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**TESTIMONY OF NEW YORK STATE SENATOR BRAD HOYLMAN
BEFORE THE HUDSON RIVER PARK TRUST REGARDING
THE PROPOSED LEASE BETWEEN HUDSON RIVER PARK TRUST
AND PIER55, INC. AND A PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO HUDSON
RIVER PARK'S GENERAL PROJECT PLAN**

January 12, 2015

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Hudson River Park Trust (HRPT) regarding the proposed Pier 54 (a/k/a Pier 55) project.

I heartily commend the Diller – von Furstenberg Family Foundation for their history-making philanthropic commitment to the arts and culture in New York City, and specifically, the West Side of Manhattan, by proposing to build this exciting and innovative new public space and performance venue on our waterfront. Pier 55 is poised to be a major asset for our community and theater and music lovers everywhere. The Foundation's gift of at least \$130 million, to be supplemented with public funds, ensures that Pier 55 is financed through its completion.

I am extremely impressed with the world-class group assembled to see this project through to completion, including designer Heatherwick Studio along with the creative team of Stephen Daldry, Kate Horton, and George Wolfe. With rolling hills, gardens, passive recreation space, a public plaza, and three performance spaces, the park will be an outstanding public gathering space. Furthermore, the creation of Pier55 Inc., the not-for-profit organization that will operate the Pier's programming, demonstrates a commitment to bringing the highest quality performances to our community and city.

In the face of such significant generosity, it almost seems ungracious to critique the process that led HRPT to this momentous stage of deciding whether to accept this tremendous gift. Still, I think it is incumbent upon policymakers to review the process through which such significant modifications to the park's original plan are made, such as the proposal before you, and offer suggestions for improvement. We must ensure strong public input, engagement and transparency as decisions are made regarding the

shape and design of this important public open space. The current HRPT process requires a single public hearing with 30 days notice, and gives elected officials, Manhattan Community Boards 1, 2, and 4, the HRPT Advisory Council and the New York City Planning Commission (CPC) 60 days to submit non-binding comments. This stands in contrast to New York City's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure, which ensures an environmental review, at least two public hearings as well as an opportunity for several more, recommendations from the Manhattan Borough President, a vote of the CPC, culminating in a vote of the New York City Council - a process that takes approximately seven and a half months from start to finish. The current HRPT process avoids a legally binding vote by the representatives of those most affected by this proposed change. As a result, I am examining ways to legally mandate a more inclusive, open process for any future proposals.

I am concerned that this project may have a greater effect on the fragile waterfront ecosystem than the original Environmental Impact Statement, completed as part of the General Project Plan, envisioned for this area of the park. The change in the footprint of the piers, along with the associated new piles, and the introduction of new plantings, thousands of additional visitors and commercial activities all may impact the surrounding ecosystem many have fought to protect. I urge HRPT to more fully examine the potential impacts of this change.

I strongly encourage the HRPT to give great weight to the recommendations of Manhattan Community Board 2 (CB2). I personally attended CB2's Parks and Waterfront Committee's review of this project, and commend the board members for their thoughtful deliberation and consideration of this proposal. Notably, community members have raised concerns regarding HRPT's ability to assure maximum public access to the pier, the lack of clarity around promises of free and low-cost access to performances in this public space, and the ability of historic ships to dock at the piers, as was originally envisioned. Residents have also expressed concern regarding amplified sound disturbing nearby residential areas, a serious issue seen in other areas of the park as well.

Additionally, traffic and transportation is already a challenge in the area and the influx of visitors traveling to and from the park, especially at event times, will add further congestion to the sidewalks and nearby transit stations and create potential safety hazards for pedestrians and vehicles. While there is a proposal to add a new bus station to the area, more must be done in conjunction with relevant agencies to address likely traffic and transportation conflicts when the park is operational. The project should also comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act by ensuring all park facilities are fully accessible.

I share the community's desire to ensure that CB2, neighborhood associations and local performing arts organizations have an ongoing, in-depth advisory role to help guide this new public space to become a treasured community asset.

I urge you to continue to work with local stakeholders to address their concerns, both now and throughout the construction and operation phases. Doing so will add enormous value to Pier 55 by ensuring that the park is truly a welcome and wonderful addition to our community and the city as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration of my remarks.