

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

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January 20, 2015

Start: 1:21 p.m.

Recess: 4:08 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Room  
14th Floor

B E F O R E: MATHIEU EUGENE  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Annabel Palma  
Darlene Mealy  
Margaret S. Chin  
David G. Greenfield  
Andy L. King  
Laurie A. Cumbo

## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Bill Chong, Commissioner  
Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)

Denise Williams, Assistant Commissioner  
Comprehensive After School System (COMPASS)  
Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)

Hector Batista, Chief Executive Officer  
Big Brothers Big Sisters of NYC

Yelena Baranovskaya, Multi-Site Director  
Queens Community House

Cidra Sebastien, Associate Executive Director  
The Brotherhood Sister Sol

Amy Sananman, Founder and Executive Director  
Groundswell

Sami Abu Shumays, Deputy Director  
Flushing Town Hall

Lisa Tagiali  
Girls Club Lower East Side

Odisha Kia Vega Hutchins  
Girls Club Lower East Side

[sound check, pause]

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: All right, thank you. I think we're going to start--ready to start. Okay. [gavel] Good afternoon. I'm Council Member Mathieu Eugene, and I'm the Chairman of the Youth Services Committee. I want to welcome you all to this hearing. To Commissioner John, thank you for being here with us, and I want to take the opportunity also to thank you for your dedication to serve youth and also their families. Thank you very much. Again, I thank everyone for coming to this important hearing entitled Culturally and Linguistically competent afterschool programs that draws out [sic] and benefits youth.

As a society, we have learned already that ensuring that students have access to current enrichment programs outside of the classroom is a vital component, perhaps the key to a student's success inside the classroom. It is also acceptable dogma that in order for a student to be prepared to excel in school and compete into this world, it is vitally required that all youth participate in meaningful and reaching extracurricular programs. Programs that strengthen not only the academic, but

just as importantly the social and emotional development as well.

In order for us to examine whether the programs provided to our youth through after school programs are meeting their cultural and linguistic needs, it is necessary to understand what we mean by cultural competence. For this reason, I will clarify for the record that cultural competence is defined as the ability of all agency staff to provide the highest quality of services by responding respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, genders, sexual orientations, ability status, and faith and religions in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, tribes, and communities. And protects and preserves the dignity of each. It is only by knowing and understanding the goal that we strive toward that we can assess whether we are achieving that goal. And if not, we must evaluate what needs to be changed, how we can think outside the proverbial box, if need be. How we can create a new paradigm, if necessary, until we do achieve it. Anything less changes our children and thereby fails all of us.

Before I call our first witness, I want to recognize the Council Members who have joined us. We have with us Council Member Annabel Palma. Thank you very much. Council Member Margaret Chin, and Council Member Andy King. Thank you very much, and let me take also the opportunity to recognize the member of the committee, the staff committee. Kimberly Williams, our Counsel. Thank you. Thank you very much, and Michael Benjamin our Legislative Policy Analyst. And again, to all of you here, thank you very much for what you are doing in your organization, for the young people in New York. Thank you for your presence. Thank you for providing for our young people the opportunity that they need to become the leaders, to become positive and profitable citizens. And we all know the young people they are the future of this nation. We see that every single day, they are the future of this city, and we are obligated. This is our obligation to come together to make sure that they can enjoy the best opportunities that the city can provide. I cannot do it alone. Council Member Chin, Council Member King, and Annabel and we in this committee we cannot do it alone. The city simply cannot. But all

of us together, and I am convinced that all of us together through working together we will make those young people the future leaders. And more than ever right now we have an obligation to do it. If we don't do it, the city is going to be in trouble. We will be in trouble. And if we do it, it's going to be a win-win for all of us. Having said that, now let me call the Commissioner. Commissioner Bill Chong, Commissioner of DYCD, and Assistant Commissioner Denise Williams. You can start any time. Please state your name.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Good afternoon, Chair Eugene, and members of the Youth Services Committee. My name is Bill Chong, and I'm the Commissioner of the Department of Youth and Community Development. I am joined by Denise Williams, the Assistant Commission for COMPASS, which stands for the Comprehensive After School System. [background comments] Thank you for holding this oversight hearing culturally competent after school programs. DYCD greatly values and supports the delivery of after school programs in a linguistically and--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing]

Commissioner, excuse me. I think you've got to swear--

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Oh.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --to raise your hand even I don't have the language. But do you--do you attest that you will say the truth and all the truth?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yes, I do.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: And will you please also. Do you?

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: Yes, I do.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much. I'm sorry, with your name. I didn't say that. [sic]

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Ask her again. Good afternoon Chair Eugene and members of the Youth Services Committee. My name is Bill Chong, and I'm Commissioner of the Department of Youth and Community Development. I'm joined by Denise Williams the Assistant Commissioner for COMPASS, which stands for a Comprehensive After School System. Thank you for holding this oversight hearing on culturally competent after school programs.

DYCD greatly values and supports delivery of after school programs in a linguistically and

culturally competent manner. We know there are multiple benefits for young people such as the affirmation of one's heritage, development of positive self-esteem, fostering caring relationships between youth and staff. Better engagement of parents, especially immigrant parents, and the development of their children. And exposure to different languages and cultures and instill and appreciation for diversity.

Essential to our successful programs are our partnerships with community-based organizations. Our funding model acknowledges that community-based organizations and their staff are best equipped to meet the cultural and language needs of the student body and their community. Included in our requests for proposal are linguistic and cultural competency requirements. We have evaluation criteria that affects these requirements when we select programs. The organizations that we fund, hire staff and design programs in accordance with the needs of their participants. Outreach efforts to identify new providers who can reach under-served communities and bring fresh and engaging content to our programs has also paid off recently.



For last year's SONYC Expansion, Schools Out NYC Request for Proposal, we partnered with the Department of Cultural Affairs to reach out to arts organizations. To promote our SONYC Non-Public School Sites Request for Proposal, I spoke last summer at the Muslim Youth Day. We also conducted training for Islamic School Association on how to become eligible to apply for request for proposals by pre-qualifying through the HHS Accelerator System. We have so many strong CBO partners that include specific racial-ethnic organizations and mainstream non-profits that have linguistic and cultural competency to serve New York's diverse neighborhoods. For example, El Conte Cornerstone Program at Tailor-White in Brooklyn also serves Williamsburg's Hasidic Jewish residents. At Bronx Works, Melrose Cornerstone Community Center bilingual staff operate in an after school program for recent immigrant youth. Other examples of DYCD's provider organizations include Advocacy and Development Corporation; the American Family Support Center; Black's Spectrum Theater Company; Chinese-American Planning Council; Coalition for Hispanic Family Services; Council of People's Organizations; Haitian-

Americans United for Progress; the Korean-American Family Service Center; Sesame Fliers; South Asian Youth Action; the Settlement Houses and other member agencies of United Neighborhood Houses and the YMCA.

To no surprise, our program participants speak many different languages, 32 in addition to English. Although with the 244,000 program participants in our COMPASS, Beacon and Cornerstone Programs nearly 43,000 speak a language other than English. These include Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Haitian-Creole, Arabic, French, and Bengali to less spoken ones like Mandingo, Albanian, and Vietnamese. Of the majority of these 43,000 speakers of other languages, 73% are English proficient. Another prime illustration of our linguistically and culturally competent providers are the providers we just selected from our SONYC Non-Public School Sites Request for Proposal last week. The Mayor announced that 18 of the new SONYC middle school after school programs were located at religious schools. We added additional sites at Catholic schools and yeshivas, and funded programs for the first time in Islamic school as well as Greek Orthodox and Seventh Day Adventist schools. Some of the new SONYC programs

will also operated by providers who serve the city's new immigrant populations, including the New York Tibetan Service Center in Queens and the African Refuge in Staten Island that specializes in the Liberian community. Also selected was University Settlement's Houston Street Center in the Lower East Side, which serves a majority of Cantonese speaking families with multilingual staff to accommodate those needs. Our DYCD program managers also have several tools at their disposal to make sure providers are offering culturally competent programs.

DYCD contracts include provisions that require services to be provided in a linguistically and culturally competent manner. When conduct site visits to assess program quality, linguistically and culturally competent services is a key factor that is reviewed with our Program Quality Management Tool. This tool feeds assessment data into the city's Vindex Rating System, which can impact whether funding continues and for proactive [sic] and receiving funding from other city agencies. DYCD contracts require meeting enrollment and attendance targets. They cannot be achieved without engaging parents and young people in a linguistically and

culturally competent manner. Technical assistance and trainings are available to our providers.

Training types have included supporting English language learners; sexual orientation, and gender identity; and in working with LGBTQ and gender non-conforming youth.

In order to connect New Yorkers to our services we have 1-800 hotline called Youth Connect where callers can learn more about a program and find program sites in their neighborhood. If we identify callers that need interpretation assistance, we can connect them to our language bank operators who have the ability to speak to 180 different languages. Once again, thank you for holding this hearing today. We look forward to collaborating with the City Council on best to support after school programs, and serving our wonderfully diverse city. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much, Commissioner. [pause] Thank you for your testimony, and again we are very pleased to have you with us. I guess I have some questions regarding your presentation, and-- We are talking about our providers, our organizations that are providing services in different languages. And this is--this

1 is great, and we cannot stress enough and then put in  
2 practice enough on the need, the necessity to provide  
3 services in a variety of ethnicities and in several  
4 languages. Because we all know that New York is home  
5 to many immigrants and people who are not proficient  
6 in English. That's wonderful, but can you tell us  
7 exactly in your staff giving the after school program  
8 since we want them culturally and linguistically  
9 complete an after school program, do you have in your  
10 staff people who speak different languages to deal  
11 with that? As you know, a liaison between the  
12 organization and the DYCD?

14 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yes, we have staff  
15 who speak different languages. I don't have a list  
16 of the languages, but we can provide that you after  
17 the hearing.

18 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay. Can you  
19 define for us what is a-- When we say cultural  
20 competence or linguistic competence, what do you mean  
21 by that? Could you from your point of view, from  
22 DYCD's point of view what does that mean exactly?

23 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I think it means  
24 basically to understand the culture that a young  
25 person and their family come from, and then

1 understand how you can connect with that culture,  
2 promote the culture, and also help make them part of  
3 this great city. So, it may take it's-- It may take  
4 different forms. Many of the programs have cultural  
5 activities who may want to celebrate different  
6 cultures that are--that exist in a school. It might  
7 be to have guest speakers. I think it's the more we  
8 can expose younger people to the diversity not only  
9 in their school, but in their city, we strongly  
10 encourage it.  
11

12 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So what type  
13 support? Do you have any type of support that you  
14 provide, culturally to those organizations to make  
15 sure that they meet the goal of being culturally and  
16 linguistically competent--

17 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Well,  
18 there are two ways?

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --to provide  
20 assistance?

21 COMMISSIONER CHONG: There--there are two  
22 ways we support them. One is we do regular site  
23 visits of programs, and one of the things that we  
24 look at on a regular basis in these site visits is  
25 whether the programs are culturally competent.

Whether they are meeting the needs of that particular community. And, any agency, any program can access technical assistance through our Capacity Building Division if they have problems in that area.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So, we all know that, you know, we may have good intent and make a lot of sacrifices to set goals, and to reach the goal also. We may have done a lot of sacrifices. But the best way, one of the best ways to ensure that we do the right thing is by doing an evaluation assessment. You say that you organize site visits. What are you looking for exactly? When you do a site visit, what is true? What exactly you are looking for?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: How engaged young people are. Whether the activities reflect the community that it's serving. And one way you measure engagement is attendance. If a program is not engaging, young people will not show up. Particularly when we're talking about programs for middle school youth. We know from many years of experience that attendance is a measure of how engaging a program is to a young person because they will vote with their feet. So, as I mentioned in my testimony that these site visits are one of the basis

on which we do annual evaluations as you are familiar with, the Vindex System, which will determine whether an agency will continue to get funding or whether they will not. And so, we take this very seriously. If a program is struggling in a particular area, we put them under what's called a correction action plan. We give them a certain amount of time to improve, and if we don't see improvement, we can take a more harsh action, and withdraw funding. So we take this very seriously. It's part of the toolkit we have.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: [off mic] Yeah and-- Denise Williams. [on mic] The other thing I want to add is one key indicator to us is we're looking at the relationships between participants and the adults in the programs, and the participants amongst each other. And really looking on environment that's inclusive, and welcoming and respectful of all those who are participating. So, to echo your earlier comments it's not just linguistics and culture, but folks who are LGBTQ or questioning folks. Young people with disabilities. We want all those to be safe, feel safe, and welcomed in our programs. And we don't just take our own word



for it. We survey the young people, and start an evaluative survey. And we really get high marks on young people feeling safe and welcome in our programs.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So when you do your or conduct your evaluation, if an organization doesn't meet the requirement, it doesn't fulfill the requirement, and it is not successful or not satisfied, what are the consequences? What happens? How do you enforce this? How do you correct this situation?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: It's similar to progressive discipline. So we give a program opportunity to correct the problem. We do what's called first a Work Improvement Plan with specific steps they should do to address whatever the shortcoming is. If it's attendance, if it's lack of cultural competence. Whatever the issue might be, and then if the Work Improvement Plan doesn't work, we then put them under what's called a Corrective Action Plan, which is a little bit more harsher measure. And then, if that doesn't work, then we can consider any number of options. We can reduce the funding for that program if, for example, they--

they're under contract to serve 100 young people, and they only serve 60, we can reduce the funding. Or, we could withdraw the funding and reassign the program to another provider that we think can do a better job.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I see, but our plan disciplinary measure correction is a very important, very important step to make sure that they reach their goal. But, do you have them or does DYCD have them also, you know, in terms of tuning, and

COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Yes.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --additional support for them to go through and to correct, you know, all the mistakes.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yes. Part of the Work Improvement Plan might involve them seeking assistance. We have an array of capacity building providers that work on a range of issues from the Community Resource Exchange to the After School Corporation to Ramapo for Children, which works with programs to help them serve young people with special needs. So depending on the particular challenge a program might face, they may get a different referral for capacity building services. So like I said, we

try to use the carrot and the stick because we realize the carrot may be more effective than the stick.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Yes. Thank you very much, Commissioner. I want to acknowledge that we have been joined by Council Member Laurie Cumbo, and it I'm going to turn it--turn it over to Council Member Chin who has-- Council Member King first-- thank you very much--who has some question. Council Member King.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate today's conversation and hearing, Commissioner. Thank you both for expressing how after school programs linguistically have an impact on our children. My--I'm going to be brief in my questions. As Bill, as you have developed programs today, [sic] I understand the importance of how the--how you save neighborhoods in making sure that the youth are taken care of. Through the RFP process, how do you gauge whether or not a program or contractor will be able to culturally and linguistically offer these competent services that we're talking about today?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Let me start and then maybe Denise will have some comments. So, one of the ways that we look at this issue is what experience they have already because that's really an indicator of whether they can do the job.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: What their history with a particular community might be. So for example we just-- I referenced that we awarded a contract in the North Shore of Staten Island to the African Refuge Center. And they have worked for many years with the Liberian community. So obviously they have a track record there that would probably trump any other organization in that area. And then, the last piece is what is their plan-- What is their understanding of that particular school or that neighborhood, and what's their plan for addressing it? So it's experience, but it's also the proposed plan.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: [off mic] And I would add our RFP process to that segment today. [sic] [on mic] We do contract development sessions. So we go through more detail what their staffing plan is, if they've identified the program direction.

That person's cultural and linguistic competence, in addition to the history of the organization.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Speaking of-- You used that organization, that example has been in the community for a long time. How does it play out for community, for an organization who has done a lot of work over the years, but may not be able to fill out or go through the RFP process correctly? That doesn't mean-- They might be better at delivering on services, but because they don't know how to fill out the paperwork correctly, they get kind of excluded from that process. How do you reach out to them, or justify who is the better of anybody who is filling out an RFP?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: But last year this is something that I was very concerned about. So we simplified the Request for Proposal process. We used to issue these really thick documents. [laughs] I used to call them dissertation RFPs.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: And my wife is working on her PhD so I can relate to it. And so, we moved to an online application of about 10 or 15 pages with specific questions that you have to

answer. You know, how many points you get per question. You're give a word limit per question because what I found in my previous tenure at DYCD was that if you didn't have a full-time grant writer, and many small groups don't have full-time grant writers, you really can't compete. So last year when we awarded 110 organizations the SONYC, the Middle school Expansion Contracts, 30 of them were brand new to us, groups that we had never, ever funded before. And many of them were grassroots groups, and in this select bidders round [sic], you know, groups that we had never worked with before like the Tibetan Service Center in Astoria were able to get funded. The Liberian group. Grassroots groups like the Red Hook Initiative in Brooklyn were able to compete. So I think that's a big part of it is simplifying the process so that it's a level playing field. And I think doing outreach. When I was invited in December of last year to speak at Career Day for Muslim Youth Organization, I thought it was a great opportunity to connect with the community that quite frankly is growing in the city.

But really has been part of the programs we fund. And so, through that I mean the head of the

1 Islamic School Association, which represented I think  
2 something like 30 Islamic schools. We got them  
3 connected, got them into the process, and we were  
4 able to fund three Islamic schools this year. So, I  
5 think outreach. You have to continue to do outreach  
6 because the city is changing daily. You know, when I  
7 grew up in East New York/Brooklyn in the--many, many  
8 years ago, we were the only Chinese family there.  
9 Now there's a growing Bangladeshi community in East  
10 New York. So that I think really speaks to the  
11 diversity of the city that there's no one ethnic  
12 group living in one neighborhood. We live in  
13 neighborhoods with many different ethnic groups. So  
14 I think we have to constantly do outreach.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, I'm going to  
17 wrap up my couple-- I have about two more questions.  
18 As someone who's worked in after school programs,  
19 I've seen how the recruitment of staff comes on.  
20 Now, we're talking about being culturally and  
21 linguistically competent. How do you train or have  
22 the proper staff? Because a lot of our after school  
23 programs have young people who are working in them.  
24 So as a 15 or 16 or even a 19 or 20-year-old that  
25 you're in there, how are you able to deliver on what

1 the RFP says you should be able to deliver on? If  
2 you may not be culturally exposed to the diversity in  
3 an after school program or you're only able to cater  
4 to one sector of the after school program. But  
5 you're not mature enough to know to deal with the  
6 other pieces? What do you do with that individual?

8 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [off mic] Okay.

9 COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: I'll answer it in  
10 two ways. So, yes, we do fund technical assistance  
11 providers, and I always used to say this when I was  
12 initially at DYCD we have to also be able to support  
13 providers in paying part-time staff to come to these  
14 trainings. So one of the things that COMPASS does is  
15 we allow our programs to close three days. Kind of  
16 like teacher professional development day in order to  
17 train their staff. We look for hours of staff  
18 training when we are reviewing the budgets that we're  
19 now working on, the work scope and budgets. In fact,  
20 this last round of SONYC last year, we let the  
21 contract start on July 1st even though the programs  
22 were going to start in September to allow for hiring  
23 and training and the ability for contractors to  
24 changes us for those hours. So that they could train  
25 staff as well. So, we are-- My background is



capacity building. So I'm always looking at how to support both the TA providers, but also our programs in being able to support staff in coming to these programs. Particularly part-time staff who mostly get paid for showing up not for the staff meetings, not for professional development and things like that.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay. I'm glad.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] And--

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Yes.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: And the other thing that, you know, I think a strong suit of many of our programs particularly our community centers or Beacons and Cornerstone, is to promote home grown talent. One of the things that Richard Murphy, the Commissioner of the Department of Youth Services under the Dingus [sp?] Initiative talked about was really viewing these programs with youth development. That a young person who might start as a participant may one day graduate and be a staff person. And we have dozens and dozens of examples in our Beacon and Cornerstone programs where people started as children. You know, came back and volunteered. Maybe worked in the summer, and then before you know

1  
2 it, they're the director of the program. And that's  
3 a value we really cherish and we actively promote  
4 home grown talent.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, my final  
6 question is I started out say that the best way to  
7 help a community is that you develop the youth. One  
8 of the best ways to destroy a community is to make  
9 sure the youth are dysfunctional. So what happens to  
10 a program-- What are the time limits? I heard you  
11 mention that you go through a process of trying to  
12 help programs improve if they're failing or  
13 delivering on their RFP. I'd like to know what  
14 actually is the time frame. How quick is it that you  
15 can go from say assessing that something is wrong to  
16 going quickly to defunding a program. Because again  
17 sometimes the longer you wait, the more destruction  
18 is done to those community children.

19 COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: So let me say  
20 that the fastest I've ever seen it done and been  
21 involved with it is if it has something to do with  
22 safety. Like safety is kind of a non-negotiable.  
23 You go straight to a cap, and if it's not improved  
24 within a month--we just went through this--the  
25 program will lose the contract. Everything else we

try to give it the year of the contract and supporting staff training and development. And we just funded Financial Management Associates and Community Resource Exchange because you can't have strong programs if you don't have strong organizations. So we do try to give time for development. I think it's usually a year. It's faster if it has something to do with safety.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, all right. I thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for your time, Commissioners.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you Council Member King, and before I call on Council Member Chin, I want to acknowledge that we have been joined by Council Member Darlene Mealy. Thank you, Council Member. And let me just ask one question as follow up, you know, to piggyback on the question of Council Member King. When you were talking about support or assistance given to an organization to navigate through the system or to fill out applications and stuff like that, what do you have in place, you know for those people even that may have a good organization who are providing good services in their neighborhood. And that may be culturally competent

1 because they speak another language or certainly  
2 aware of their communities. But they are not  
3 proficient in language enough to fill out an  
4 application to go through this system, to understand  
5 the application. So you have also anything to add  
6 about to them?

8 COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, one way they  
9 can work with us if they don't have the capacity yet  
10 to compete even with a streamlined simplified  
11 application form. We're planning a resource fair  
12 where people can sign up to be potential  
13 subcontractors. So they have a specific thing they  
14 do well. Or it might be they have the ability to  
15 reach one particular population. They can do a  
16 certain type of programming. They can in this  
17 resource fair meet other agencies that have  
18 contractors, and they can be a subcontractor. So we  
19 encourage groups like that to sign up for the  
20 resource fair.

21 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So that means that  
22 we contracted by other providers?

23 COMMISSIONER CHONG: By the provider.

24 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Other providers.  
25

COMMISSIONER CHONG: And then the good thing about this is that they get some experience under their belt and so-- And they get more familiar with our system, and then when the next RFP comes out they can point to this experience as a subcontractor to apply for funding.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much, Commissioner. Council Member Chin, please.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon, Commissioner. In doing your evaluation, what does a good quality program look like, and also do you look for these programs, and use them as models?

[background comment]

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: I can share the program quality monitoring, too, but there are eight areas that we look at and they all have kind of indicators. Part of it is relationships. Part of it is the program implementation where we look at things like curriculum, staffing ratios. Things like subcontracting that the Commissioner related to relationships because about 80% of our programs are school based. So we look at the relationship between the CBO and the principal. We look at the youths,

something called education specialists who is really the person that facilitates the use of curriculum that supports school day learning, but does not replicate it. So there, you know, about eight areas that we look at with multiple indicators. We do look for programs or agencies who are what we say best practice, and we capture that in our system. We connect them to smaller CBOs so that CBOs can come and do a site visit. It's easier to take in something when we see it versus just reading about it. So we do facilitate connections between organizations so that we can hold up best practice. We also hold up best practice as part of trainings that we do. So we might have agencies come in and talk about how they develop staff. How they connect with the schools. How they connect with the parents as part of trainings that we do. So we try to have a lot of different strategies to approaching that. But a lot of what we look for is in the program called a monitoring tool that we've developed after looking at best practices nationally and with support of Policy Study Associates.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So, you have providers in the city that meet your expectations that you were talking about?

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: There are providers who are excellent in all areas. There are providers who are excellent in some area, and fair in others. And there are a few that are unsatisfactory I think like any system of our 850 programs.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So do you have some providers that you would put up as role models I mean for best practice? I mean even for council members--

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: [interposing]  
Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: --to visit and, you know, to really see what a good quality program.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: Absolutely, and if you were to be more specific, there are some providers who are best practice in one area, but if you asked me were they best practice in their paperwork, I might say no. Are they best practice in pair and engagement, I'll send you to that. Are they best practice in STEM. So depending on what you're looking for, and then there are a few that are just really sterling in everything that they do.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: [interposing] Well,  
I think--

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: But absolutely I  
have programs you could visit.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah, I think it  
would be really good to really share the one that you  
say is really sterling. [laughter] So that we could  
really take a look I mean for a lot of us to really  
see what a really good quality program are, and how  
to be able to support that--

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: [interposing]  
Absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: --with funding so  
that you could train more, or they can really learn,  
you know, from their peers. And my last question is--  
- I mean right now we're talking about, you know, a  
universal after school program. When are we going to  
get to universal after school program period? I mean  
especially for elementary school because we still  
have kids who are on the waiting list who don't--  
can't even get into an after school program so--

COMMISSIONER CHONG: We're not finished  
yet with middle school yet. In fact, we have a  
request for proposal out right now for the next round



1 of programs for middle school. So we're taking it  
2 one grade at a time. So, you know, we want to make  
3 sure we do quality first. Then quantity. So I  
4 understand, you know, that there's a great need for  
5 elementary school programs. We're trying to--  
6 There's a request for proposal right now that's also  
7 out for elementary programs. So we're mindful of  
8 that, but, you know, we want to be mindful also of  
9 being meticulous, and focusing on quality because  
10 that's so important. Because the challenge when you  
11 go to the scale is maintaining quality system wide so  
12 that the young person in East New York gets the same  
13 positive experience as the young person in the Upper  
14 East Side. And so, we're mindful that sometimes  
15 you've got to take your time to do it well.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I think it's good  
18 to do that, but I think also we also want to see some  
19 projection in terms of, you know, in a great  
20 situation where we don't have to worry about money.  
21 You know, what would it take to get there so that we  
22 can be prepared? So while we're talking about good  
23 quality universal after school program for middle  
24 school, we also are not forgetting the elementary  
25 school, too.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: And we'll--when we're ready, we'll share those numbers. We don't have them yet.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Okay, thank you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much, Council Member Chin. Commissioner, in your testimony you said that another prime illustration of our linguistically and culturally competent providers are the providers that we just selected from our SONYC Non-Public School Sites Request for Proposal last week. The Mayor announced that 18 of the new SONYC middle school after school programs were located at religious schools. We added additional sites at Catholic schools and yeshivas, and funded programs for the first time in Islamic school as well as Greek Orthodox and Seventh Day Adventist schools. That's wonderful.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yeah, we were very happy.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: That's great and I commend the Mayor for that, and I commend you for that. This is a very, very good step because this is a tradition that now affects New York City to give

the same opportunities to everybody. That's great. But I have a little question for you. But that will require some more stuff, more resources, more work. What do you have in place to accommodate those new schools, that new organization? Do you have the structure in place to make sure that those new organizations and schools that receive the same support. And the same opportunities to be involved, to be culturally and linguistically competent?

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: So with the first expansion of SONYC, the Commissioner and Mayor supported an investment in my team and we were able to lower the contract per staff member ratio from 1 to 33 to 1 to 26 to be able to provide much more on-site high touch support from my team to the new sites. As I mentioned earlier, those new contractors are meeting with my team right now. We have a morning session to do individual contract development where we're going over their paperwork. Both the contract and the work scope. Instead of having emails back and forth, me sending it to you this is wrong, fix it, you bring it in. My team is meeting with you. We're reviewing it so that we can cut down the back and forth by emails, making sure that

everybody is clear on what needs to happen so that we can expedite the process. We've added staff. We just focused on licensing. As any of the CBOs in the audience knows how long it can take to get a SACC license, and for the first time all of the 271 were licensed before we started. So we've restructured to try to provide much more high touch support, and also specific support around things like quality. So I have a team that's just focused on program quality and innovation and training and things like that. So I think we're ready.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: All right, thank you, and now let me recognize Council Member Annabel Palma because she has to leave.

COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for indulging me. I have a meeting at 2:30 with HHS [sic]. Thank you, Commissioner for your testimony. I have a quick question. In regards to the organizations that receive--that are going to be receiving the contracts for the expansion of the new RFP, have any of them been on corrective action prior to receiving this contract because they had a previous contract with DYCD?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: We have to look into it, but that would be part of the what we call-- It's a very government term. It's called responsibility determination. So before a contract gets registered with the controller, we do essentially a background check on an agency to see if there are any red flags. And part of that would include whether not only were they under a corrective action plan with DYCD, but with any other city agency and whether that was addressed.

COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: And that would-- would that disqualify them?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Not necessarily. It depends on what the nature of the problem was, and if it was fixed.

COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Okay, and in regards to the new organizations, obviously they have been doing this work without a contract. And so, how-- I want to understand now with the contract will they be limited to certain slots or will they be depending on the community they're going to be working work with, how are they going to try to reach the masses?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: I mean the additional money will allow them to provide more hours of service. One of the things that the Mayor invested in, in the middle school expansion was to invest \$3,000 per young person, which allows for 540 hours of service a year. Now, we know from our experience in working with middle school youth, not every young person shows up every time. So, in fact, most programs over enroll sometimes up to 125%. So for every dollar we spend, we're getting probably \$1.25 in services because it stretches the services. Because we know the program can be open five days a week, three hours a day, and every young person shows up every single day.

COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: So, we're serving many more than the number of seats that we fund.

COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Right, and given the history on how the RFPs are written and now an organization qualifies for them in terms of, you know, each criteria receiving a percentage point to qualify you. In terms of community engagement or parent engagement, what was the percentage under this RFP to quality?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: We can get back to you with what that was, but I would like to raise the issue of parent engagement. One of the exciting things that recently happened because of our partnership with the Department of Education is that we now will have parent engagement nights 12 nights a year. And in the previous administration I think it was what, three?

CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Three.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: And so, you know, the biggest challenge particularly with parent engagement in school based programs it's a very simple--it's a very simple problem. Who's going to pay to keep the school buildings open? And we negotiated with the Department of Education, and they were very generous, and they agreed to cover the cost of nine more days. And, we know particularly in middle school that's the time when young people tend to push off from parents. Parents need to be more engaged in their young--in their child's life. And so, we are very happy that we have now 12 parent engagement nights because we think it will be a way to get parents more involved in their child's life.

COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Okay, I look forward to receiving the information or the committee receiving the information that you couldn't give us today in terms of percentages and what it involves for an organization to qualify. Thank you for the work that you've been doing, and I look forward to make sure that we play a crucial role. And that these organizations are successful throughout the City of New York. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much, Council Member Palma. Now, Council Member Laurie Cumbo.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you, Chair. Thank you so much. This is a very important hearing, and thank you both for being here today. I wanted to ask when the RFPs go out, can you talk about what is the process for getting the RFPs out to the community organizations? How do you go about that process so that as many organizations as possible are aware of the process?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: We do constant outreach. We've moved last year to an online application system called HHS Accelerator, Health and Human Service Accelerator. It was started under the



1 previous administration. It was intended to simplify  
2 the process and make it online and move to an  
3 application process as opposed to what I said  
4 earlier, this thick dissertation that we used to  
5 issue. And so, every organization that pre-  
6 qualifies, meaning they show experience in providing  
7 a service, will be included in the database, and they  
8 will automatically get an email saying there's an RFP  
9 out not only from our agency, but from any other city  
10 agency that provides funding of that service. So if  
11 ACS has a program that serves young people, they will  
12 get a notification and a link to that Request for  
13 Proposal. So we, you know, we're constantly looking  
14 to add more groups. So if you have groups that are  
15 interested in how to sign up, we'd be glad to have  
16 you connect with the people who do workshops and how  
17 to sign up. That's how I met the Muslim groups. I  
18 went and spoke, connected them. They signed up and  
19 three of the schools got funded. So, we'll be glad  
20 to work with the Council to add groups that may not  
21 be in the database.

22  
23 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I think what would  
24 be helpful because I've seen this happen in terms of  
25 a lot of the initiatives that have been rolled out by

1 the Administration, has been as members who were  
2 equipped with some level of social media or icons  
3 where we can let people know this is how you pre-  
4 qualify. So that we can then send it out to our  
5 specific groups. Because it's very difficult to have  
6 groups just kind of know that there are these  
7 applications. And they know that there are these  
8 websites because just you explaining it to me, I'm a  
9 council member. So I didn't know that that was  
10 exactly the website that they would have to go to,  
11 and that they would have to pre-qualify.

12 Let me ask a question. Do you also with  
13 DYCD, do you all partner with the Department of  
14 Cultural Affairs? Because they have a base of over  
15 800 institutions that they fund. Do those  
16 organizations get sent an email and/or an email  
17 notifier to say that there are these programs that  
18 you may potentially qualify so that you will become  
19 aware of it?

20 COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: So I did sessions  
21 in collaboration with Cultural Affairs where they  
22 summoned their members to hear myself and leadership  
23 from HHS Accelerator talk about pre-qualification,  
24 the SONYC RFPs and things like that. I remember  
25

doing one at the Brooklyn Museum for arts organizations, which is how we got Black Spectrum Theater and some others to receive contracts from DYCD for SONYC. So absolutely art is a big engagement strategy--

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing] Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: --for young people. So we very much wanted those groups, and so we've partnered with Cultural Affairs on a number of outreach sessions. And again, once those groups are pre-qualified, they're pre-qualified. So they will continue to get notices about upcoming RFPs.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Many of the 30 groups that were new to us last year that we funded in SONYC were the result of the outreach we did with the Department of Cultural Affairs. I mean the best name and the one I always remember is Divas for Social Justice.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I love that.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yes.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: They are known, and they got another one just now.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, they got three contracts as a result of our outreach.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: [off mic]  
Excellent [sic] culture, Black Spectrum--

COMMISSIONER CHONG: And so we-- I had a meeting with Commissioner Finkelpearl, and, you know, we're looking for ways we can collaborate because we know that one way to engage young people is the arts.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Certainly.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: So, we're very committed to that.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: And I just want to reiterate without beating a dead horse it is so important because like I know for the Department of Cultural Affairs their programs deadline is coming up for expense funding I think February-- I don't want to say the exact date. The 9th? The end of February? You said it ended? The 5th. Thank you. So that's coming up the 5th. So we've created a social media icon where we've put it out all over my Facebook all in our emails, all in our newsletters. That type of information empowers us very quickly so that we can say go here, go there. You can do this. And when people meet with us in meetings, it will be

very helpful for us to be able to say this is the flier or this is the email so that you can--

COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Our staff will follow up and make sure that they'll-- we can share with you a notice of how to join the Accelerator system if you aren't. I mean many groups I think join, but, you know, you never do not enough outreach. So we'll do more.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I appreciate that, and please utilize the council members--

COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: --because we have vast networks and individuals that are wanting and desiring those services. Let me ask another question in terms of are the RFPs--and you may have answered this earlier--are they available in multiple languages if an organization or a group comes in that does not speak that language, and the people providing those services is there an RFP available for them?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: I...I don't think so then we--we would have to have staff who would read the proposals in those languages. So they're all in English--

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing]  
Okay.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: --because that is  
the primary language that the City interacts with.  
But if they need assistance we can connect them with  
someone who can help them. But the applications are  
in English.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Because we're  
working in terms of like with housing. We're looking  
in terms of having housing applications done in  
multiple languages.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: So it's one of  
those things where there is a trend moving in that  
direction.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: I think there's a  
distinction between an individual receiving services  
and an organization applying for funding.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: I understand and--  
and our applications for enrollment in an after  
school program are in multiple languages.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I see.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: So if--so if a parent wants to sign up for a program it's in different languages for the parent. But for the program applying for funding, we have it in English because that's the language the staff speaks and we can evaluate the proposal.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Well, any of the programs that are done for these after school programs are they--are they conducted sometimes ever often in other languages?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: It will vary from site to site depending on the need. So we'll allow that kind of flexibility. I think I mentioned in my testimony there was a bilingual program up in the Bronx. Some languages-- You know, we found that the best practice is hiring staff from the neighborhood--

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: --who speak the language of that community, and so it will be a mixture of services. Some will be conducted from one language. Some will be bilingual. I think it will depend site-by-site.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay. What is the panel review process? How is it comprised? How do

you review the-- When you send out an RFP and proposals come back, how are they reviewed? Each?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Each competition is assigned to a panel of three staff readers, and they read independently, make their own judgments. And then depending on the score variance. If there's a huge score variance, say a 20-point score variance, then the Agency Chief Contracting Officer or the ACCO, as we call that person, convenes committees to reconcile the score differences. So, to the extent some people need to bring their scores up. Some need to bring their scores down, and to come up with-- And then once that is done, in each competition the proposals are ranked from the top to the bottom. And then that's how the selection is done.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Have you ever considered or thought about bringing in peer readers in terms of getting your own colleagues from the field that could potentially read those proposals as well to make determinations?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: The big issue is conflict of interest. That often times we can't use providers because they're competing for the same



funding. So we want to avoid any kind of conflict of interest.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: But we have had the Department of Education readers again because they are big--they are involved with a lot of our programs. Well, with the NDA RFP, we've had

COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Community.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: Community--

COMMISSIONER CHONG: --residents.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: As part of that.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Right.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: As part of readers. Yeah.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] But--

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: So a lot of maneuvering around conflict, but yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: The reason why I asked that because-- And I'm making a lot of references or comparisons here. I served on many panels for the Department of Cultural Affairs, and through that process as a Not-For-Profit Director at that time, I learned a great deal about how to create a better proposal from eating--reading other

1 proposals and hearing the feedback that others gave  
2 to those proposals. And it also creates a level of I  
3 guess openness or in some ways a fairness or a  
4 transparency in the fact that you know that there's a  
5 lot of efforts being made to make sure that the  
6 panels are diverse. And that they're reflective of  
7 the community, and that the community's interests are  
8 upheld. And just one final question, do you have in  
9 the agency as far as awarding RFP-- Excuse me,  
10 awarding contracts to those that participated in the  
11 RFP? Have MWBE requirements that you like to see  
12 that there are a certain amount of minority and  
13 women-owned CBOs that have actually--

14  
15 COMMISSIONER CHONG: I'm not sure. We  
16 can check with our ACCO. I'm not sure that it  
17 applies to not-for-profit--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Uh-huh.

19 COMMISSIONER CHONG: --organizations. We  
20 can look into that, because I think that that it  
21 applies more to procurement--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing] Uh-  
23 huh.

24 COMMISSIONER CHONG: --by the city, by  
25 city agencies, but with Human Service contracts I

think there might be some different interpretation.

But I don't know specifically. So we can get back to you on that.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I think that's very interesting because when I was a not-for-profit leader, we couldn't qualify to necessarily become MWBEs in the same way that for-profit entities. But then I found that because of that, there was no way to track whether community based organizations were getting contracts as women, as minorities--

COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: --and that sort of thing. And the last one, I promise. As far as the types of services that are provided, what are the types of services that are provided in these after school programs? And is there any thought about let's say in Central Brooklyn noticing that there are tons of basketball programs, but maybe not tons of STEM Programs. Or, how do you create a balance to make sure that the types of services are balanced so that young people are experiencing all types of services?

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: So to that end we have some minimum requirements. To your point about STEM--

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing] Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: --all of our programs, whether elementary or middle have to offer a minimum of two hours or STEM or literacy to all participants. And I emphasize that because beyond them not having any of it, what I used to see a lot was that there was a small cadre of young people who would participate, but you wouldn't see girls--

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: --and you wouldn't see kids of color.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Right.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: So we made it such that all the kids who are in our program have to have STEM or literacy. They have to have physical activity or something that they design. It could be dance. It could be basketball. One of my favorites is fencing.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Right.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: We have programs that offer fencing. In elementary school they must offer homework help, and design and consultation with the principal and conversation with parents. Because some parents want all the homework done no matter how long it takes. Some principals only want the 45 minutes. So you have to really navigate. You know as a parent I want it all done, but--

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: So you could have--  
- I 'm sorry. So you could have a dance program, and in that dance program you all are going to manage to incorporate STEM--

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: [interposing]  
They have to.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: --into that particular area?

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: They have to incorporate STEM or literacy in all of the programs even if you're a dance program or a theater. Theater is very easy. I mean incorporating literacy, right?

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Right.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: You're looking at plays and monologues and all of those kinds of

things. And then the last thing I'll say is for the middle school they also have to do leadership development so civic engagement. Things like that within the school or the community.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Well, how do you make sure that a dance teacher is also equipped to teach STEM?

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: The dance teacher may not be teaching STEM--

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing] I see.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: --right. So it might be a specialist. It could be a teacher from the day school. We have a relationship with the New York Academy of Science where we place graduate students in post-op who are candidates in our programs. We referenced subcontracting so that they may be subcontracting with the Million Oyster Program, for example. So when we do work scope development, we look at how are they reaching those milestones that we set through what staffing, through what subcontracts. Things like that. But we do set minimum requirements to ensure that there's a balanced approach to after school, to your point.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you very much. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much, Council Member Cumbo. We have been joined by Council Member David Greenfield. But I'm going to call up Council Member Mealy, but before I call Council Member Mealy, I just have one question.

Commissioner, you have been talking about a panel review process to read the RFP. But could you tell us, you know, of the members of the panel that have been chosen, what is that? You know are they--

COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing]  
They're staff of the agency, and sometimes staff of other agencies such as the Department of Employment, and this is required by the Mayor's Office of Contract Services that you have to have at least a minimum of three readers. In some request for proposals we're allowed to bring in community residents like the Neighborhood Development Era competition, and people who are members of the Neighborhood Advisory Board can apply to be readers. We usually keep people to a very tight timeline, and so we try to offer different incentives like paid overtime in order to get things read. Because people

2 are doing this on top of their regular jobs. But we  
3 are required by the Mayor's Office of Contract  
4 Services to have at least three readers.

5 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay, but, you know,  
6 how do you ensure that there's no conflict of  
7 interest with those members that don't belong to any  
8 other organization--

9 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] That--

10 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --empirically? That  
11 they don't have any interest in--

12 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] That  
13 is part of--

14 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --the tings that--

15 COMMISSIONER CHONG: --what they have to  
16 sign an agreement that there is no conflict of  
17 interest. If we--if one becomes aware, they're  
18 removed as a reader. In my tenure at DYCD that's  
19 never been a problem.

20 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Is there any  
21 consequences also if there is an organization they  
22 are linked to?

23 COMMISSIONER CHONG: No, because there  
24 wasn't--

25 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: No.



COMMISSIONER CHONG: You know-- They,  
you know--

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: [interposing]  
They are signed to an agreement.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yeah, yeah, but they  
are-- The reader is removed and then someone else  
will be reading that contract--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] All  
right.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: --or that proposal.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.  
Council Member Darlene Mealy, please.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Thank you,  
Commissioner, and thank you both for being here. I  
just have a few questions. After my CBOs have  
problems, how fast have your turnover for the CBOs to  
get their funding after they get the contract?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: A lot depends on--

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing] Has  
that changed?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Well, are you  
talking about discretionary contract?

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Yes.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: I mean I think a lot depends on the submissions of paperwork that's required by the Mayor's Office of Contract Services. Unfortunately, we can't treat a discretionary contract differently than a regular contract. It's the same documents that the controller requires. So We work closely with groups. If they have problems, I've designated a person on my staff, Andrew Miller, to troubleshoot. Sometimes the problem might be with the agency not submitting a document. Sometimes it might be something at DYCD. So, I've made this a priority, assigned Andrew Miller who is the person the Council can contact if there is a particular program. And I would be glad to share his contact information with you afterwards. He's gotten calls from the Council and he's been able to expedite where there's a problem. And sometimes it's something that the agency hasn't provided. So, we'll work with you on trying to move it as quickly as possible.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing] But the--

COMMISSIONER CHONG: But the documents that are required unfortunately are beyond my control.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: I thank you. With the Mayor now announcing, and I want to commend him on this, with all the outside churches who get these--this new contract. Could you tell me-- You said it's only 18 of them. Could you break it down. How many in each district?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Oh, we can give you that information.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay, because I don't see Christian churches on this list just as well.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: It might be-- It might be they didn't apply. I mean we did as much outreach to--

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing] What kind of outreach? That's another thing. What kind of outreach? Did you use the local Amsterdam News or--?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Well, we welcome--

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Because every church is not literate--literate with email or they do not have staff--

COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: --or cannot afford a staff member to look at all the church emails. So it's very important that we just can't look at all the churches as they got email.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: We'd be glad to get any suggestions from you on how to do more outreach, but, you know, we can-- We make awards based on the funding available and who applies. So we talk about goodwill--

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing] But if they do not-- I just found out about the--

COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Come on? [sic]

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: --HH Accelerator program. So now I have to tell my churches now. So, if I didn't really know of it that well, how can I, how can they just start doing--

COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Well, well--

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: --research? They have limited resources just as well, and it is our job to make sure that everyone get an opportunity.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Absolutely. We'll work with you on that.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: And Accelerator will do--come anywhere. So if you have a convening, they're willing to do sessions. They've done that all over the city. So, we're happy to work with them to schedule something.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Yes, I have a lot of churches. So I would love to be there, and I-- Do you do any surprise visits because I know I had did-- How do you deal with CASA? At CASA we support an outside entity with CASA Grant and then they apply--

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Cultural After School Adventures?

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: We don't fund those. That's the Department of Cultural Affairs. So if you have a specific concern about a CASA program, you should probably let the Commission of Cultural Affairs know, but we can--

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing] I'm saying will a CASA-- If a church and you're saying these churches Islamic, Orthodox organizations can apply and has gotten these 18 grants, right?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: So they cannot get a CASA Grant also?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: No, I didn't say that?

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: So, you didn't say that?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Cultural After School Adventures is a program that is funded by the Department of Cultural Affairs. So I have no role in that process for awarding contracts. So you can speak to the Department of Cultural Affairs. Often time agencies that we support have funding from multiple city agencies.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: [interposing]  
Right. That's right.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: So I never said a program cannot get CASA funding.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay. I guess you understand what I'm saying. I will talk to you afterwards in regards to my churches--

COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: --because they definitely need-- And your advertisement has to get a little more broader than just emailing or telling

people to go to a website. Because one thing I know some churches are not on the website. So, I hope we really sit down and talk about that.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much, Council Member Darlene Mealy. Commissioner, let's get back in regard to the RFP. So, after reviewing the RFP, how does the organization get notified if they are qualified or if they are not qualified. And when you contact them do you tell them the reason why they are not qualified? What is the weakness?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] I--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Is there any assistance to them to correct, you know, the situation for them to be qualified for the next time?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Every agency that's not selected in a competition has the right to what's called a debrief. And so, they can contact our Agency Chief Contracting Officer, and schedule a debrief of their proposal, and they look at-- They will look at the evaluation form. They can see where they did well, and where they didn't do well.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Is there any situation where the organization they don't agree with you. They say no they don't believe that what you're saying is correct, and they want to go further. And they say no that was not correct, and they believe they are entitled? You know, they believe they are qualified for it. Is there any situation like that? And how do you resolve that, if there are any?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: I believe-- In my time in my tenure as Commissioner this has not happened, but the rules allow for a group to appeal a decision, and it's-- We can give you the details of that appeal process, but it-- they can appeal to me and then I think they can appeal to another level to reconsider a decision. But yes, there is an appeal process.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay, but it seems that in practice-- in practice if an organization is not being part of the system it's going to be very difficult for them to get into it. It seems that. I don't know. Maybe I'm wrong. An organization that have a track record of doing a good job or being qualified for something, it seems they have more



chances to be qualified versus the organizations that are applying for the first time.

COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] That might have--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Is that--?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: That might, might have been the case in the past, but with the simplified application process, the fact that 30 of the groups that we funded last year were brand new. In this last go-around the ones that we just announced last week we fund many, many programs that we had never funded. I think we're changing that situation.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay. Thank you very much, and thank you for all your effort to, you know, provide the same opportunities to everybody. In your testimony, Commissioner, you said it is essential to our successful programs of partnership with community-based providers. And you said that our funding the modern agencies that community-based organizations, and their staff are best equipped to meet the cultural and language needs of student body in the community. When you say that they are best

equipped, what do you mean by that? Can you give us more detail about it?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: Because these programs are locally based in a specific school, in a specific neighborhood that the people who are operating the program in that school in that neighborhood who live there day in and day out, probably have a better understanding what the needs of that community are. When we do our site visits, we look at, as we said, whether it's engaging young parents--young people. Whether it is engaging parents. So, while we defer to their expertise, we don't necessarily assume it always happens. And that's why we do site visits both scheduled and unscheduled, and that's why we evaluate programs. Because even though people may have a good grasp of the needs of a community, a lot depends on how they execute it.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay. We know that it is very necessary. It is necessary for an after school program to have bi-language competent. It is very important I would believe. But, how do you determine which languages should be part--should be

used in a particular after school program, in a particular community board [sic] of a community?

COMMISSIONER CHONG: I think it will vary from neighborhood to neighborhood, from school to school because the city is so diverse. So earlier I mentioned how in East New York/Brooklyn, which is the neighborhood I grew up in the 1960s, it's the-- It's the home to the largest Bangladeshi community in the world outside of Bangladesh. So I think we have to be mindful that the days when we had one ethnicity in one neighborhood have long gone. There is a growing Chinese population in East Harlem. There's a growing African population in different parts of the city. So I think we have to give programs on a school-by-school basis the kind of flexibility to adapt to the needs of a given school, and a given part of the community. Because communities are so diverse now that it would be impossible to come up with one size fits all.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: All right, thank you, Commissioner. I think that's all for you--

COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --today. And one  
3 more time, thank you very much--

4 COMMISSIONER CHONG: [interposing] Thank  
5 you very much.

6 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --for the education  
7 and thank you very much Deputy Commissioner.

8 COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you.

10 [pause, background comments]

11 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Now, we are going to  
12 call the second panel. Hector Batista from Big  
13 Brothers and Big Sisters New York.

14 [pause, background comments]

15 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Commissioner, could  
16 I ask you one question, is there anybody from the  
17 organization who is going to remain in the hearing?

18 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [off mic] Yes, I'll  
19 be here. [sic]

20 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay. Thank you  
21 much. Yelena Baranovskaya sp?] I believe. I'm sorry  
22 if I mispronounced it. From Queens Community Houses.  
23 Thank you. Cedra Sebastien from the The Brotherhood  
24 Sister Sol.

25 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Keep it down, please.

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Are you ready?

FEMALE SPEAKER: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Could you please raise your hands? And swear that you will say the truth and all the truth? Will you.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much. Please state your name, please before we start.

HECTOR BATISTA: Okay. Okay, my name is-

-

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Do you want to sit down, please? Thank you.

[pause, background comments]

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: You can start.

HECTOR BATISTA: Thank you. My name is Hector Batista and I'm the Chief Executive Officer of Big Brothers Big Sisters of NYC. We are proud to be the founding agency of the nation's mentoring movement. This year we celebrate our 105th anniversary, and throughout the history of Fifth Committed to helping children achieve success in life. Each year we serve over 4,000 youth through mentoring and other youth development programs. A

large majority are African-Americans, Latinos with a growing Asian population. Most of these children live below the poverty line, and come from single parent households. Many are also facing additional challenges. They live in foster care home. They have been incarcerated--they have parents who have been incarcerated. They have been in trouble with the law; they're recent immigrants into this country. We have many programs to support their needs like our SONYC program. And today, I will focus on one program that's been around for about 20 years, which is our Workplace Mentoring Program. In this program students from public schools, we call them Littles are brought to the partnering companies at the school to be mentored by their employees, which we call Bigs. The program introduces the Littles to the world of work. Whenever possible, partnering companies mirror the school areas of interest. For example, one of the schools we work with is the School of Business of Sports High School, which is matched with our partnership with the National Football League. This gives the Littles the opportunity to work with experts in that field of their professional interests. Students are mapped

out a plan for their future, and work with their Bigs to develop the tools needed to succeed in the workplace. The curriculum centers on four critical needs: Communication, professionalism, teamwork, and problem solving. Activities are facilitated by a master level social worker who is trained in youth-centering approaches. The topics are relevant to the Littles as chosen to engage them in developing their critical skills. Each Little also collaborates with them to create three smart goals for themselves. Additionally, at the beginning of each program year, the Littles collaborate by creating rules of engagement, which outlines what the program is expected from them. And what they can they expect from the program. Often Bigs also visit the schools so they can get a hint of what our Littles-- And so the Littles can introduce them to their own environment, and the mentors can spend time with them. As you can see, we employ our Littles in the goal setting process to give them a sense of ownership and value. I'm proud to say that research has constantly shown that this model of mentors is making a tremendous impact on their lives. In fact, last year alone 98% of our Littles were promoted to

the next grade. 97% of seniors graduated from high school. Eighty-six percent of them went on to college, and many of them avoided the risky behaviors.

I think what is shown in this program is how effective it could be giving these young people the opportunity to have sort of that ah-ha moment that they need in order for them to have-- Have someone who comes from a similar background to give them an opportunity to be able to learn about different areas of interest. I thank the Council for giving me the opportunity to present today, and I look forward to our continued partnership. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much, Mr. Batista.

YELENA BARANOVSKAYA: My name is Yelena Baranovskaya, and I'm the Multi-Site Director of the Queens Community House. Queens Community House is a multi-site, multi-service settlement house that serves the diverse population of Queens. Our Queens Community House Comprehensive Youth Program serves 5,000 youths ages 5 to 24 annually at 18 schools and community centers providing them with a multitude of



various comprehensive programs. Across QCH's programs, 80% of participants are immigrants or children of immigrants. I Direct the Queens Community House After School Program at P.S. 86 in the Queens-Jamaica area for children ages 6 to 12. We have been a continuous community partner with the school for more than 20 years. P.S. 86 is in a high need community, and has a student population of over 950 students where more than half of the student population is South Asian. Nearly 30% or Hispanic and 12% Black. Nearly 40% of the students are English language learners, and I would like to share the best practices that we use to run an effective program within a cultural diverse community. Half of the participants in our after school program this year come from Latin-American countries like Ecuador and Salvador, Peru, Guatemala, and Colombia. Many others arrive from Pakistan, Bangladesh and several south and western countries of Africa. The majority of these families are recent immigrants, and experience many stresses related to their adjustment to new life. Struggles with lack of employment, poor housing conditions, and deprivation of the support from their extended families. All of which increased

their vulnerability, and produces a negative effect on children's psychological wellbeing and overall development. What we do in our after school program to work effectively with the culturally, linguistically, racially, and ethnically diverse population is the following:

We educate staff about the various cultural norms, habits, and effective communication styles that help establish better partnerships with parents and families. Staff receive formalized training on the cultural differences, and how to build a strong communication with families and show respect to those cultural differences. We ensure that there are always staff members available towards cultural--I'm sorry--available to translate during parent orientation and registration and meetings with participant's parents. For example, we have a staff person to represent each of our major language groups: Spanish, Bengali, and Creole, at registration and enrollment so that things are clear from the beginning, the expectations and policies of the after school program. And what to do if they have questions or issues of concern related to their children's special needs. Over and above all

services, we provide school administration with collaboration and partnership to reach out to families with language barriers.

Our after school program staff often assist school office in their telephone conversations providing translation to non-English speaking parents or during their verbal communications with families during school parent-teacher conference days, or other special events for families. We provide families with referrals and resource information, which might be related to a multitude of issues of concern to them: Health clinics, food pantries, affordable housing, cultural and educational places to benefit from. For example, staff provided payments for a child who has recently arrived to the USA from Bangladesh. As well as local food pantry centers in both languages, English and Bengali to assist financial struggling families to improve their nutrition, and ultimately to improve the child's wellbeing.

We organize cultural celebrations to allow parents, participants, and staff to increase people's awareness of the cultural diversity of the community they live in. For example, in December all

the school program staff organized an end-of-the year cultural celebration for families and children during which they enjoyed potluck dinner, and a singing show. Parents were happy to share their favorite recipes of multi-cultural dishes with the children, and it became a very good experience for our youth.

We serve as informal advocates and liaisons between families and the schools when parents feel lost or hesitant to address issues of concern related to their children's performance at school. For example, after school programs staff serve a liaison between a Spanish-speaking parent whose child showed learning and behavioral difficulties during both regular school and after school programs. And we have helped the parent to build up a bridge of communication with the school guidance counselor and administration. As a result of these efforts, the parent and the child were able to start attending weekly sessions with a professional counselor at a local mental health clinic. And currently there are obvious symptoms of improvement in this child's performance both in school and the after school program.

The culturally sensitive approach helps the program not only establishing effective communication and sound partnership with parents and families, but it contributes towards a gradual and smooth integration of children with special needs into our after school program and the school as a whole. Thank you for your attention.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.

CIDRA SEBASTIEN: Good afternoon. My name is Cidra Sebastien.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Do you have a written testimony?

CIDRA SEBASTIEN: I am reading something, yes.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay.

CIDRA SEBASTIEN: You didn't get a copy? Let me see here. [pause background comments] Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much. Thank you.

CIDRA SEBASTIEN: Thank you. So again, my name is Cidra Sebastien. I'm the Associate Executive Director at The Brotherhood Sister Sol. Founded in 1995, The Brotherhood Sister Sol provides

comprehensive holistic and long-term services for young people ranging in age from 8 to 22. Our theory of change is to provide multiple layered support, guidance, education, and love to our membership to teach them to have self-discipline, and to form order in their lives. And to provide opportunities and access so that they can develop agency. We have achieved this through facilitating programs and activities that focus on our members' culture and identity. Bro/Sis is an evidence-based program that has documented outcomes that surpass those of the city. Harlem's teen pregnancy rate is 15% and for our youth members it's at 2%. Our educational achievement members also surpass those of the city. Eighty-eight percent of our alumni have graduated from high school and 94 graduated from high school or received an equivalency diploma. Ninety-five percent of our alumni work full-time or are enrolled college or doing both. And after 20 years no member or alumni is currently incarcerated, and less than one percent is on parole.

Our Rites of Passage program is a four to six-year long process. Members learn from culturally relevant curriculum to develop critical thinking, and

global awareness skills through leadership development, drug awareness, conflict resolution, community service and other activities. Each Rites of Passage Program develops a mission statement and collective define what it means to be a sister, a brother, a woman, a man, and a leader. Members also create personal testimonies to how they plan to live their lives. The program is structured around ten curriculum focus issues incorporating topics such as Pan-African and Latino history and culture, sexism and misogyny, political education and social justice. We also have a study abroad component that brings young people to countries such as Ghana, Brazil, Haiti, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico to name a few. And I urge council members to come and visit our space and learn more about our programs.

In 2014, we began a partnership with the DOE and expanded Bro/Sis initiatives to bring elements of our model to three new schools, three epic schools. One is in Brooklyn and two are in Queens. The intensive professional development trainers for our educators we conduct focuses on our culturally relevant curriculum as well as how to implement Rites of Passage programs. And in order to

expand the focus of culturally relevant after school programming, we are recommending changes in how DYCD after school RFP process engages smaller culturally relevant programs.

The RFP system currently advantages large non-profits while not giving emphasis to smaller innovative CBOs that might not match the minimum threshold requirements, but can equally or far better serve their constituents. Problems with the RFP system currently include scale and numbers of clients served; a cumbersome and tedious application process; complicated reporting systems; and untenable delays of actual grant funds for smaller CBOs, who simply cannot carry over waiting for contract monies to come in.

And we are recommending that any new DYCD RFPs have a portion of new or re-bid funding carved out for a separate competitive process for small non-profits. That the City define the size of the acceptable applicants as non-profits that receive less than half a million or less than a million dollars of funding from the City. that the RFP could perhaps be streamlined for this category so that requirements regarding scale or past experience is



more flexible, and that funding for this pool should be fast forwarded and guaranteed within a 90-day timeframe of contract signing. So that CBOs that compete for grant dollars do not have to rely on other funding sources to start the process. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much, Ms. Sebastien. Are there any questions? Okay. Thank you very much to all three of you for your efforts to meet the needs of our children. Thank you very much. Ms. Sebastien, let me ask you one question. Could you please tell the different programs that your organization is providing to the young people? We know that you are very successful. You are providing wonderful programs, but we don't know about them in detail. What are the programs that you are providing to the young people? Could you talk about that, please?

CIDRA SEBASTIEN: So, I'll talk about a little bit more. Our Rites of Passage Program is one I spoke of already where we spend four to six years with the same cohort of young people. So either at the start of middle school until they graduate from high school or from 9th and 12th grade. And we work

in partnership with their schools or their base at our space in West Harlem. And we facilitate programming over this four to six years based on a curriculum that we also do training for educators on. It's called Brother Sister Leader, the official curriculum of The Brotherhood Sister Sol. And it takes young people through this process to create a bond with a group of young people who are they are traveling with across this process as they're talking about concepts around manhood and womanhood and leadership. And then, all of our other programs connect to these ten curriculum focused issues. So with our 8 to 12-year-olds in our elementary school program they're coming for five to six days a week, Monday through Friday or Monday through Saturday for homework help, for nutrition classes. And then some physical activity component. It might be Capoeira, which is a Afro-Brazilian dance in martial arts. It might be West African drumming. It could be hip-hop dance class. But they're having an opportunity to go deeper and learn more about their culture. And their identify as young people of color who live in the city who have connections to places in the US, but also in the Caribbean, Africa and Latin America. We

1 have a liberation program for youth organizations who  
2 are our community activists and organizers who are  
3 building skills as leaders. But who are also  
4 learning about the history of youth leadership in  
5 this country and also parts of the world to create  
6 social justice change. Our International Study  
7 Program is an eight-month long program that takes  
8 young people to different countries throughout South  
9 America, the Caribbean, and Africa for one month over  
10 the summer to learn more about those countries. And  
11 then, we also have an environmental program that  
12 provides an opportunity for young people to learn  
13 about food justice, and also take care of the  
14 community garden that's adjacent to our space in West  
15 Harlem.

17 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.  
18 You mentioned many, many programs. [laughs] Too  
19 many more to name them, you know, of what I was  
20 expecting. But you mentioned on of them, you know,  
21 martial arts. [laughs] But I'm telling you this one  
22 is very important. The reason why I'm saying that is  
23 because what is lacking in our young people some of  
24 the time is self-esteem, so discipline. And I am  
25 sure--and I am convinced that martial arts can be a

1 helper with self-esteem. Please, don't, you know,  
2 alleviate this program. [laughs]

4 CIDRA SEBASTIEN: [off mic] We won't.

5 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So, in your  
6 testimony you said that in Harlem 20% of our youth  
7 from 18 to 25 are working full-time or in college,  
8 whereas 95% of BSS youth are working full-time or  
9 enrolled in college. And also you said after 20  
10 years no member of BHSS is incarcerated and less than  
11 one percent are on probation. How do you know all  
12 those things? Is there any follow up? What do you  
13 use? How do you get to those numbers?

14 CIDRA SEBASTIEN: So we track our  
15 members' results. So we don't just look at things as  
16 far as academically, but also things that speak to  
17 their social status and abilities. So from the  
18 inception of the organization, we've been keeping  
19 records to track where our young people are at. Once  
20 a year for each program they do an evaluation of the  
21 program, and when we have a new young person who  
22 comes in, they complete an intake form so that we can  
23 see where they're at. And at the end of the  
24 programming year, they complete a similar form to see  
25 their progress. So those are things that we track.

We think very highly of evaluation that it's important. That it helps us to tell a story that is listed here, but also helps us to see where's there is progress and where there is also room for us to grow.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much. Council Member Cumbo, please.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you. Everything here is very political. And so, when Council Member Eugene talks very much about martial art, ha-ha.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Don't go there, please, right. [laughs]

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [laughs] I think it's because he's a six-time--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] I know you know the culture, right?

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: --world champion black belt expert or something to that nature. I don't know the degrees of Black Beltness, but he certainly has that, and mine is the arts so it just really goes around. [sic]

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I know. I know you are going to get there anyway.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Between martial arts and the visual arts, you're going to see some real changes of the Youth Services Committee. One of the things that I wanted to ask so all three of you currently at this time receive funding through DYCD?:

CIDRA SEBASTIEN: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: You do?

CIDRA SEBASTIEN: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: And let me ask you, what has-- Would you all consider yourselves small, midsize or large-scale organizations?

HECTOR BATISTA: [off mic] Well, I think I'm...I'd consider us probably a large agency or something approaching it. [sic]

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay.

YELENA BARANOVSKAYA: I also represent a--a very large agency that is providing services to many, many centers in--across the Queens area.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay.

YELENA BARANOVSKAYA: To those areas. So we have to--

HECTOR BATISTA: [off mic] [interposing]  
The only thing that I would add is that for--

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing] Can you speak into the microphone?

HECTOR BATISTA: Oh, sure. The only thing that I would add is that for the amount of children that we service, our portion of city funding is very limited. Most of our funding comes from the private sector in terms of foundations and special events. And then we get a very small percentage of that funding. And we believe that if we get a lot more funding from the city obviously we could service more kids, you know. But the numbers are sort of off the charts in terms of kids that we're trying to target. I mean there are about 250,000 children that live below the poverty rate and encompassing the parent house, and that's the population that we're targeting so--

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: And--

CIDRA SEBASTIEN: [interposing] We would be considered small to medium.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: You would be considered small to medium. Okay. I guess what I-- what I wanted to focus on was that you made a lot of recommendations as it pertains to small and midsized organizations. I just wanted to focus on that. So

in working with DYCD once you're awarded a contract, how long after that do you actually receive the resources?

CIDRA SEBASTIEN: It depends and in the past sometimes it could be before that 90-day period.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Oh, it can be before the 90-days.

CIDRA SEBASTIEN: I'm sorry. Longer than the 90-day period. So you can be waiting more than those 90 days at time to receive monies after you've actually signed the contract.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: How long after has it been at times?

CIDRA SEBASTIEN: I would need to go back to look at our records to see what's the longest we've waited. But sometimes it is more than 90 days.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: And what would you do in the meantime in that lag time?

CIDRA SEBASTIEN: At times it means waiting to begin programming so that we can hire staff if it is a program that requires us hiring additional staff, which might be the case for the summer program. Or, it might mean not being able to do the program to the fullest capacity that we've



envisioned. Or, it could mean cutting things in place of- So, that we can wait out for the funding.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Mr. Batista.

HECTOR BATISTA: Yeah, for us it's really we've waited as much as 60 days after the 90 days to get our funding. So in some ways we actually self-fund--

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing]  
Okay.

HECTOR BATISTA: --in order for--  
Because we can't--we can't wait for that funding. Our program starts at the school year. And especially when it comes to the Workers Mentoring Program. We lock in the business that are going to be part of the program, and we recruit the kids. So we have to be able to provide the program. And in most cases or even an agency like ours, really we have, you know-- We have our act together. We kind of know what we're doing and we're sort of-- The system could be very problematic. Sometimes you don't even know where you're stuck at, and why you're stuck there. Then once it goes through the City, you've got the Controller's Office. And then, what happens in some cases is because they have this 30-day period, they

1 actually wait 30 days. In some cases you don't  
2 understand why because you've done everything you  
3 need to do. So the process could be streamlined a  
4 little bit more especially for agencies that don't  
5 have the resources. I mean that could be very  
6 problematic in terms of cash flow.

7  
8 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Are there-- I  
9 guess going back again to DCA, are there multi-year  
10 contracts so that you're not having to go through the  
11 application process or the process every year? Or,  
12 are there opportunities for you to get a grant or  
13 contract for three years or more?

14 HECTOR BATISTA: Let me-- For us, it's  
15 two--twofold.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing] Uh-  
17 huh.

18 HECTOR BATISTA: We get money from the  
19 City Council.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing]  
21 Right.

22 HECTOR BATISTA: So every year we have to  
23 go in front of the City Council and meet with you.  
24 Like I'm meeting with you next week.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [laughs]

HECTOR BATISTA: Meet with the council members and talk about our program, and make the pitch. And so, that's every year we have to do a new contract. We got a-- We recently go an after school program. The SONYC Program. That's a multi-year program.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing] I see.

HECTOR BATISTA: So that one is a little bit different. Once you get your contract registered, then it's just a matter of you submitting the documentation. But for us, really the problem is every year we started from beginning again. It's like we didn't have a contract, and we've submitted all the paperwork and getting everything in place. That's kind of how it works for us.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Uh-huh.

YELENA BARANOVSKAYA: Since I'm been mostly talking about the after school programs that the Queens Community House has been running at P.S. 86 this is our last year of being there under the DYDC contract. So we are kind of anxiously awaiting for the review of a contract for next year. The are also anxious. In our recent DYCD visit when we met

1 with the Principal of P.S. 86, she was anxiously  
2 presenting her questions whether the program is going  
3 to continue running at this very needy school.  
4 Especially that--considering that we have such a  
5 large immigration population that is serviced by the  
6 program. And we hope that-- We were told that there  
7 is a strong prospective on being renewed, and like,  
8 you know, we remain very positive and optimistic in  
9 this direction because we've been working with DYCD.  
10 The P.S. 86 I believe it's been our eighth year on  
11 the DYCD Funding Programs, you know.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Have you found the  
14 ability to apply for funding through the new RPF  
15 process, which the Commissioner testified is simpler?  
16 It's not as much information requested? Have you  
17 found that be--

18 HECTOR BATISTA: [interposing] Let me  
19 start with first saying it's-- I mean I think--I  
20 think they tried to streamline it, but still the  
21 amount of paperwork that is needed to apply for the  
22 grant. Again, we're an agency that it has-- You  
23 know, we have a staff that's sort of focused on these  
24 things. It's a lot of paperwork and a lot

documentation that--that you have to submit. I mean we understand it's City funding.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Uh-huh.

HECTOR BATISTA: You know, we understand the whole process, but it could be streamlined a little bit more.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing]

Okay.

HECTOR BATISTA: And I think it--it could be a way that if you're a repeated agency--

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing] Uh-huh.

HECTOR BATISTA: --there should be a way that you--there are certain things that you don't have to resubmit again. I mean here at least when it comes to City Council funding--

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing] Uh-huh.

HECTOR BATISTA: --like if you gave me \$5,000--

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing]

Right.

HECTOR BATISTA: --it's treated like I have to submit the same amount of paperwork if you gave me a \$500,000 contract. I mean there's no--

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing] I see.

HECTOR BATISTA: --there's no difference, right. So if there could be some way to-- if they're getting those constant, and you're an agency that's in good standing with the Attorney General's Office, and the State, blah, blah, blah. You've got all those things in place, then you shouldn't have to submit all the level of paperwork that we have to submit. So that's I think where it becomes challenging.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Uh-huh. I think my question comes up, and maybe this will be more for the Administration to discuss, but based off of your testimony. So within the RFP process and competing, there are no categories from what I understood from your testimony of where smaller midsized groups compete for resources, medium to large and large. It's all one category where everyone all competes for the same level of funding through that process.

CIDRA SEBASTIEN: That's my understand and I think the recommendations we noticed a difference with the Accelerator to what it looked like before.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Uh-huh.

CIDRA SEBASTIEN: But I think that the recommendations show that there's still space for there to be improvement.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay. All right. Those are all the questions that I have. Thank you. Council Member, do you have any additional questions?

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Yes. Thank you very much Council Member Cumbo. Thank you so much. Mr. Batista, you stated in your testimony that the youth we serve are as diverse as the city we live in. But you mentioned also that a majority are African-American and Latino, and a growing--a growing Asian population. Not only three communities, three initiatives. The city is big and, you know, huge. Could you tell us about the other group that you are serving.

HECTOR BATISTA: Yeah, I mean we service--we service the big Indian--the Indian community. We

serve--we have a lot of kids that come in from Haiti,  
a big Haitian community we serve and--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Any  
Creole speaking person on your staff?

HECTOR BATISTA: That we have on staff?

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Any Creole speaking  
person.

HECTOR BATISTA: Danielle, do we?

DANIELLE: [off mic] Yes, French.

HECTOR BATISTA: We have French, yes.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: French?

HECTOR BATISTA: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So I would advise  
that, you know, it would be good also to have a  
Creole speaking because with the South Asian people  
most of them, you know, don't-- they are not fluent  
in French. You know, the basic language really is  
Creole.

HECTOR BATISTA: [interposing] Sure. We  
have 700 schools, so--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: But what I'm saying  
for the Haitian people, you know, it's true also for  
the--all of the ethnic groups. It is very important  
if you can, if you can afford it to have somebody who



can speak the language of the people that you are serving.

HECTOR BATISTA: Let me just explain one thing. Our program, the model to our program is we have a master level social worker that works with the match. It is challenging for us as an organization to find multi-speaking people that actually are-- Have a master level in social work. We are advertising in all kinds of papers. It's very challenging. But we actually have, for the most part, covered a lot of the areas. But, you know, your point is well taken, and it's something that we will continue to focus on. But I will tell you we're in 700 schools. We have a lot of different ethnicity groups that we service, and it would be a little challenging for us to have all the languages--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Of course.

HECTOR BATISTA: --but we've got to do what we can.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: All right. So-- I'm sorry.

YELENA BARANOVSKAYA: I just wanted to add that again since I'm representing mostly the

1 after school program at P.S. 86, in my staff among  
2 young people we have actually all of the staff it is  
3 bilingual people. Some attorneys will. Myself I  
4 speak three or more foreign languages, and I believe  
5 that's extremely, extremely important. Like, you  
6 know, we always even provide our regular school  
7 administration with support in regards to translating  
8 in various languages. Including Arabic that, you  
9 know, we started seeing appearing for the last two  
10 years among the parents, you know. So, we really put  
11 a big emphasis on linguistic competence among the  
12 staff, and on their ability to reflect and know very  
13 well the communities that they come from. We try to  
14 also to develop in our participants and our students  
15 a sense of self-pride. And actually enjoyment of  
16 getting to know various cultures across the city that  
17 they come across. And that they like have  
18 celebrations together that they can learn more  
19 involved. And they're really making--or feel the  
20 beauty of the world, and the beauty of the New York  
21 City as a melting pot.

23 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.  
24 Mr. Batista, you mentioned that most of the children  
25 are living below the poverty line and come from

single parent households. Many also face additional challenges. They live in a foster home.

HECTOR BATISTA: Uh-huh.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: They have an incarcerated parent. Have been in trouble with the law. Have a disability and have recently immigrated. This is a very important component, very important. Most of the young people they are facing trouble, you know, their behavior. You know, their behaviors are connected to the situation in the families.

HECTOR BATISTA: Right.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I know that because I've been serving young people for-- I was an educator before I was elected because I was also a leader in a not-for-profit organization that I created to help the young people. But my question is that, and you probably will agree with me, because if we want to help those young people who are facing challenges in their families we have to offer also assistance to the parents. It is very important, but what do you have in place in your organization to assist the parents? Because I know you said that when we send young people to school, and they go out on the street, the pressure that they are facing, the

pressures are so huge, are powerful. The parents don't have the resources to counter. So we as a society, as a city, we have to offer them also the assistance that they need to better educate their children. And also to make sure they counter the peer pressures that the young people are facing in the street. Do you have anything in place in your organization to assist the parent also in this way?

HECTOR BATISTA: Yeah, sure. Thank you for the question. Look and our intent here as an organization, we have a vow. I mean obviously every-- As through our history, we have began-- We have really focused on-- We are trying to deal with the different challenges that the kids--the kids in New York City are dealing with. But we feel that the secret to our program is this master level social worker. In order for us to be able to have an effective mentoring relationship, we have to remove some of the barriers that the kids are dealing with at their home. And, we work with the family to make sure that their family is stable. And, if there are referrals that have to be made when it comes to housing or other kinds of referrals, we kind of deal with those issues. Because in order for us to be

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1 in some ways the Board of Education really some  
2 techniques that I believe need to change. I mean we  
3 need to begin to focus on these kids and the family  
4 issues that they're dealing with. Because in order  
5 for them to be able to learn and do the things that  
6 they need to do, we need to remove some of those  
7 barriers. I mean we have--we have young--young  
8 mothers in our program. Imagine being 13 years old  
9 and being pregnant and having a child. You're a  
10 child yourself. So we have--we work with that young  
11 person to deal with whatever issue she's dealing  
12 with. And also work on stabilizing our family in  
13 order for that youth to be able to get the services  
14 they need and get a mentor in their life. And that's  
15 why our numbers are so successful.

17 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.  
18 That's great. Ms. Baranovskaya and Ms. Sebastien,  
19 I'm sure that you have also, and the constituents  
20 among the young people we are serving. Certain young  
21 people are facing the same challenges in their  
22 families. Anything that you want to add?

23 YELENA BARANOVSKAYA: Right, at the after  
24 school program at P.S. 86 we quite often organize  
25 special events inviting parents to come, and to

1 participate in various activities along with the  
2 staff and participants. We have a very popular  
3 actually T-shirt decoration event where many parents  
4 have been joining us with a big blank shirt, and they  
5 really enjoy to see how their kids are decorating  
6 their T-shirts. As well as they contribute their own  
7 wisdom and knowledge and talents to the process.  
8 Since we're also learning a computer program for our  
9 participants in the after school program we also  
10 offer some computer training to the parents who are  
11 in need to get ready to be computer literate. Or  
12 just to help them to find resources for the job  
13 market. Like, you know, to find better career  
14 opportunities. So any type of help that we can  
15 provide, we always provide it to them. We distribute  
16 various free tickets like quite often from several  
17 cultural institutions or organizations. That whoever  
18 go onto the trips will receive free tickets.

20 So we always try to spread those tickets  
21 among the low-income kids that might benefit from  
22 their weekend. They can take their kids over to the  
23 city. And also, there is an event in the fall that  
24 is called Harvesting Celebration in Jamaica Market.  
25 So every October, the local housing coalition

1 actually organizes many free events for families to  
2 celebrate the harvest event. And we advertise these  
3 events to our parents to let them know that this is a  
4 community that you can have free resources actually,  
5 you know, to take your kids to the shows. To take  
6 your kids to free coloring seminars, and like the  
7 free pumpkin distribution, you know, and things like  
8 that. Yeah, so we feel that it is absolutely true  
9 that parents need a lot of support, and we are here  
10 to support them. Because if parents and families are  
11 doing well, then kids also will be doing really well.  
12 Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you much.

15 CIDRA SEBASTIEN: And for us at the  
16 Bortherhood Sister Sol we like to make sure that our  
17 first interaction with the parent is not when there's  
18 an issue that takes place. So we do our forms for  
19 membership. When we have a new young person, there's  
20 information for parents to complete. We reach out to  
21 those parents. We have them come to our space so we  
22 meet them at home or in a local space. And then we  
23 also give them update letters in the languages that  
24 they're speaking at home so that they understand  
25 what's going on. And we keep them updated on a



CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.

Mr. Batista, in your testimony you said that in fact last year alone 98% of students were promoted to the next grade, and 97% of high school seniors graduated with 86% of them accepted in college. And this question is for anyone of you, and I think that this is advised whether you answer some of your questions. But what do you have in place? What is the follow-up portion that you have to ensure that, you know, those young people they are successful? Where do you get those numbers?

HECTOR BATISTA: Sure. About two years ago commissioned a study. We hire an evaluator, an outside evaluator. It actually is the evaluator that evaluates the Robins Foundation, Phillip & Associates. And we took 300 kids and we put them through a-- we put them through a program. We took 300 kids and put them in a control group. And we compared different

categories, and after six months of being in our program, there--those behaviors were stabilized by having a mentor in their life. And in the control group those behaviors went up by about 12%. After one year in our program, the behaviors went down by about 1there--those behaviors were stabilized by having a mentor in their life. And in the control group those behaviors went up by about 12%. After one year in our program, the behaviors went down by about 15% of kids that are in our program. And they went up an additional 22% of kids that were being--put in the control group. So the whole point of the-- And after two years it went down a substantial amount. I'm happy to actually provide to actually provide this committee with that report. And basically, what I'm trying to tell you is that our program is a program that has been evaluated. We are constantly bettering the program. We brought in an outside evaluator to make sure that our program continues to remain relevant to see if we--there are things that we need to do. The one thing that we all take granted is these young people having a positive role model in their life made such a difference. And having that role model helped them through some of

the challenges. It really makes a difference in their life. Now, the other thing that we have done as a organization is now we're a mentor organization with a strong educational component. One of the things that I've done is created a new educational program--educational unit within the organization that's given young people-- They're going--they're in high school, SAT prep courses. We're doing tutoring programs for those young kids, and we feel that by supplementing and providing these services those numbers that are already pretty high. If you compare them to the Board of Education, those numbers are already pretty high. They continue to grow, and continue to allow our kids to really have all the tolls and all the programs that they need in order for them to be success. Because obviously, the most important thing about our program is making sure that we're creating the next citizens in the city. So by having the kind of support, by having a wraparound program, services for these kids, it allows these kids to be successful. And the only way that we are able to do that is by continuing to evaluate our program, and bring people from the outside to

1 evaluate the program. So, we're very happy about  
2 that and I will send you our study so you can see--

3 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Oh,  
4 thank you.

5 HECTOR BATISTA: --that it's evidenced  
6 based.

7 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.  
8 Thank you. Ms. Baranovskaya, you mentioned that  
9 your organization provides many services, and among  
10 the services you mentioned that your organization  
11 provides to families with referrals, and sources of  
12 information, which might be related to a multitude of  
13 issues of concern to them. For example, health  
14 clinics, food pantries, affordable housing,  
15 vocational and cultural and cultural places to  
16 benefit from. Do you have any follow-up system to  
17 ensure that those young people that you refer to  
18 those organizations are served properly or they  
19 receive the assistance that they need?

20 YELENA BARANOVSKAYA: Yes, absolutely.  
21 We--like first of all the Queens Community House  
22 itself has a great housing department where we try to  
23 refer our families in need like to prevent from any  
24 possible evictions, or to find affordable housing.  
25

1 So we are fortunate to have already a program in  
2 place where we refer our families and parents. And we  
3 actually keep track of their progress. Like first of  
4 all, through our connection with the families and  
5 like seeing--like, you know, things have been done  
6 for them. How they are doing. We are not losing  
7 them from our sight. We are constantly being in  
8 touch. So that's something that is constantly like,  
9 you know, being monitored. And like, you know, by  
10 referring somebody to a local service of support  
11 doesn't mean like we provide the information and then  
12 we drop it. These are participants who are in our  
13 after school program. So we continue with our day-  
14 to-day continuous communication with the parents.  
15 And we can see actually by the child performance, and  
16 by also reaching out to the parent how well this--or  
17 that family actually is able to do. Absolutely. We  
18 constantly keep track of the progress. In our after  
19 school program, we also have in addition to our  
20 regular staff we use, you know, several interns from  
21 various schools. Like we have social work interns.  
22 We have psychology interns, and they are really the  
23 ones who help us to like, you know, with spreading  
24 out the word to these needy families on various  
25

sources of support available for them in the community.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.

And I want to commend you and thank you for the effort that you are doing to serve our young people and to fulfill their needs and the needs of their parents. But before you go, I've got only one last question. Because my father-- You know, my father usually said that my son there is no perfection. No one is perfect. There are is no perfection. We should always work hard to improve what we are doing, and to do better what we are doing because there are always tragedies. Could you talk about the challenges you are facing in your effort to help those young people. And your effort to reach your goal to be linguistically and culturally competent. And to make sure that you serve the young people who are in need of so many services.

HECTOR BATISTA: [interposing] Yes.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: And tell me in addition to funding. We know that funding is a challenge for all our organizations. But what do you believe that you should do better, and what are the

steps that you have taken to improve the services that you are providing to the young people.

HECTOR BATISTA: For us as an organization, and I think this is probably true for a lot of organizations, we are having problems getting male volunteers, especially men of color to become big brothers. We have more women coming to our doors, and we have--we have more boys coming to our doors. We have less men volunteers. That's one of our challenges. We have more women coming to our doors, and we have less girls coming to our program. So that's another challenge. And so, as an organization, we have created in terms of girl recruitment we're working with certain areas in different boroughs to try schools that are-- And community organizations to try to bring in the girls into the program. Because what happens is boys act out a lot. You can see it, and you can see when they need a positive role model in their life. Girls are more internal so it's a lot more-- And the mothers don't see the need to have a mentor. So we're trying to sort of figure out a way to get mothers. And our new motto is you don't have to do it alone. You know, you could use a big sister to help you bring

up--bring up your daughter. And for us in place of men, I mean, you know, it's actually a joke in our office. When we have men of color or a Hispanic, Black, African-American or whatever, once that person gets sort of rushed through the system because we are in so much need of having male volunteers. So those are the challenges. Where obviously, for example, to deal with the whole men recruitment, we started. We did a partnership with barbershops. So we worked with 25 barbershops throughout the-- We started off in a pilot in the Bronx. And then we expanded throughout the city. And then, that's where men go. So we tried to go there, and we partnered with these barber shops. And we ended up doing pretty well. Actually, we launched something--a shoeshine recruitment program. That didn't go as well as we would have liked. But, you know, we're constantly trying to come up with new gimmicks or new ways to recruit men. This is an opportunity.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] For sure.

HECTOR BATISTA: I'm glad you asked me the question for me to make that appeal. I mean obviously it is extremely important for us to try to



recruit more male volunteers. So those are the challenges, and we're obviously using different techniques to try to recruit more male volunteers and young girls.

YELENA BARANOVSKAYA: I think as much as we do in regards to provide a culturally competent program, and with as many successes as we can share with you, I guess we also experience a lot of challenges dealing with a variety of cultures that families represent. And, like we can see that every year, like the--like trends, cultural trends really rely and they change so fast that it's not always easy to actually adopt them. And like, you know, to get to know like, you know, various cultures that like, you know, [laughs] come into the community. And, we always wish that when we see something like some kids experience difficulties in their regular school after school program in regards to their emotional wellbeing or behavior or even like in their performance, we wish that there is more done around parents to actually provide them with more knowledge about cultural differences. Because quite often when they come to this world, when they come to the USA, they like, you know, like being here like several

months it's very difficult for them to get to know all the expectations.

Even when there are situations like related to child abuse and neglect, quite often we see that it's related to some cultural differences. You know, where spanking is allowed in certain cultures. Or it's like, you know, even like some parents share with us, in their school like teachers use the rule as a way of disciplining kids. And like, you know, how to really be able to support these families in providing them more education, more awareness of how things are done here. And, like, you know, actually to provide them more support in regards to better adjust their reality. You know, so that's one of the challenges that we face. That's one of the challenges that we try to constantly, you know, support our families with. But I really hope that also between the after school program and like the school system like there is more connection. And there is more attention done towards families in regards to the individual struggles that they experience when they come here.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: You mentioned something very, very important. You see the sad

1 reality in our community if we spoke to immigrants  
2 because immigrant people they discipline their  
3 children differently--

4 YELENA BARANOVSKAYA: [interposing]

5 Right.

6 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --from what we see.

7 Because I was born and raised in Haiti. So that was  
8 how my parents used to discipline me. And that was  
9 natural. That was part of our culture, and not only  
10 Haiti in several other countries the parents  
11 discipline their children. Not to hurt them.  
12 Because they love them.

13 YELENA BARANOVSKAYA: Right.

14 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: They want the best  
15 for their children. And just realizing somebody  
16 comes to the United States and, you know, the person  
17 is 40 years old, 50 years old, 60. It's going to be  
18 very difficult to change the culture. Because I,  
19 too, believe that the mothers, the fathers they love  
20 their children. They sacrifice themselves for their  
21 children to succeed, but if somebody, a mother or a  
22 father hurts a child that person needs professional  
23 assistance.  
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HECTOR BATISTA: [interposing] You know that--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: But now, just because they're--

HECTOR BATISTA: [interposing] Let me point out one thing, council member?

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: But, now, it is so important also that we educate the immigrant people to tell them, you know what, over here this is not a Jamaica, Grenada, Haiti or whatever other country. This is the United States of America. If you don't, you know, try to accommodate yourself and change a little bit, you know, your culture you may be in trouble, legally in trouble. This is very important. But by the same token, we and the immigrant people we have to come together also to make sure that the United States of America understand it. The people in the United States they don't understand the culture of those people and meet the halfway. Because the reason I'm saying that--excuse me--it is unfortunate to see some of the time we break families. We destroy children just for a situation that the immigrant people believe, you know, they were doing a good thing trying to discipline their

1 children. To make sure that those children follow  
2 the rules and regulations, but they are in conflict  
3 with the rules and regulations in the United States.  
4 This is a very important situation, a very critical  
5 situation. And I think that the immigrants and  
6 people in the United States, the legislators, we have  
7 to come together. The educators, organizations, we  
8 have to come together to address it because I've seen  
9 so many young people and children who have been, you  
10 know, removed from the families and after the results  
11 they are better. I thank you very much. Yes, Mr.  
12 Batista.  
13

14 HECTOR BATISTA: I was just going to  
15 point out that one of the challenges for us as a  
16 agency, we're a reporting agency. So once you hear,  
17 you know, that a child had been hit or whatever, we  
18 are obligated by law--

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Yes.

20 HECTOR BATISTA:

21 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --to have to report.  
22 And one of the most difficult conversations that I've  
23 had to had-- I mean I don't have them that often. My  
24 Program--Chief Program Officer has them more often  
25 than I do--is the fact that when you tell the parent

that we have to report them and they are obviously--

Look, I grew up in a similar culture to you with

discipline, but it is the law of this country and we

have to follow it as an agency. We are obligated to

report it, and it is a very challenging thing.

Because on one hand, we're trying to put a metro in

their life. But on the other hand, they're doing

something that is against the law, and we are

obligated to do it. So it is an educational thing.

It is something we have to continue to do. And

sometimes we are put in a really bad situation as an

organization because we are obligated to report that.

So I totally agree with you, and it's about

education.

CIDRA SEBASTIEN: So just quickly the

challenges that we face. I'm glad you recognize that

money is one of them and funding, but more

specifically for us to be able to pay our staff what

we know that they deserve for all the work that they

do with our young people. Another challenge often

time is supporting young people as mental health

issues arise. And we find that more and more that is

something that young people and our families are

facing whether it's our members or a family member.

So being able to navigate the city system to make sure that our individual members and their families are receiving quality support around mental health services. And then also recognizing a challenge of us being able to get other organizations and agencies to recognize the value of our work. Specifically work that is culturally relevant, and that is developing our young people as social change agents, as critical thinkers and as leaders. That is not seen as something that is frivolous, or something that is an add-on or something that just happens in an after school program, but it is given the value and attention that is deserved. And it's seen as a component that helps to develop our young people's critical thinking skills. That supports their educational and academic achievement as well, and their development as whole people.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you so very much all of you, but before I let you go, I just want to put advisers on what I said at the very beginning. It will take all of us, all of us to provide the best services to the children and to their families. In a city as diverse as New York City it is very difficult, very difficult to understand. And also to

1 meet the requirement or the need of all of the people  
2 from all New York City. It will take legislators,  
3 the government, the schools, and evaluation to come  
4 together and to make sure that we do the right thing.  
5 Because we have a big task in front of us. Thank you  
6 very much--

8 HECTOR BATISTA: [interposing] Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --and God bless you.

10 YELENA BARANOVSKAYA: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you. Now, we  
12 are going to call the next panel. Sami Abu Shumays  
13 from Flushing Town Hall, New York; Lisa Tagiali?[sic]  
14 [background comments] I'm sorry, it's--? Yes?  
15 Thank you very much--from Lower East Side Girls Club  
16 of New York, Odisha Kia.

17 ODISHA KIA: Here.

18 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Kia. Thank you very  
19 much from Lower East Side Girls Club, and Amy  
20 Sananman. Is that right? It's Amy? Thank you from  
21 Von's Well.

22 [pause, background comments]

23 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Would you please--  
24 Are you going to testify also? Amy? Yes, would you  
25 please pull your chair and-- Thank you.



[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Could you please raise your hands and swear that you will say the truth, all the truth. Will you?

PANEL MEMBERS: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much. You may start. Anyone may start at any time. Please state your name.

AMY SANANMAN: Good afternoon and thank you for affording me the opportunity to testify today. My name is Amy Sananman and I'm the Founder and Executive Director at Groundswell. As New York's leading community public arts organization, Groundswell's projects are designed to engage artists, marginalized and under-served young people and community members in creating visible and permanent change in some of New York City's most challenged neighborhoods. In the after schools pace, Groundswell offers a suite of programs designed to engage a broad and culturally diverse group of participants. These opportunities range from community for court involved youth programs to programs focusing on college access and preparedness.

At Groundswell we built cultural competency into all aspects of our organizational structure.

In our experience there are four key issues to keep in mind as the Council looks to foster culturally competent programs. First, staffing. Staff and leadership demographics from governing boards to teaching artists should reflect the youth and community served. This is important in fostering an environment where youth feel affirmed and free to express their voices.

Number two, recruitment and support. Culturally incompetent programming leads to poor recruitment and low retention rates. Supports must be in place to help guide youth through programming and quickly identify any cultural or environmental challenges. This level of staff investment allows organizations to provide equitable services to a diverse group of participants.

Number three, program diversity and open dialogue. A diverse and accessible suite of program option that encourage open discussion and group exploration is also vital when building a culturally competent curriculum. This open exchange of ideas creates a situation where youth feel connected to the

organization, and project while fostering a learning environment in which youth feel empowered to fully express themselves.

And finally, creativity. Creation is inherently liberating across cultural barriers helping us reflect and see that something else is possible. It recognizes, affirms and elevates the lived experience of those often left out of civic engagement. Through imagination and creative action we can reconfigure our social and economic relationships, shift power and make change.

While these are approaches that Groundswell has found useful in meeting the needs of a diverse youth population, we understand that culture competency is a continuing journey rather than a destination. As a sector, we must be flexible and aware of our own cultural assumptions in order to create meaningful change. We're so grateful that Council funding has played a crucial role in the support of culturally competent programs by allowing us to increase our reach of programs and number of youth being served. Bringing arts education programs to the communities generally under-served by the sectors such as Brownsville in East New York and

1 through the Girls Initiative. And fostering new  
2 partnerships increasing the impact of our  
3 organization and providing new opportunities for  
4 youth to learn, make their voices heard and give back  
5 to their communities. One thing is clear, without  
6 support for culturally competent programs in New York  
7 City, we will constantly struggle to engage support  
8 and inspire New York City's most vulnerable young  
9 people. Thank you very much for your time and  
10 consideration, and I would be happy to answer any  
11 further questions.  
12

13 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.  
14 The next speaker please.

15 SAMI ABU SHUMAYS: Good afternoon.  
16 Thanks for inviting us to testify. My name is Sami  
17 Abu Shumays and I'm Deputy Director of Flushing Town  
18 Hall. Flushing Town Hall is a member of New York  
19 City's Cultural Institutions Group and a Smithsonian  
20 affiliate. At Flushing Town Hall we believe that  
21 cultural competence must be central to arts  
22 educational programming in a city as diverse as New  
23 York. The arts play a significant role in how  
24 children develop both a sense of identity and a sense  
25 of community in addition to fostering numerous

1 cognitive and social abilities as many studies have  
2 shown. And it's absolutely crucial that New York's  
3 minority and immigrant children be given the  
4 opportunity to see themselves represented in the arts  
5 and cultural programs brought to their schools. And  
6 that non-immigrant and minority children see other  
7 cultures in a positive light.  
8

9 Flushing Town Hall has been at the  
10 forefront of this type of arts programming for years.  
11 Aside from the fact that there are no certification  
12 procedures in New York City for most of the world's  
13 artistic disciplines. Because any given school or  
14 community in New York City is host to an  
15 extraordinary diversity of cultures, it would be  
16 unrealistic to expect schools to be able to hire  
17 enough in-house arts teachers capable of doing  
18 justice to all the artistic traditions coming from  
19 the countries of origin of all of their students.  
20 That's where cultural institutions and teaching  
21 artists can play a significant role in expanding the  
22 horizons of New York City school students. And  
23 because school budgets and especially arts budgets  
24 are stretched thin as highlighted by Controller  
25 Stringers Report in the Spring of 2014, additional

1 funding from City government including the Council,  
2 the Department of Education, and other agencies has a  
3 major impact in increasing the likelihood that New  
4 York City kids will have the opportunity to  
5 experience culturally competent arts educational  
6 programming.  
7

8 The cost of the program I mentioned  
9 earlier in the hearing is(1) an effective vehicle for  
10 this. I'm going to highlight a couple of our costs  
11 of programs. Thanks to funding from Council Member  
12 Vallone in 2015, Flushing Town Hall is offering to  
13 P.S. 184 a program in World Percussion Traditions led  
14 by African-American Master Percussionist Napoleon  
15 Rebels Bay. And he takes the students on the tour  
16 from West Africa to Spain to the Caribbean to the New  
17 Orleans sound to the jazz age. And has a culminating  
18 project with a student music presentation with a  
19 Parents Exchange Night where the students will  
20 perform with Rebels Bay and his band. And parents  
21 will be invited to participate. And this program  
22 helps to create new intergenerational bond around  
23 culture so that students' learning does not exist in  
24 isolation from their community.  
25

The previous year in 2013-14, one of our foster programs to I.S. 25 was on Asian arts, which included instruction on Korean dance, Korean mask making, Chinese calligraphy and Chinese dance. And featured a number of the master teaching artist on our roster. And this combination of both Korean and Chinese arts traditions reflects the demographics of our area right in Flushing. And we used the arts to build a bridge between the Chinese and Korean communities, which are often at conflict with each other. And this approach is mirrored in our public programming as well.

My final example comes from a DOE funded program, the Teen Thursday Program. And this year our Teen Thursdays program is focusing on dance and immigration. The Queens Borough historian Jack Eichenbaum is giving the history of immigration in Queens and in Flushing starting all the way back to the Flushing Remonstrance of 1657, which was the founding of religious freedom in the country. And we have four teaching artists, a Chinese dancer, a Korean dancer, a Mexican dancer, and an Indian dancer, who are each talking about immigration and teaching dance classes there. There is a little more

detail about that program in the paragraph in my written testimony.

And in addition to these after school programs, Flushing Town Hall conducts numerous residencies in New York City schools with teaching artists from a diverse array of world traditions and cultures and we offer exciting field trip programs in our theater featuring many of the internationally touring artists we present to general audiences. Throughout all of these programs, we have found that students are tremendously curious and open-minded. And that a diverse and changing selection of arts and arts traditions engages these students more than a static presentation of mainstream western arts genres.

More funding from after school programs in the arts would enable us to take advantage of an under-utilized resource already at hand. The expertise of the many master teaching artists on our roster who carry forward rich cultural traditions from around the world. And I think that's probably true of many cultural institutions that there are so many teaching artists present in the city, an under-utilized resource.



So below, below my testimony--I'm not going to go through all of it--I have a list of some of our culturally competent field trip programs as well as a list of our master teaching artists on our roster who display a mastery of traditions from all over the world. And I'm happy to answer questions later. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much, Sami Abu. Next speaker, please. Do you have a testimony?

LISA TAGIALI: Yes, we have a written testimony that you should have, but I'd like to encourage you to listen to me rather than read along actually. Because I'm going to give you a little bit--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] And I will be listening to you, but I want to make sure that I, you know,--

LISA TAGIALI: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --I rely, you know, my question from your testimony.

LISA TAGIALI: Please do.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you.

LISA TAGIALI: I want to give you both a little bit of information about my background for two reasons. We believe that it's the people in our organization that actually makes the organization. And we also--I also believe that the work that I do at the Lower East Side Girls Club is more of a calling than a job. I would like to tell you that I was born in Fort Greene, raised in Crown Heights. I'm a Public School--New York City Public School student or past student at the High School of Art and Design. I volunteered at the school in programs like reading, teaching, English and math. I participated in after school programs like New York City's NAACP ACT-SO Program. I know very much from the work that I did as a high school student what after school program means in the life of a young child. I'm now older, giving back to my community and I have the privilege of showing my artwork at institutions such as MoCADA, the Caribbean Cultural Diaspora Institute in Manhattan. I've also shown my work at the Museum of Art and Design and the Brooklyn Museum. And so, I've--I take my students on field trips to places where my work is showing, and also the works of other

people from their backgrounds so they can become more culturally competent.

One of my girls, Ayisha [sp?] she's a young African-American student. She lives in New York City Public Housing actually on Avenue D, which is right across the street from our institution, our building. And she has dreams of becoming a fashion designer. We work on portfolio development. We talk about color theory. We talk about light and shadow composition. All the things that would help a strong portfolio, but also the things that are going to help her learn how to think creatively and critically. So she can become more confident as a young person. I ran into her on the bus the other day, she was actually on her way to FIT to submit this portfolio to the school where she's hoping to go. She's now culturally, you know, equipped with all the tools she needs to present herself without feeling that she's going to get a bad grade necessarily or-- You know, because she's had a lot of that one-on-one instruction from me.

I'm also the Director of the City Arts Program at the Lower East Side where I help come up with programming and curriculum that gauge-- That

are basically tailored to these girls' backgrounds, but also challenge them in new ways. So they can go onto college and high school, and basically surpass their dreams in new ways.

For almost two decades our institution, the Girls Club has basically provided after school programming like these young women. We serve 300 girls in the neighborhood. We provide not only creative arts, which is my area, but wellness in the form of Yoga. We provide math and science through our bio-base. It's a--basically an institution that holds--that we house that basically helps them learn how to evaluate bugs and insects and plants through high-end microscopes that you would only find at the best Ivy League schools. They're housed in our building. We have a planetarium, and this planetarium is actually--has the best technology. It's better than the one at the Museum of Natural History at the Rose Museum. And so--and we offer all of these programs to our girls free of charge. Again, we're looking at right across the street from where a lot of them live. They come from low-income housing. A lot of their parents have been incarcerated, or they come from marginalized

1 backgrounds. You know, whether it's same sex,  
2 African-American, immigrant backgrounds. I'm also a  
3 daughter of Nigerian immigrants who immigrated here  
4 in the 1970s. And so I'm actually I feel like--I see  
5 myself in these children. I engage them in these  
6 projects so that they are equipped with tools like I  
7 said to rise above their circumstances.

8  
9 The last thing I'll leave you with before  
10 I pass it on to my colleague Kia is that our mission  
11 is basically breaking the cycle of local poverty by  
12 training the next generation of ethical  
13 entrepreneurial and environment leaders. Those three  
14 words: Ethical, entrepreneurial, and environmental we  
15 take very strongly. In my art classes, I stress art  
16 and activism. We talk about things like what's going  
17 on with Black Lives Matters movement. In fact,  
18 yesterday we just took them to see Soma. And we  
19 incorporate that in our art projects so that they  
20 know that art can be a tool for sending messages,  
21 right? For changing the world. We also take them on  
22 trips that help them learn how to run their own  
23 businesses. We actually house in our own building La  
24 Tiendita, which is way for them to learn sewing and  
25 culinary. And then we have a sort of, a small side

shop where they learn business ethics. And then environmental again to our bio base. How to change the world. How to make the earth our home. How to really-- We did the climate march in New York City along with millions of people in New York City around the world. These are all values that we instill in them and programming that we hope will carry them on to the next stages of their lives. Thank you very much. I look forward to taking your questions. Kia.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much. Thank you.

ODISHA KIA VEGA HUTCHINS: Hello, my name is Odisha Kia Vega Hutchins--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Odisha, did we get your testimony?

ODISHA KIA VEGA HUTCHINS: Oh, yeah.

LISA TAGIALI: [off mic] It's together.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Together?

ODISHA KIA VEGA HUTCHINS: It's together.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Oh, it's together.

ODISHA KIA VEGA HUTCHINS: It's a big volume page.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay, it's the same organization, huh?

LISA TAGIALI: [off mic]

ODISHA KIA VEGA HUTCHINS: Uh-huh. Yes, I'm a colleague. I teach podcasting and audio engineering at the Lower Side Girls' Club.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: You teach what?

ODISHA KIA VEGA HUTCHINS: Podcasting and audio engineering--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Okay.

ODISHA KIA VEGA HUTCHINS: So, I'm teaching the girls how to do civil journalism. So going out into the streets and just documenting issues that matter to our neighborhood.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: All right.

ODISHA KIA VEGA HUTCHINS: The last time I had the honor of presenting to the New York City Council I was a child, a member of the Girls Club drumming team who performed, a set we worked on for a semester at City Hall. I'm now staff there. While I went to elementary school full of dedicated teachers, my school, as well as my neighborhood was often overlooked by those distributing educational resources, but even at an early age I was aware other schools had the privilege to receive. An awareness that often made me feel inferior to those who had the

1  
2 opportunity to go to summer camp or take expensive  
3 instrument lessons. I felt as I had been ignored for  
4 some inherent inferiority. It was my years in after  
5 school programs, the Girls Club among them, that  
6 closed the gap and made me realize that broader  
7 society cared about community. And even more  
8 importantly, gave me the evidence that I was on equal  
9 standing with whoever I met regardless of their  
10 socio-economic backgrounds. I had, of course,  
11 performed at City Hall.

12           The Lower East Side Girls Club has only  
13 gotten more amazing in my absence. It filled the  
14 empty lot in near my childhood home with a club house  
15 beyond my wildest imagination. The fact that I  
16 returned to college with the planetarium on Avenue D  
17 and digital media lab on the par with that of my  
18 college required a complete restructuring of my world  
19 view. Since I've been there, the Girls Club has led  
20 programs on environmental racism, disabilities,  
21 recognizing domestic abuse in the home. It has also  
22 spent a semester introducing girls to Chinese-  
23 American history, and had mentors visiting speaking  
24 about LGBTQ rights. In these programs there were  
25 periods of discomfort. The girls had many questions



that revealed some prejudice to these communities.

It was during these moments that I realized how essential these programs are.

Working as an Oral Historian at the Center for Race and Ethnicity a Middlebury College, I realized what a unique privilege it was to grow up with institutions that prioritize integration. At the Internet Story Corps I learned that one of the most effective ways to foster empathy is to listen to the stories of people from different backgrounds. At the Girls Club, I see this happening everyday.

Now, a recent graduate of Middlebury College where I double majored in chemistry and environmental science, was a fellow in environmental journalism, a narrative journalism fellow, and a Posse Scholar, among other achievements, I've chosen to bring the skills I've developed through these institutions back to my community because I know first hand the influence the Girls Club can have in shaping the life of a young girl growing up on the Lower East Side. I can't imagine a better way to serving the neighborhood that I love. Thank you for your support.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much,  
and to all four of you thank you so very much. And  
now, let me get back to Mr. Abu. Mr. Abu, you know  
that we in the City Council we support arts because  
we value the importance of art. We know how  
important arts are not only for the children but for  
all of us. But we have been talking about CASA.  
This is one of the initiatives from the City Council,  
but could you elaborate on the--all the art  
activities that your organization provides to the--

SAMI ABU SHUMAYS: The other arts  
activities?

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Yes.

SAMI ABU SHUMAYS: So our organization is  
entirely an arts organization. Everything we do is  
arts. We have both public programs in the arts, as  
well as educational programs in the arts. So our  
public programs would be concerts, music, dance,  
theater as well as visual arts exhibitions. We also  
have workshops for families. So those would be  
educational opportunities but not for schools. So  
those would be such as weekend workshops where  
families can come and learn arts traditions, or take  
dance classes before a concert. And then we have a

whole slate of arts educational programs, some of which I've described here. Which include after school programs through CASA or the DOE as well as we send teaching artists into schools. And I've included the roster of some of--many of our artists who have different kinds of cultural competence. For example, you just look at the list on the last page. Our Master Teaching Artist Roster includes Indian dance, Mexican paper arts. I'm just sort of jumping around. Korean traditional knotting, Colombian music. There's a lot of variety in what we offer. Some of those are residencies. Some of those may be one-off programs. And then we also have field trip programs, and I've included our education brochure behind my testimony that shows kind of the range of what we offer. Our field trip programs are programs where schools will basically come into our 308-seat theater and see an hour-long arts education program.

That's common to a lot of the cultural institutions in this city, that kind of format of an arts educational program, an hour-long program. And some of those programs are supported by the City Council. Some of them are just funded by the schools themselves. We believe that our tickets prices are

1 reasonably low, \$7.00 per student, but for many low-  
2 income students that is too high. So some of the  
3 members of the City Council have been able to support  
4 us giving free tickets to students in their district  
5 or lower cost tickets to students in their district.  
6 That's kind of the whole overview of what we're  
7 doing.

8  
9 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.  
10 Ms. Amy.

11 AMY SANANMAN: Uh-huh.

12 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: In your testimony  
13 you mentioned that our experience, in our experience  
14 there are four key issues to keep in mind as the  
15 Council looks to foster culturally competent  
16 programs. You mentioned staffing, staff and the  
17 leadership are demographics from our governing board  
18 to teaching artists should reflect the youth and  
19 communities served. This is important in fostering  
20 an environment where youth feel affirmed and free to  
21 express their voices. What type of training that  
22 your staff members receive? You know, in order for  
23 them to reach that goal?

24 AMY SANANMAN: Yeah, I think there are  
25 two different pieces. I think it's how we do

recruitment both for our board members, for new artists and for our own staff people. And then how we create training for all of those levels. And so we're really actively recruiting diverse board members, diverse staff, and diverse artists. And then making sure that we're doing training not just in each of those sectors. But making sure that our organization as a whole has chance to experience those trainings together. During our annual retreat, our board, artists, staff and youth work together. The youth often are doing training for the board members. The staff sometimes are training the artists. The artists are training the board. So really making sure because our model believes in cross-sector interdisciplinary work, and we believe that adults learn from youth, and youth learn from adults. And then that environment elevates the youth voices, and makes them feel affirmed and that they're being taken seriously. And as you know, each of our mural projects is a commission from a community partner or city agency. And so, the kids are working on projects that have real life value to adults in the community. And that also affirms and elevates

and gives them an opportunity to speak out around issues that are important to them.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much. You mentioned also creativity. You said that that is inherently liberating across cultural barriers helping us reflect and see that something is possible. How to you foster or boost the creativity among the young people that you are seeing. Give us an example, for example.

AMY SANANMAN: Yeah, so--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] A typical example, you know--

AMY SANANMAN: [interposing] Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --of the type of activity that, you know--

AMY SANANMAN: Yeah, so each of our sessions always starts with an ice breaker that gives young people and artists a chance just to kind of break down barriers. But really each of the projects is a mission for the team to figure out how they are going to use public art to speak out around environmental justice for example. And so, the kids might go out and do some research, and then come back to our studio and start to collage together new

1 symbols. And analyze symbols that are being used too  
2 frequently and have been devoid of meaning, and have  
3 to create their own symbols. And so that process of  
4 doing it collaboratively sort of forces them to look  
5 at how symbols are understood within our culture.  
6 Sort of critique those symbols and then maybe pull  
7 symbols from other cultures. So we did a lot of  
8 Vision Zero work and kids created a new kind of  
9 street sign that was based on the African symbol for  
10 respect. So it gives them a chance to cross-  
11 pollinate ideas. And because most of our teams are  
12 very inter-cultural, they really have a chance to go  
13 deep into what the symbols and icons mean from  
14 different cultures.

16 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank very you much.  
17 And Lisa, please help me pronounce properly your  
18 name, Tagiali?

19 LISA TAGIALI: Tagiali. The G is silent.  
20 It's tricky.

21 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay. Very good.  
22 Thank you very much. At the very beginning, you  
23 mentioned, you said that people make the  
24 organization. This is so impactful. I love it

25 LISA TAGIALI: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: People make the organization. Can you explain what you mean by that?

LISA TAGIALI: Yes, when our girls run through our doors, the first thing they see is the teacher and they run in and they greet that teacher. They've connected with the teacher in class. They have connected with some who has taught them how to sew their favorite skirt. They've connected with someone who is in our culinary classes who has taught them how to cook their favorite meal because maybe mommy is working three jobs, and doesn't have time to spend with them in the kitchen. You know, they've connected with someone who has taught them how to draw. You know, maybe that's something that they're learning how to see. And, you know, we talk in our art classes that seeing is not just a physical activity. It's actually envisioning and planning, and telling the truth. Because if you're not drawing what you're seeing, technically you're lying. That's something that I learned when I was in school. So I impart that on the girls as well. They want to remember those people who have been special to them. I still have my favorite math teacher in my head from seventh grade. You know, those were my mentors.



Those were my heroes. Those were my warriors, and I would like my girls to remember me the same way.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Well, thank you very much. So the question I'm going to ask, you know, both of you can answer because you belong to the same organization. And, how many young people, how many youths you are serving in the organization?

LISA TAGIALI: About 300.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: 300. Boys and girls?

LISA TAGIALI: Just girls. We do have a boy's program. The reason the Lower East Side Girls Club, you should know, was formed--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Oh, yeah, that's right.

LISA TAGIALI: --in 1996 was because the Boys Club never allowed girls in. There are actually three Boys Clubs on the Lower East Side. And so a group of moms got together as activists and said enough is enough. You know, we're going to form a girls club--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Okay.

LISA TAGIALI: --and so for the last 20 years or so we've been serving girls in our

neighborhood now. There have been some changes where we're now seeing girls doing a little bit better than boys in our neighborhood. And we're starting to actually reach out to people who are doing work with boys in the neighborhood. And we're starting to actually reach out to people who are doing work with boys in the neighborhood to partner with them. We're doing--we're looking at doing some work with the police precinct, which is right on the corner of C, Avenue C and 8th. They work with a lot of boys in our neighborhood on mentoring and, you know, sort of fatherhood and things like that. Just because a lot of our funding is specifically to work with girls, we've been trying to find creative ways to work with boys as well. But our mission has been girls for the last 20 years.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So that means that the programs are designed only for girls right?

LISA TAGIALI: Correct, mostly. Yes.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: All right, you mentioned several activities and among the activities you mentioned Yoga. Why Yoga?

LISA TAGIALI: [laughs] Yes.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: And who is teaching the Yoga? How do you recruit the person?

LISA TAGIALI: Yoga is being taught our amazing, amazing teacher Jocelyn Celine. [sic] She's been in our neighborhood for almost a decade as well. Yoga is important to our girls. I mean they are coming from a lot of stress. A lot of them are coming from abusive families where they're watching daddy beating on mommy. They're watching, you know their brother-- Some of our girls have told us stories of being locked up in their room. So they come into our room, and even before they can get to a class they may need-- just need to de-stress. We've been hearing news in the Lower East Side of crime in the neighborhood. And so we're thinking of actually introducing Capoeira as a martial art or any type of other self-defense class. And these are things that we feel it's whole body. You know, it's holistic programming. You know, again ethical, environmental, and entrepreneurial. How to become a whole person. That's what we're focused on.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: You know, I commend you for that because-- For putting the emphasis on that because most of the time we focus on external.

LISA TAGIALI: [interposing] Yes.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: You know, and for instance we want to change this, but I think that we have to think about changing ourselves also.

[coughs] Excuse me. The change should come from within, and I believe that through my experience. Because I used to practice Yoga, too. I'm sorry to mention that. [laughter] You know, such activities give the young people inner peace.

LISA TAGIALI: [interposing] Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: You know, it changes them from inside. And if we--if we can change ourselves from inside, believe it or not we are going to change the environment also, a way to behave and to see things are going to be very different. This is a good program for the young people. I commend you for that, martial arts, yoga. It is very important because that's changes people and that change the life. And I know what I'm talking about first hand. [laughs] Congratulations again, but you mentioned also that your mission or the mission of the organization is to break the cycle of poverty. This is powerful. How are you going to do that? This is huge. Could you tell me some of the steps

that you are taking to reach that goal, or what type of activities or programs that you have?

LISA TAGIALI: Absolutely. Again to stress our entrepreneurial activities where our girls learn to sew. Where they learn to cook. Where they learn to make art, paintings, which could be sold or auctioned off. We're trying to get-- Actually get them to show their artwork outside of our gallery. We just actually had an installation of the Governor's Island Art Fair, and then also a mural painting program on 5th Avenue right across from the New York City Public Library. And I believe that all of these activities again enter into our portfolio development program. Once you have a portfolio, once you have a record, and once you have archives of what you have done, that is equipping you with knowledge and competence that you can take to any job. It adds to your resume. In fact, some of our girls-- We also have a chorus program, and I had mentioned activism before. Some of our girls have sung with the likes of Joan Baez. You know, if you can say that we have a Tyra Banks Empowerment Zone that-- Through our partnership with Tyra Banks where she teaches them body image. And she actually Skypes in

and talks to our girls about how to become better women and not think about how big you are or the shape of your nose and things like that.

Once you're equipped with this portfolio, you can take this to any job, you know. And maybe your grades aren't the best at school. You know, again, this is not school per se. This is a place to learn and have fun at the same time. So what we're doing is we're giving them a chance, and we're giving them the resources that they can sort of weigh against what's happening at school. Which may be bad grades, suspension due to, you know, acting up. So that they have a chance that every other kid in New York City has.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much. Ms. Vega, any comment or thought that you want to add?

ODISHA KIA VEGA HUTCHINS: Yeah, I mean I think one of our goals is really just to empower. It's allowing the girls a chance to have self-empowerment. To give these girls-- I think growing up in our neighborhood you kind of have this understanding that you, at least I did at my age that I was getting the short end of the stick, or that

1 there were things available to the rest of the city  
2 that weren't available to me. And I think with the  
3 Girls Club you really kind of have the sense of love,  
4 and that they're overly investing in you. And with  
5 that, just with that love and with just that, the  
6 faith in myself, I felt like that was something that  
7 kind of compelled me to continue forward. Knowing  
8 that it was the gateway to loving myself, and pushing  
9 myself through programs that I would have thought I  
10 wouldn't have been capable of.

12 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Very good. And you  
13 mentioned also about base climate, the big value in  
14 Manhattan. That was powerful. [laughter] That was  
15 powerful, and it is very important that we instill  
16 in our young people a sense of responsibility of our  
17 nature of our environment also and of our society.  
18 That was powerful, and it is good. It's good. But  
19 could you tell me about follow-up activities that  
20 your organization is doing, is conduction.

21 LISA TAGIALI: [interposing] For sure.

22 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Follow this value--

23 LISA TAGIALI: [interposing] Absolutely.

24

25

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --and connection with the protection of our environment and our climate.

LISA TAGIALI: Yeah, well, we like to participate in outside activities like the Climate March, but we also have internally, and I didn't stress this before is a roof garden. On our roof garden we plant vegetables that we actually use in our kitchen to cook healthy meals so that our girls know how to eat organic. We don't allow them actually to bring junk food into the facility at all.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Really?

LISA TAGIALI: On the roof garden we're also going to have a meditation garden. There's a whole three-year plan actually for our roof garden, but we did have some harvest last year, a few tomatoes. Our girls are active in planting. So that, you know, they live in the city but they're not necessarily feeling like they're not going to get those skills if they want to farm or out in the suburbs or something. We believe that these small actions and these small steps all lead into an overall awareness of taking care of the earth. You know, watering a plant. These are things that we



1 have a fountain that's in our-- That's right next to  
2 Baker Hall. We have a huge community hall dedicated  
3 to the life of Josephine Baker. Right next to that  
4 is a Kiki Smith Fountain. She donated that. And  
5 Kiki Smith is an amazing fabulous well know artist,  
6 and she donated this piece of sculpture to our  
7 facility because she believes in our mission. But  
8 it's actually a water fountain that's actually  
9 enclosed by bamboo reeds, and our girl see this  
10 everyday as they're coming in. So I think the  
11 awareness through things like that, through having  
12 them plant and harvest as well as connecting with  
13 outside activities, international globally aware  
14 activities like the Climate March. They're getting  
15 it. They're getting it.

17 ODISHA KIA VEGA HUTCHINS: Um, one thing-

18 -

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Thank  
20 you.

21 ODISHA KIA VEGA HUTCHINS: --I'd like to  
22 add is this summer leading up to the Climate March we  
23 had a program on-- An art and design program where  
24 our girls produced their own posters for the march.  
25 So they had to study issues related to climate

change, and understand exactly what we were marching about in order to produce something kind of conveyed what they personally felt was in danger.

LISA TAGIALI: And talk about Cape Valor.

ODISHA KIA VEGA HUTCHINS: Oh, yes we also go to Camp Valor once a year in the Adirondacks. It's a beautiful location. I think it's one-- It's a place that really-- It's really world renown for its environmental advocacy, and it's an opportunity for girls to kind of have an interest in nature and really learn to value the tranquility that that can provide. We also have a CSA program for parents, and the girls are receiving organic produce through that in their home.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much, and thank you to all of you, and let me say that to conclude. I know and I said it before no one alone can do the job. Everyone of us we can do something, but all of us we can do so much. And I think you for your dedication to serve our young people, and I'm looking forward to continuing working together with you. And I will call you because myself and the City we are planning a lot of activities to make sure that

2 we together we empower the young people in New York  
3 City. Thank you very much.

4 LISA TAGIALI: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: And got bless you.

6 Thank you. [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date January 23, 2015