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**Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY**

November 12, 2015

New York City Council  
Committee on Environmental Protection  
Hearing on Reducing Noise Caused by Sightseeing Helicopters  
Intros. 0858 and 0859

Susan M. Dooha, J.D.  
Executive Director  
Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY



A United Way Agency

Re:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the impact of noise caused by sightseeing helicopters flying over our communities. Those who benefit from tourist helicopter noise would urge you to consider only the jobs lost if helicopter flights are in any way curtailed. However, permitting high noise helicopter flights to continue comes with a cost as well. We strongly request that you consider the public health impact of the noise pollution caused by these ventures and the costs borne by our communities. We also invite you to consider the disparate impact of noise pollution on jobs for people who are hard of hearing and on people with other disabilities. We support Intros. 0858 and 0895.

The Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY) is a non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring full integration, independence and equal opportunity for all people with disabilities by removing barriers to the social, economic, cultural and civic life of the community. CIDNY, which has been in existence for over 37 years, reached approximately 15,000 New Yorkers in 2015, many of whom are hard of hearing. In New York City, there are nearly 1 million individuals with disabilities. Of these, 185,378 people identify as hard of hearing or Deaf.

Noise pollution caused by tourist helicopters deserves your attention as a public health issue. The World Health Organization <sup>1</sup>has considered this issue. They observe that hearing is essential for safety and well-being. They have documented the hearing damage produced by hours of exposure to significant noise.

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health<sup>2</sup>, workers with hearing loss are particularly affected by working in a noisy environment—like that produced by helicopter noise. The noise has an impact on their job safety, communication, stress and fatigue levels.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/554566\\_3](http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/554566_3)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/mining/userfiles/works/pdfs/winwa.pdf>

Re:

So, the employment loss issue identified by the industry cuts both ways. Noise pollution from tourist helicopter flights affects employability of people with disabilities. In a study we produced with the University of New Hampshire,<sup>3</sup> we demonstrate that hearing impairment correlates with lower levels of employment and income and higher levels of poverty than exist for people with no disability.

We appreciate that New York is a busy place that attracts tourists from across the globe to enjoy our world class city. We welcome them. At the same time, we believe that the benefits of this particular attraction—noisy helicopter flights—is outweighed by public health and employment considerations. We simply cannot afford the public health impact and we cannot afford to further disadvantage people with disabilities who need employment.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.cidny.org/resources/CIDNY-ADA25-Many%20 Bridges\\_to-Cross.pdf](http://www.cidny.org/resources/CIDNY-ADA25-Many%20Bridges_to-Cross.pdf)