



Associated Musicians of Greater New York

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Hearing: New York City Council Committee on Consumer Affairs

Testimony regarding *New York City Cabaret Law and Establishing an Office of Nightlife and a Nightlife Task Force*, on behalf of the Associated Musicians of Greater New York, Local 802, AFM

June 19, 2017

Good afternoon Chair Espinal and members of the Committee on Consumer Affairs. My name is Christopher Carroll and I am the Political Director of the Associated Musicians of Greater New York, American Federation of Musicians Local 802. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present testimony about two extremely important issues for thousands of musicians, performers and artists across New York City: the Cabaret Law and our city's nightlife. The discussion about both will prove vitally important if New York City is to remain a place that supports our vibrant and diverse communities, as well as those who drive our economy and make New York City a cultural capital.

Out of respect for time, I've condensed our testimony today, but full testimony has been submitted to the Council in writing.

Local 802 and the Music and Nightlife Landscape

Local 802 is the largest local union of professional musicians in the world, comprising musicians of all styles and backgrounds, from the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra to musicians on Broadway and thousands of musicians playing in recording studios, jazz clubs, hotels, bars, restaurants, lounges, venues across the city every day and night.



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Many of these musicians come to New York and perform in the city's nightlife, and it is in the city's restaurants, bars, hotels, clubs, and cabarets that much of our artistic and diverse cultural life is born, developed and encouraged.

Cabaret Law and License

The Cabaret Law and License, a law that is arbitrarily enforced and steeped in racist and bigoted sentiment and unreflective of the needs of small businesses, workers and our economy, hinders this extremely important component of our city's identity and economy and must be removed. The musicians of Local 802 believe that it puts undue and unreasonable burden upon businesses - and by extension the performers - who otherwise would gain from the opportunity to perform live music. **Our union supports removing the Cabaret Law, or repurposing it in a manner that addresses the needs of the industry and protects the workers who inspire our city's vibrant nightlife and music loving society.** This is an opportunity to ensure that the individuals who work, perform and drive our nightlife receive the protections, wages and security needed to live, work and raise a family

Office of Nightlife and Nightlife Taskforce

The prospect of repurposing the Cabaret Law is particularly exciting in conjunction with the creation of a Nightlife Taskforce and Office of Nightlife. The music industry is a major component and driver of our city's thriving economy, contributing billions of dollars in direct economic input and millions of dollars in wages annually, and it is no surprise to anyone that the nightlife of New York City is a major component of that economic success and artistic vibrancy.



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Given that importance, **Local 802 fully supports the creation of a Nightlife Taskforce and an Office of Nightlife, believing that both could play an important part in determining the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges this industry faces, as well as the opportunities that it presents.**

However, this taskforce must not be constrained solely to supporting and encouraging the businesses, venues and employers in our city's famous nightlife. Though small businesses and the challenges they face are undoubtedly an important part of the discussion, the workers, performers and other employees who allow our City's nightlife to thrive also face considerable challenges that are unique to the industry, from wage theft and exploitation to unsafe working conditions and inconsistent income streams.

As such, **the Taskforce must include representatives from the workforce and performers. Their voices, just like those of the city residents, business owners and other members of the industry, are vital.**

Similarly, the Office must be charged with addressing the concerns of all those impacted by the City's nightlife -- businesses, residents and workers alike. While the current bill justifiably identifies such issues as permitting, quality of life, inter-agency coordination, violation enforcement, small business relations and other concerns, issues directly impacting performers and other workers are conspicuously absent. **If an Office of Nightlife is intended to encourage a more vibrant and healthy nightlife community, such an office must be explicitly charged with addressing the concerns of performers and workers if it is to achieve those goals and support the entirety of the nightlife industry.**



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Ultimately, the success of this Taskforce and Office will depend on whether or not they reflect the diverse needs of the workers, the businesses and the New Yorkers who engage with it.

Thank you again for allowing me to speak. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.