



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN

**MANHATTAN BOROUGH PRESIDENT GALE A. BREWER
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF INTRO 179-2014
COMMITTEES ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS
SEPTEMBER 26, 2016**

My name is Gale A. Brewer and I am the Manhattan Borough President. Thank you Chair Williams for the opportunity to testify in support of the bill we introduced together, Intro 179-2014, to amend the administrative code of the city in relation to street numbers. For the record, I first introduced this commonsense bill in 2004 – and in each subsequent legislative session as it died an administrative death with inaction. I appreciate my colleague’s partnership on this bill and his scheduling a public hearing for its consideration.

As some of you may know, New York City’s Borough Presidents are charged with determining a building’s street number and for regulating the display of such numbers. The fines for non-compliance are currently so low (a \$25 fine after a 30-day notice period has elapsed, with a \$5 fine for each additional day of non-compliance) that building owners have virtually no reason to adhere to the current law. As a result, many of the City’s residential buildings, businesses, and other buildings choose to leave off their building number for a variety of reasons - some due to lack of awareness, others for perceived aesthetic, and perhaps even to establish an air of exclusivity.

In 2010, then-Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer released a report which found that nearly 40% of buildings studied along certain stretches of 13 busy corridors do not display their addresses. On 8th Ave., between 42nd and 59th Streets, 58.2% of 165 locations surveyed had no displayed address; on Greenwich Street, between Murray and Spring Streets, 48.7% of 119 locations.

A building number may seem like a little thing, but it makes a huge difference in the quality of life for so many people. The primary intent behind this bill is promoting public safety. First responders, such as the Police and Fire Departments, and Emergency Medical Services, as well as volunteer ambulance organizations such as Hatzolah, may unnecessarily waste critical time locating buildings whose numbers are not posted, or waiting for a person calling in an emergency to locate an exact building address.

Thank you to the FDNY for its support of Int. 179. In his testimony, Bureau of Operations Deputy Chief John Sarrocco said that the bill creates more ways for responding FDNY members to determine the correction location and respond to emergencies. He also states that this bill, if enacted, would make it easier for the men and women of the FDNY to serve the people of New York.



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Eddie Lowenthal, co-Coordinator of West Side Hatzolah, applauds this measure to have building addresses easily and clearly visible for emergency providers. He said that he and his fellow volunteers understand that any delay can feel like an eternity to those who call, “it can also, literally, mean a lifetime – theirs.” These responders encounter a variety of issues in identifying buildings. These challenges include buildings with vanity/multiple addresses and residential complexes like Lincoln Towers, Park West Village, and NYCHA developments with multiple entrances that are difficult to identify especially after nightfall.

The proposed law addresses these concerns by expanding the posting requirement to include any entrance that is primarily used by pedestrians, and increasing the initial fine for non-compliance to \$250, and to \$50 a day after 30 days until resolution.

In addition to emergency personnel, this legislation will help mail carriers, cab drivers, Access-a-Ride, and other service workers who help us every day to do their jobs more quickly and efficiently. It will also assist many other residents and New York City visitors in finding the commercial establishments and other buildings they are looking for. The leadership at the Columbus Avenue Business Improvement District thinks that the lack of visible shop numbers is a real detriment to patrons, visitors and delivery people trying to locate area businesses. They purchased inexpensive legible adhesive stickers that also fit within the character of the BID’s historic district and then distributed the street numbers amongst the shops that do not currently comply with the law.

On a final note, I would like to briefly address the enforcement powers behind the current and proposed expanded law. Due to its placement within the Borough President’s section of the Administrative Code, I and my colleagues are responsible for enforcing the law – yet without the foot soldiers, so to speak, that each Borough President once had in the Bureau of Encroachments and Incumbrances. It’s my understanding that building numbers are one of the items on the HPD inspector checklist. Suggested alternative agencies to include in this process are the Departments of Sanitation, Buildings, or Finance. I welcome further discussion on this topic with the Council and Administration to identify a process and agency to educate building owners on the law and expand compliance and enforcement.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I am honored to have introduced this common sense public safety and quality of life measure with my colleague Chair Williams, and I urge all City Council Members to vote in favor of Intro 179.