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Good afternoon, Chair Jackson, Councilmember Quinn, and members of the City Council. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of Comptroller William C. Thompson.

Comptroller Thompson supports Intro. 271, the Equal Benefits bill, which would require contractors doing business with the City of New York to extend benefits to the domestic partners of their employees.

The law would cover firms with contracts valued at more than \$100,000, requiring them to apply leave policies and provide all benefits -- including healthcare coverage, pension benefits, disability, and life insurance -- to all of their employees on an equal basis.

Passage of this legislation would mark an important step forward in the fight for equal rights for all people. It would also bring the City's requirements for companies into step with the City's policy for its employees.

Under current law, the domestic partners of New York City employees are entitled to receive the same benefits as spouses. The companies covered under this bill are doing significant business with the City. Much like City employees, their employees provide essential services to the City of New York, and they deserve the same rights and privileges.

The City of New York has a responsibility to do business with companies that respect the basic rights of all of their employees. Businesses that cannot or do not wish to abide by New York City's standards simply should not be doing business with the City.

This will send a strong message to private companies seeking to win contracts: make it your business to offer equal benefits, or you won't do business with the City of New York.

The Comptroller's office does have some technical concerns regarding the best way to structure the audit requirements included in the legislation. We have already discussed them with some Committee members, and we look forward to working with the Committee as review of the legislation proceeds.

Comptroller Thompson applauds Councilmember Quinn and Chair Jackson for advancing this important legislation, and the members of this committee for sponsoring the bill. We look forward to working with you and the entire City Council to support its passage.

Thank you, once again, for the opportunity to present testimony today.