

I would like to begin by thanking Congressman Jordan and the other members of the committee for giving me the opportunity to testify. Nearly two years ago, on May 20, 2021, I received a call that no parent, mother or father, should ever receive. On the other end of the line was my son Joseph, who quickly told that everything would be okay, but he was savagely beaten in the heart of Times Square and was in desperate need of medical attention. He handed over the phone to the NYPD and I was told they were bringing him to the Emergency Room at Bellevue Hospital. Without hesitation, I made a beeline to Manhattan to be by Joseph's side; the true horrifying circumstances of the attack began to trickle in as I got closer-and-closer to the hospital. It turns out my son was merely walking through Times Square en route to a pro-Israel rally when he was gang assaulted by a group of individuals that kicked him, punched him, struck him with weapons, sprayed him with mace and/or pepper spray, as well as bombarded him with anti-semitic slurs. The reason why they attacked him in the heart of Times Square with countless other people around? BECAUSE HE WAS JEWISH AND WEARING A KIPPA (JEWISH HEAD COVERING)

I sit here in front of the committee with the two-year anniversary of the attack rapidly approaching to speak of the ongoing struggle with Manhattan District Attorney Alving Bragg in the pursuit of justice and accountability. While the delays and continued hold ups in the legal case are discouraging, it is the sweetheart slap-on-the-wrist deal offered to one of the attackers in my son's case that is exemplary of DA Bragg's incompetence when it comes to carrying out justice. Despite the fact that an individual in the case (Waseem Awawdeh) adamantly stated he would do it again, had previous run-ins with the law, displayed zero remorse after the fact, was arrested while out on bail for a road rage incident involving an elderly man, and has continually thumbed his nose at the legal process, not to mention is caught black-and-white on video striking my son repeatedly with his metal crutches on Police video in the heart of Times Square rush hour, Alvin Bragg deemed it appropriate to offer him a six-month prison sentence. How is this justice? How is this best serving the people of Manhattan? Moreover, there is another deal being offered to a defendant in the case for no prison time because "he only punched my son in the head once." The Awawdeh deal especially has caused quite an uproar amongst our family, the Jewish community, and other communities across Manhattan. The notion that someone can engage in such conduct, act so emboldened afterwards, get arrested while out on bail, and be given a break by Alvin Bragg illustrates his inability to properly protect the citizens of Manhattan. The news of the plea deal being offered shocked everyone; efforts have continually been made since to illustrate to DA Bragg it must be revoked.

It is very important for me to point out that the ongoing case surrounding my son is not a political issue but rather an issue of what's right and what's wrong. No individual should ever feel that they are a target of verbal or physical abuse because of their race,

ethnicity, gender, religion, or appearance, especially somewhere like New York City. As a matter of fact, Joseph appeared at a summit at the White House over the summer to raise awareness about antisemitism, so this is not a Trump or Biden issue, this is about Alvin Bragg's inability to be an effective Manhattan DA. I have lived in New York for my entire life and I have never seen New York City sink to the depths it has sunk, even relative to the troubled times of the 1980s. Moreover, I am a proud Jew who is shocked by the surge in antisemitism and giving deals to individuals like Waseem Awawdeh, who said he would do it again and has shown no remorse, further demonstrates that law and order is a thing of the past for not only the Jews of Manhattan, but for all of its citizens under the guidance of DA Bragg.

The years since the attack occurred have been extremely challenging for my son Joseph. He was banged up the night of the attack and in a great deal of pain, but thankfully he made it out alive. If the NYPD did not intervene as quickly as they did, maybe we would not have been so lucky. Unfortunately, my son is still dealing with numerous lingering issues even after all of this time, and the notion that one of his remorseless attackers could be treated so leniently is a major slap-in-the-face. He has already been through one painful surgery on his right wrist and may need another. He still partakes in physical and mental therapy as a result of the traumatizing events. Additionally, this deal has been open for months without any sense of urgency and no deadlines assigned. How is this indicative of a DA whose interested in seeking justice and accountability?

I would like to conclude by stressing the bipartisan nature of the events involving DA Bragg and my son Joseph's ongoing case. Although Joseph was asked to testify today, he is unable to do so because even after two years of waiting; he still has not even begun the process of trial preparation due to no clear trial date being set. Our family has received support from both the left and right and we welcome anyone who is willing to support our cause of seeking full justice in Joseph's attack. We have heard from countless politicians representing both the Republicans and Democrats, but I will say it is quite disheartening that it appears some politicians on the left are more concerned with defending DA Bragg than protecting the people of Manhattan. A prime example of this is Rep. Jerry Nadler, who will come out swinging in the defense of Da Bragg, yet has never reached out to my son or commented on the laughable deal offered to his attacker. (ADDRESS NADLER) Rep. Nadler – is it more important to stick up for DA Bragg than your fellow Jewish people? I would love to ask Mark Levine the same question, another Democratic Jewish politician seemingly more concerned with defending DA Bragg than victims of antisemitic violence. All in all, it is clear that DA Bragg is not equipped to protect Manhattan and seek justice for those affected by its rising crime. One needs to look no further than the inexcusable fashion in which he has handled my son's ongoing case.