

Testimony Of Steven Banks, Commissioner

The New York City Human Resources Administration

Before the New York City Council Finance Committee and General Welfare Committee

Fiscal Year 2016 Executive Budget

May 19, 2015

I would like to thank the City Council's Finance Committee and General Welfare Committee as well as Chairs Julissa Ferreras and Stephen Levin for giving us this opportunity to testify today about HRA's budget and our continued progress toward reform of our policies and procedures.

My name is Steven Banks and I am the Commissioner of the New York City Human Resources Administration. Joining me today are HRA's Chief Program Planning and Financial Management Officer Ellen Levine, HRA's Executive Deputy Commissioner for Finance Erin Villari, and HRA's Chief of Staff Jennifer Yeaw.

HRA is proud to be in the forefront of the de Blasio's Administration's efforts to address poverty and income inequality. The Fiscal Year 2016 budget reflects these priorities as we reaffirm our commitment to reforming our policies and procedures to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of our programs as we work to better serve low-income and vulnerable New Yorkers.

HRA serves approximately 3 million low-income New Yorkers through a broad range of programs and we have spent this past year reforming key areas within the agency to ensure that we are:

- Helping working families stay in the workforce when their jobs do not pay enough to live on by providing supports such as food aid and cash assistance, public health insurance, and emergency cash assistance and eviction prevention services.
- Aiding those struggling to return to or enter the workforce by providing a variety of employment-related services, including access to education and job skills training, help with job search and placement, and temporary cash assistance.
- Providing a safety net for those permanently or temporarily unable to work.

Today, rather than go through all of the reforms that are underway, we will highlight some key reforms, especially milestones since our last testimony at the Preliminary Budget hearing in March.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

EMPLOYMENT

One of our top priorities is providing clients with the opportunity to develop the skills and training to leave public assistance permanently. As we have reported previously, without a high school education, you are lucky to earn \$20,000. With a high school diploma or equivalent, your earning ability increases to \$30,000 or more. With some college, it increases to \$40,000 or more. Since 60% of employable clients on HRA's caseload lack a high school diploma, the importance of providing the opportunity to gain a high school or college level education is clear.

We have further reported that our goal is to move away from a one-size-fits-all model that resulted in too many clients returning to public assistance rather than successfully starting careers.

In the employment area, we can report the following:

- By the beginning of June we will be issuing concept papers to start the RFP process for new employment and training programs, which we hope to have in place by early next year.
- Meanwhile, we have already converted 500 CUNY WEP slots into work study positions, which will increase the ability of students to successfully complete their studies.
- As part of moving away from the prior one-size-fits-all model, HRA is developing an RFP for a program within our existing budget to enhance employment services for people with HIV who are eligible for HRA's assistance through our HASA program or our new Employment Plan.
- Based on a change in State law, the training policy revision to allow four-year college enrollment was announced in late July of 2014, with the first enrollments submitted in August. As a result of this reform, currently 1,271 clients are enrolled in four-year college.

ACCESS TO FEDERAL BENEFITS TO FIGHT HUNGER

Together with the Mayor's Office of Operations, and with assistance from DOITT, HRA launched a new version of AccessNYC, the website where New Yorkers can go to find out if they qualify for more than 30 different benefits. This new, improved website, which is accessible in English and the six Local Law languages, will be the basis for many improvements for HRA clients. The immediate advantage is it is now possible to both apply and recertify for SNAP/food stamps online. And there is much more to come.

Historically, submitting documents to HRA has been a problem for both our clients and our staff because documents were often lost and the process added unnecessary transactions that created staff workload problems. We responded to these concerns and now it much easier to submit documents using scanners in our offices and at community organizations. More importantly, beginning later this month SNAP/food stamps clients will be able to start to submit documents using a smart phone as we begin to roll out new technology during the calendar year.

As part of the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety, HRA now has in-person outreach capacity in all 15 NYCHA developments that are targeted as part of that program. In addition, we will be partnering with NYCHA to reach residents at these developments who qualify for but are not using SNAP/food stamps.

Last month, we also began a major campaign to find people who qualify for SNAP/food stamps but are not using them. While close to 80% of eligible New Yorkers and 97% of eligible children are signed up for SNAP/food stamps, only 68% of eligible seniors and immigrant adults are. We hope you have seen our ads, which feature actual clients, in the subways, bus shelters, check cashing stores, laundromats, bodegas, hair salons and barbershops around the City. More than 1,000 people a day have been going to the website that is part of the campaign to increase access

to SNAP/food stamps, which directs people to AccessNYC so they can find out if they qualify and then sign up. We have materials available and would welcome the assistance of Councilmembers in helping spread the word.

PREVENTING AND ALLEVIATING HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is a major barrier to the stability that helps children succeed in school and adults find work and build a career. HRA has been a partner with the Department of Homeless Services in a major initiative to prevent and reduce homelessness.

Since last September, the City has been developing rental assistance programs to keep people in their homes and help them move out of shelters. The latest program is City FEPS. It is modeled on the state Family Eviction Prevention Supplement (FEPS) program, but the rent levels are increased to the Section 8 range that landlords will accept in the current market.

The LINC rental assistance programs got off to a slow start because originally the rent levels that New York State permitted were too low and landlords were resistant because of the bad experience from the sudden end of the Advantage program during the prior Administration. But we raised the rents, provided incentives to landlords, and added new LINC programs with City funds that are aimed at targeted groups. As a result, LINC and our other efforts are starting to produce results. As of May 1, more than 2,000 households – including almost 5,000 children and adults – moved from shelter to housing between December 2014 and April 2015 thanks to LINC. Including Section 8 and NYCHA referrals, a total of more than 4,000 households, with more than 12,000 children and adults, have been moved into homes during the first 10 months of the current fiscal year.

And our new program to have Judges immediately refer tenants at risk of eviction to legal service providers on the spot in the court house has begun in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens, with the roll out in Staten Island to come shortly.

PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY AND INTEGRITY

It is essential that people who qualify for and need benefits receive them. It is as important to ensure that benefits only go to those who do qualify. HRA is constantly working to improve its robust program integrity efforts.

For example, the Brooklyn D.A. recently arrested participants in a massive fraud scheme that offered free sneakers to Medicaid clients in return for submitting to unnecessary treatment. HRA staff were the main undercover operatives gathering evidence to bring down this operation and also staffed the phone taps and provided translations of conversations that exposed this cruel scheme to profit by exploiting our clients.

In addition, *The New York Times* published a story about HRA's increasingly sophisticated use of data mining to root out fraud. Using this technique, HRA has been able to focus its efforts on cases that are most likely to be fraudulent rather than cases that do not have merit.

With these recent achievements since March in mind, we would like to present these highlights from HRA's Executive Budget.

As of the Executive Budget: HRA has a Fiscal Year 2016 operating budget of \$9.9 billion (\$7.7 billion in City funds). Seventy-eight percent is for Medicaid and Cash Assistance benefits, with the balance supporting employment programs, homelessness prevention, legal services, rental assistance, and other services for low-income and vulnerable New Yorkers. Additionally, HRA administers \$3 billion in federal SNAP/food stamps that do not pass through the city budget.

Much of the public focus tends to be on the number of people receiving Cash Assistance, but it is important to note that a large number of the New Yorkers receiving assistance from HRA are working and that the benefits administered by HRA support them in remaining in the workforce. For low-income and vulnerable New Yorkers HRA provides critical services including:

- 2.445 million New Yorkers receiving Medicaid through HRA and tens of thousands more through the new State health insurance exchange;
- 1.7 million New Yorkers receiving SNAP food assistance and millions of meals served through food pantries and community kitchens;
- 700,000 New Yorkers receiving home energy assistance every winter;
- 190,000 children assisted through child support income; and
- 100,000 receiving one-time cash assistance grants each year to prevent evictions and utility shutoffs or provide assistance with other emergencies.

As presented in Table 1 in our PowerPoint, HRA benefits and services assist in maintaining employment; these efforts are intended to keep low-income New Yorkers in the workforce, as it is more efficient and less expensive than providing assistance after they are out of the workforce, especially after a prolonged absence. Cash Assistance, food and energy assistance programs, Medicaid, child support, and the Earned-Income Tax Credit all help to support New Yorkers struggling to survive on low paying jobs. In 2014, for example, HRA's Office of Child Support Enforcement collected more than \$742 million on behalf of 190,000 NYC children and nearly all of these collections went directly to families. Additionally, we are making it easier for Non-Custodial Parents to access our child support debt reduction programs which reduced \$12.3 million in child support debt owed to the government in 2014. Finally, parents whose government debt accumulated while earning less than the federal poverty level will have their debt automatically reduced to \$500 for that period.

HRA's homelessness prevention programs, legal services initiatives and rental assistance programs all serve to stabilize families, help individuals avoid losing employment, and provide support in the face of sudden emergencies. We will discuss our caseload in further detail, but it is worth noting that of the nearly 90,000 recipients who are eligible for cash assistance and subject to work requirements, 25,000 have fulltime jobs in which they make so little, they still qualify for public assistance. This is just one of many reasons why the Mayor's leadership in advocating

for raising the minimum wage is so important in the effort to address poverty and income inequality.

Additionally, as presented in Table 2, HRA provides support for vulnerable populations, including adults unable to care for themselves, home care services for seniors and individuals with physical or mental disabilities, support for people with clinically symptomatic HIV and AIDS, shelter and supportive services for families who are survivors of domestic violence, and legal services to address tenant harassment, avert homelessness and assist immigrants. In 2014 more than 7,400 middle and high school students also received counseling as part of HRA's Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (Teen RAPP). Teen RAPP funding in FY'16 is \$3 million, which will fund 22 social workers in schools to support this evidenced-based prevention, intervention and outreach program aimed at teaching students to recognize and change destructive patterns of behavior prior to their transference to adult relationships.

The broad range of programs and services administered by HRA explains the size of our staff and budget. HRA has a 14,439 budgeted headcount in FY'16 paid for with a combination of City, State, and federal funds. These public servants chose to work at HRA assisting low-income and vulnerable New Yorkers in need, many of them dedicating their entire careers to civil service. Just a few weeks ago I had the privilege of speaking at our employee recognition ceremony at DC 37 at which members of our staff were recognized for 25 years of service. HRA has both a diverse workforce and a unionized workforce.

The two pie charts in the PowerPoint we have provided to you each show how the HRA spending is currently estimated to change from year to year.

HRA's Budget:

- In the Executive Budget, \$28.6 million (\$29.7 million tax levy) and 57 positions were added in 2015. In 2016, the increase was \$162.8 million (\$131 million tax levy) and 328 positions were added.
- The HRA budget as of the Executive Plan totals \$9.9 billion (\$7.66 billion tax levy) in 2015, and is virtually unchanged in 2016, with an increase of .4% (\$33 million) in tax levy funds.
- The tax levy increase is due to:
 - rental assistance increases for additional placements in 2016 compared to 2015;
 - additional legal services including expansion of the anti-harassment initiative;
 - new staff in 2016 to implement reasonable accommodation requirements;
 - growth in the IDNYC program to manage additional applications.
- Total headcount is 14,535 in 2015 and 14,439 in 2016 (City funded headcount is 10,601 increasing to 10,689).

HRA's ten year capital budget is \$191.8 million of which \$137.5 million are City funds:

- \$78.6 million for technology to streamline operations including key investments to Client Benefits Re-engineering;

- \$76.1 million for facilities maintenance, equipment and improvements;
- \$33.9 million for the installation of telecommunications equipment; and
- \$3.2 million for vehicles.

Within our overall budget and staffing levels, we want to describe in greater detail our major initiatives and reforms, including:

- \$32 million (\$18 million City funds) for LINC rental assistance, increased LINC rent levels, Federally funded Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA), City FEPS and related programs.
 - Allows for a combined total of 8,480 move outs in FY'16 through funding for LINC, CityFEPS and Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA).
- \$20 million (increasing to \$36 million in 2017 as the providers ramp up) for anti-harassment legal services and \$4.3 million for related outreach – an increase from the prior Administration which funded an anti-eviction initiative at \$6.4 million that is also increasing to \$13.5 million in FY'16.
- \$5.6 million for additional immigration legal assistance and services to address Executive Action.
- \$51 million for Cash Assistance and \$21.9 million for additional rent arrears (\$58.9 million City funds) to support an average of 360,000 receiving ongoing benefits and 8,600 receiving one-time grants, while maintaining the flat annual caseload of 500,000. The total Cash Assistance budget is \$1.48 billion (\$651 million City funds).
- \$14.8 million (declining to \$7.5 million in 2017) for additional staff and OTPS for the IDNYC municipal identification card program; the projected decline is based on projected future demand following the extraordinary ramping up process this year to meet the current demand. However, if the level of demand remains higher than projected, adjustments can be made on an expedited basis as evidenced by the expedited response to the unprecedented demand this year.
- \$13 million (\$9 million City funds) for reasonable accommodations for clients with disabilities/Lovely H. compliance, including 74 baseline staff, and one-time contractor and consultant costs.
- \$12.3 million (\$4.8 million City funds) for 252 reform positions, including additional call takers, homeless prevention and legal services staff, and HASA case managers.

At the same time, there are significant savings and efficiencies in HRA's 2016 Executive Budget, including:

- Savings of \$21.3 million (\$9.6 million City funds), growing to \$28.5 million (\$12.7 million City funds) in 2017, from reductions in unnecessary and duplicative

administrative functions and positions, which are repurposed to support HRA's new reform staffing and other important operational changes.

- Administrative savings of \$380,000 (\$249,000 City funds) in HASA as a result of a new contract to manage the emergency housing portfolio for homeless clients with HIV/AIDS.
- Improved claiming in 2015 is providing additional one-time revenue from federal fringe benefits, producing City savings of \$72 million.

Changes from the Preliminary Budget for HRA mainly reflect the Administration's comprehensive effort to prevent and alleviate homelessness and focus on the continued provision of consolidated civil legal services, which will be discussed in more detail.

Next, here is a description of HRA's restructuring and streamlining initiatives to increase effectiveness and efficiency.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO SNAP/FOOD STAMPS

During 2014, there were about 1.716 million New York City residents receiving federal SNAP/food stamps, including more than 650,000 children, and they purchased a total of more than \$3 billion in food, generating about \$5.4 billion of economic activity in New York City, largely within small businesses.

The official SNAP participation rate is close to 80% in New York City, which is a relatively high rate. The participation rate among children is approximately 97%, but it is closer to 70% for seniors and immigrant adults. In order to connect more New Yorkers who qualify for these federal benefits we launched a major SNAP/food stamps outreach campaign in April targeting the two largest unenrolled but eligible groups – seniors and immigrants.

The centerpiece of the campaign is a marketing website, foodhelp.nyc, which includes videos featuring real SNAP clients sharing stories of how the program helped them, links to the newly-redesigned [ACCESS NYC](http://ACCESSNYC) site where people can apply, and an interactive map with the locations of food pantries, community kitchens and in-person SNAP application locations.

In addition to this campaign, HRA is partnering with dozens of community organizations, food pantries and advocates to generate a strong social media outreach effort and gain support for the campaign by leveraging the digital presence of community partners and with specially designed posters and brochures, #SNAPhelps. Outreach materials will be available in English and the six Local Law languages (Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Korean, Arabic, and Haitian Creole).

We have invested in a major effort to make enrollment for federal benefits easier, including ensuring that clients are able to use PCs to submit applications. We are seeking a federal waiver for on-demand SNAP interviews, allowing clients to call at their convenience rather than have to spend hours waiting at home for a worker to call. We are continuing to improve the AccessNYC

website to make it possible not only to apply online, but also recertify. And most recently, we launched a new initiative to enable clients to submit documents using a smart phone.

We are pleased that the Executive budget includes funding to restore the SNAP/food stamps headcount cut by the prior Administration, thereby allowing us to improve services in our centers. The restoration of 515 positions in 2015 and 361 in 2017 will ensure that we have sufficient staff to assist New Yorkers who qualify for federal food assistance to be able to receive it. Overall, beginning in 2015 and continuing in 2016, one of the biggest reforms throughout the agency is enhancing and improving client services and experiences by reducing unnecessary administrative processes and functions. Repurposing \$21.3 million in total funds (\$9.6 million in City funds) and 257 positions in 2016 will allow HRA to more fully support employment, homelessness prevention, legal services, rental assistance, disability accommodations, and other programs.

Employment Plan

HRA's Family Independence Administration (FIA) offers numerous employment programs and services to assist families and individuals improve their economic standing. Through these services – including basic education, training, work experience, job search, placement and retention services – FIA works to not only keep people on the job but improve their employment prospects.

The 12-month, unduplicated number of recipients receiving recurring Cash Assistance is expected to remain stable in 2016 at 500,000 – where it has remained since at least 2008. However, the monthly caseload is projected to fluctuate modestly as we work more aggressively to reach out to families and individuals who need rent arrears benefits to prevent evictions and homelessness, as well as reduce the counterproductive churning of adults and children off and on and off the caseload, which currently subjects HRA to a potential \$10 million New York State penalty for unnecessary fair hearings. A supplemental \$49.9 million in City funds and \$51.5 million in total funds in 2016 will support a monthly average of 360,000 recipients receiving ongoing Cash Assistance benefits.

Of these 360,000 most are not subject to work requirements, according to the same state and federal rules applied by prior Administrations. That is because about half are children and many more are seniors or clients who have barriers to employment because of either permanent or temporary disabilities. Of the approximately 90,000 recipients who are subject to current work requirements, 25,000 have jobs in which they make so little they still qualify for Cash Assistance. Increasing the minimum wage as the Mayor has called for is not only an effective tool to reduce poverty and income inequality, it will reduce our caseload as well.

As reported at our Preliminary Budget hearing, the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance approved our new Employment Plan on December 31st of last year. We currently spend approximately \$200 million a year on employment programs and under the

newly approved plan we are changing the way we provide services to enhance effectiveness. We are moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach and moving towards improved and individualized assessments with an emphasis on education, training, and employment-related services with a goal of long-term sustainability. As part of our plan, we are focused on eliminating unnecessary punitive and duplicative actions. Our goal is to reduce the number of preventable and inappropriate negative outcomes that trigger unnecessary fair hearings that subject us to a potential \$10 million State penalty, thereby allowing staff and service providers to focus on client needs and increase effective problem solving. As a result, we expect clients will avoid delays in accessing services, finding jobs, and moving to sustainable, long-term employment.

As mentioned earlier, we are developing an RFP within our existing budget to enhance employment services for New Yorkers with HIV who are eligible for HASA, and clients with HIV who are not eligible for HASA services will be able to receive employment services through our new Employment Plan. Shortly, we will issue a concept paper seeking proposals for new vendor contracts to further implement the Employment Plan, which will enable us to continue our progress on phasing out WEP.

PREVENTING AND ALLEVIATING HOMELESSNESS

HRA's Homelessness Prevention Administration is a critical part of the de Blasio Administration's effort to reduce homelessness and oversees HRA's expansion of homelessness prevention services through program coordination and new prevention initiatives.

As part of HRA's overall strategy to streamline programs and root out inefficiencies and duplicative efforts, HPA includes the following:

- Homelessness Diversion Units (HDUs) located at all HRA Job Centers and at DHS' PATH facility are now utilizing new diversion tools that include short-term financial support.
- HRA is now deploying on-site staff at DHS Homebase offices around the City and at the NYCHA administrative hearings office, in addition to staff at the Housing Courts.
- There is an Early Intervention Outreach Team (EIOT) for outreach to families and individuals in need of legal assistance or emergency rental assistance based on early warning referrals from the Housing Court.
- Landlords are essential to fighting homelessness, so we created the Landlord Ombudsman Services Unit (LOSU) to address the needs and concerns of landlords and management companies that provide permanent housing for families and individuals receiving public assistance.
- The Rental Assistance Program implements various LINC initiatives and City FEPS.
- The Legal Assistance Initiatives Program manages HRA's consolidated legal assistance programs

HRA also recently created the Family Independence Administration's Central Rent Processing Unit to centrally process, issue and deliver emergency rental assistance payments to landlords to prevent evictions.

LEGAL SERVICES

Our prevention efforts include a variety of legal services programs that have been consolidated at HRA, further adding to more streamlined and efficient services for the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

As we reported previously, the Administration has consolidated legal services from DHS, HPD, CJC, DYCD, and DFTA at HRA in order to enhance coordination and effectiveness. Contracted baselined legal services include: anti-eviction, anti-harassment tenant protection, immigration, securing federal disability benefits, and services for seniors. We are also developing a study of the unmet needs in Housing Court to evaluate what programs will be most effective in preventing evictions and homelessness.

The de Blasio Administration has made an unprecedented commitment to fund legal services for vulnerable New Yorkers with \$49.2 million allocated in HRA's FY'16 budget, growing to \$65.2 million in 2017.

For example, HRA received funding in the February plan to begin to implement an Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection Program targeted towards residents currently living in six neighborhoods identified for rezoning. HRA's Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection Program received \$5 million in City funds in 2015, increasing to \$20 million in 2016 and \$36 million in the baseline as the providers fully implement the services, with an additional \$4.3 million for outreach to inform residents of the upcoming changes and ensure they are aware of their legal rights. The goals of this program include preventing tenant harassment and displacement, keeping families and individuals in their homes, maintaining affordable housing, and stabilizing neighborhoods. HRA is preparing an RFP and will have new contracts in place by the Fall of 2015.

The Executive Budget also adds \$5.6 million to HRA's budget for immigrant legal assistance and services related to Executive Action for New Yorkers seeking to adjust their immigration status.

This anti-harassment tenant protection and immigration funding is in addition to the \$23.6 million in the 2016 baseline for legal services: \$13.5 million for anti-eviction services, including programs consolidated at HRA during FY'15 and funds added in the November Plan to increase the prior Administration's program from \$6.4 million to \$13.5 million; \$5.4 million for immigration related legal services; \$2.1 million for civil legal services for seniors; and \$2.6 million for legal services to secure federal disability benefits.

Finally, as you know, in 2015 HRA is overseeing \$18.2 million in funding added by the City Council during the Adopted Budget process for legal services for the working poor, family reunification immigration defense, the unaccompanied minors immigration initiative, assistance for domestic violence survivors and veterans, citywide legal services, and anti-eviction and SRO legal services.

LINC, CITY FEPS AND OTHER RENTAL ASSISTANCE AND SERVICES

In partnership with DHS, we manage new rental assistance and prevention programs targeted to homeless families and individuals residing in DHS shelters and HRA-run domestic violence facilities. From December 2014 through April 2015, we have seen progress in regard to LINC move outs because, together with DHS, we were able to quickly adjust the programs to meet the real needs of families and their potential landlords.

Working closely with DHS, we continue to improve the LINC rental assistance program to make it more effective. Since the program's creation, we have added three additional LINC programs and now there are a total of six unique LINC programs for homeless New Yorkers. The six LINC programs for homeless New Yorkers in the shelter system are:

- LINC I: Rental Assistance for working families;
- LINC II: Rental Assistance for families with multiple shelter system stays over a period of time and multi-system involvement;
- LINC III: Rental Assistance for survivors of domestic violence;
- LINC IV: Rental Assistance for seniors and for adults receiving Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability, or veterans disability benefits;
- LINC V: Rental Assistance for working adults; and
- LINC VI: Rental Assistance for families with children already in shelter who exit to live with relatives or friends.

Total funding for LINC rental assistance is \$88.2 million (\$63.9 City million tax levy) in FY'16. This funding reflects a higher rent level in the Section 8 range to make the program more appealing to landlords and effective for our clients who are competing for market rate apartments. Funded at \$7.2 million in total and City funds in 2016 and \$13.1 million in total and City funds in 2017, the program provides rental assistance at the 2014 US Department of Housing and Urban Development fair market rent levels. The Executive Budget adds \$2.1 million in City funds beginning in 2016, increasing to \$18.5 million (\$20.5 million City) in 2017 and \$52.9 million (\$53.8 million City) in 2018 for continuation of the existing LINC programs and for the new LINC VI. The Executive Budget supports a projected 6,355 new LINC placements in 2016, in addition to the nearly 2,000 move outs in 2015.

An additional \$1.6 million in total funds (\$1.3 million in City funds) was added to fund LINC Aftercare services in 2016 and beyond. This LINC Aftercare includes services for the especially vulnerable families at risk for shelter entry and programs aimed at stabilizing LINC clients once they move to permanent housing.

The LINC Landlord Campaign is funded at \$1.0 million in total and City funds in FY'15 and \$2.7 million in total and City funds in FY'16 for a grass-roots campaign to identify apartments that can be rented to provide access to affordable housing for homeless families and adults.

Last month, HRA and DHS implemented a new rental assistance and homelessness prevention program called CityFEPS. It is modeled on the state Family Eviction Prevention Supplement (FEPS) program, but the rent levels are increased to the Section 8 range that landlords will accept in the current market. CityFEPS Rental Assistance funds a single cohort of 1,000 families, which assumes 125 families will move into or retain housing in FY'15 and the remaining balance of 875 will move into or retain housing in FY'16 with some attrition. CityFEPS is funded at \$578,000 in total funds and \$173,000 in tax levy in FY'15 and \$8.5 million in total funds and \$2.5 million in tax levy in FY'16, with \$12 million in total funds and \$3.6 million in City funds in FY'17.

Other rental assistance programs to prevent and alleviate homelessness include HRA's program to provide support to families who are able to find housing on their own after leaving DHS's shelter intake process. This is funded at \$1.5 million in total and City funds in FY'16.

Finally, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development has allocated \$20 million of its Federal HOME grant to HRA for a Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) program. Our new HOME-funded TBRA Program will provide assistance to 1,250 households that are either currently residing in shelter or are chronically street homeless. Eligible households will have at least one child or adult in receipt of federal Supplemental Security Income or Social Security benefits. This is funded at \$10.8 million in total funds, including \$590,000 in City funds for inspections in FY'16; and it increases to \$18.5 million in 2017.

HASA CLIENT SERVICES

As of March 2015, HRA serves 32,309 medically eligible individuals through HASA programs and services. To enhance services and meet our obligation to provide emergency housing for all who are eligible for HASA services, we are planning a HASA-specific master contract through which we will obtain and maintain emergency housing and administer placements at a cost of \$1.7 million in FY'16 and \$2.3 in the baseline. And as discussed earlier, we are developing an RFP to enhance employment services for people with HIV who are eligible through our HASA program or our new Employment Plan.

IDNYC

Through the collaboration with the Mayor's Office of Operations and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, we continue to implement and serve as the "back office" for the IDNYC municipal ID card program. The entire IDNYC infrastructure, including the front-facing enrollment staff as well as the back-end review staff and all equipment, sits within HRA. This is why the whole of the IDNYC budget is in HRA. HRA's support includes back-end application processing, deployment of personnel, and procurement and space renovations.

As you know, when the card was launched in January, demand far exceeded our expectations, but since that time we have dramatically increased capacity at enrollment sites citywide – IDNYC is now accepting an average of 20,000 applications per week. Additional funding for the program is at \$6.5 million in FY’15 and \$14.8 million in FY’16 for total funding of \$20 million and \$25 million respectively. As we saw this year, if the level of demand remains higher than projected, adjustments can be made on an expedited basis. However, as more and more New Yorkers obtain their IDNYC, we expect demand to level off and the budget is reflective of that. We will continue to deploy appropriate staffing and resources to meet the demand so that every New Yorker who wants a card is able to obtain one.

ASSISTANCE FOR CLIENTS WITH DISABILITIES

HRA continues to implement significant reforms to provide greater accessibility to our benefits and services for clients with disabilities as part of our commitment to providing reasonable accommodations and to meet the requirements of the Lovely H. federal court settlement. With funding at \$507,000 in 2015 and \$13.1 million in 2016, HRA is developing and implementing policies and procedures and modifying programs to provide clients with disabilities meaningful access to our programs and services. HRA’s new Office of Disability Affairs and the Office of Customized Assistance, in conjunction with an expert consultant, are developing tools to assess clients’ need for reasonable accommodations as the result of physical and/or mental health limitations or other impairments, so that HRA can then provide the appropriate accommodations.

HRA will provide case management services, based on the needs of the client, in an effort to assist clients with disabilities to maintain their benefits and connect them to federal disability benefits where appropriate. And as with all clients, before taking a negative action for failure to comply with required activities, HRA will review the case and, in these instances, ensure that the client’s disability was not a factor in the non-compliance and that reasonable accommodations, if needed, were provided to enable the client to comply with required activities. Staff training and community engagement are essential to implementing meaningful changes to ensure that New Yorkers who should be receiving benefits are not being denied because of actual or perceived disability.

The last few slides in our PowerPoint present several representative new reforms that we have been underway since I testified at the Preliminary Budget hearing. We have accomplished a great deal over the past year and since March, and we are pleased that the Executive Budget will allow us to continue with our reform initiatives during the coming year.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify and I welcome your questions.

BUDGET TESTIMONY

Steven Banks, Commissioner

May 19, 2015



**Human Resources
Administration**
Department of
Social Services

OVERVIEW: **Key Accomplishments**

Employment

- We are issuing concept papers to begin the RFP process for new employment and training programs
- Already converted 500 CUNY WEP slots into work study
- Developing an RFP to enhance employment services for people with HIV who are eligible through our HASA program or our new Employment Plan
- Currently 1,271 clients are enrolled in four-year college

Access to SNAP/Food Stamps

- Launched a new version of AccessNYC
- Can now apply and recertify for SNAP/food stamps on line
- Made it easier to submit documents using scanners in our offices and at community organizations
- Beginning later this month it will be possible to submit documents using your smart phone
- Partnered with NYCHA in 15 targeted NYCHA developments to identify residents who qualify for but are not using SNAP/food stamps
- Initiated a major outreach campaign to increase access to SNAP/food stamps

Major Initiatives: SNAP/Food Stamps Access

I've earned Social Security, and when I needed help buying food, SNAP HELPED.

- MARY, AUTHOR AND SINGER
Upper West Side

▶ WATCH MY STORY AT FoodHelp.nyc

Now it's easier to apply online at FoodHelp.nyc

Call 311 for more info

©2015 The City of New York, Human Resources Administration. All Rights Reserved. 4/2015

NYC AD & COMM
BUREAU

HUMAN RESOURCES
ADMINISTRATION
DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES
DAVID BANKS
COMMISSIONER

 ACCESSNYC



Cuando no tenía suficientes recursos para alimentar a mis hijos, SNAP ME AYUDÓ.

- WENDY, ASPIRANTE A DUEÑA DE NEGOCIO
Staten Island

▶ VEA NUESTRA HISTORIA EN FoodHelp.nyc


Ahora es más fácil aplicar por internet en FoodHelp.nyc

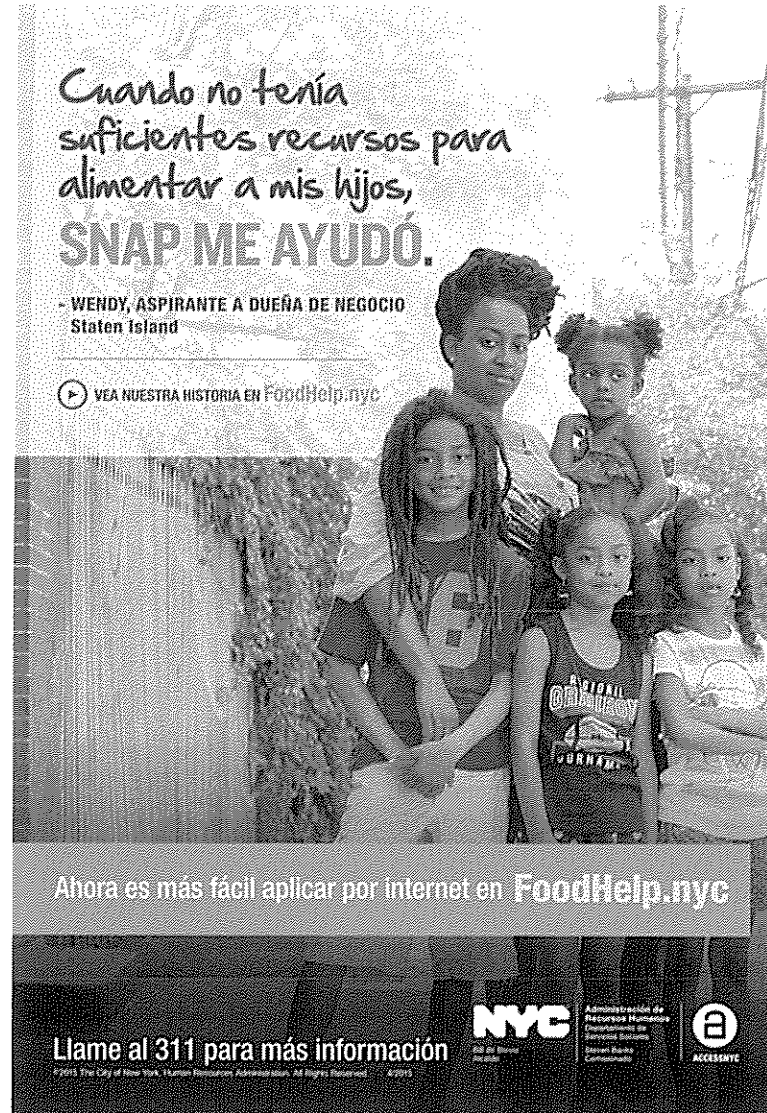
Llame al 311 para más información

©2015 The City of New York, Human Resources Administration. All Rights Reserved. 4/2015

NYC AD & COMM
BUREAU

ADMINISTRACIÓN DE
RECURSOS HUMANOS
DEPARTAMENTO DE
SERVICIOS SOCIALES
DAVID BANKS
COMISIONADO

 ACCESSNYC



Major Initiatives: SNAP/Food Stamps Access

The screenshot shows the FoodHelp.nyc website. The main header features the logo and a navigation menu. A large testimonial from Andres, East Harlem, is prominently displayed, stating: "I earned Social Security and Medicare, and when I couldn't afford healthy food, SNAP HELPED." Below the testimonial is a "Watch My Story" button. To the right, two vertical panels offer assistance: "I NEED HELP GETTING FOOD RIGHT NOW. (Emergency Food Assistance)" with a "GET HELP" button, and "I NEED HELP BUYING FOOD REGULARLY. (SNAP Benefits)" with a "GET HELP" button. The footer includes language options (English, Español, Pyckkom, 中文, 한국어, Uj... | Kreyòl), social media links, and a "I NEED OTHER HELP" link. The bottom of the screen shows a Windows taskbar with various open applications and the system clock at 11:32 AM on 5/13/2015.

FoodHelp.nyc

ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN

I earned Social Security and Medicare, and when I couldn't afford healthy food, **SNAP HELPED.**

Andres, East Harlem

Watch My Story

I NEED HELP GETTING FOOD RIGHT NOW.
(Emergency Food Assistance)

GET HELP

I NEED HELP BUYING FOOD REGULARLY.
(SNAP Benefits)

GET HELP

NYC
Bill de Blasio
Mayor

Human Resources
Administration
Department of
Social Services
Steven Banks
Commissioner

ENGLISH | ESPAÑOL | PYCKKOM | 中文 | 한국어 | Uj... | KREYÒL

SHARE

SNAPHelps

I NEED OTHER HELP

11:32 AM
5/13/2015

OVERVIEW: **Key Accomplishments**

Homelessness

- Between December 2014 and April 2015, in partnership with DHS, provided rental assistance to 2,000 households, including almost 5000 children and adults, to enable them to move from shelter to housing.
- Including Section 8 and NYCHA referrals, a total of more than 4,000 households, with more than 12,000 children and adults, were moved into homes during the first 10 months of FY'15.
- Implemented a new program for Judges to immediately refer at risk tenants to legal services providers in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens Housing Courts, with the roll out in Staten Island to come shortly.

Program Accountability and Integrity

- The Brooklyn D.A. recently arrested participants in a massive fraud scheme that offered free sneakers to Medicaid clients in return for submitting to unnecessary treatment. HRA staff were the main undercover operatives gathering evidence to bring down this operation and also staffed the phone taps and provided translations of conversations that exposed this cruel and unlawful treatment.
- *The New York Times* reported on HRA's use of sophisticated data mining to root out fraud. Using this approach, HRA was able to focus its efforts on cases that were most likely to be fraudulent instead of cases without merit.

OVERVIEW: NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA)

- HRA serves approximately 3 million low-income New Yorkers through a broad range of programs to address poverty and income inequality and prevent homelessness.
- As of the Executive Budget, HRA has a Fiscal Year 2016 operating budget of \$9.9 billion (\$7.7 billion in City funds)
 - 78 percent is for Medicaid payments and cash assistance benefits.
 - The balance supports employment programs, homeless prevention, legal services, rental assistance, and other services for low-income New Yorkers.
 - HRA continues to be responsible for much of the Medicaid program - which totals \$29 billion in NYC, although only 20 percent of these costs are part of the HRA budget; HRA also administers \$3 billion in federal SNAP (food stamps) benefits that do not pass through the City budget.
 - This means that HRA is responsible for a total of \$35 billion in programs and services.

HRA is about more than cash assistance; we help low-income workers stay on the job

- Annually HRA provides critical support that helps many low-income New Yorkers remain in the workforce:

500,000 receive ongoing cash assistance annually; any given month 360,000 on cash assistance.

2.445 million receiving Medicaid

1.716 million receiving federally-funded food assistance

700,000 receiving home energy assistance

100,000 receiving one-time cash assistance annually to prevent evictions and utility shutoffs and assist with other emergencies

190,000 children assisted through child support income

- Efforts aimed at keeping low-income workers in the workforce are much less expensive and more efficient than providing assistance to New Yorkers after they are out of the workforce, especially after an extended absence.

TABLE 1: Benefits and Services

Cash Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500,000 receive ongoing assistance over the course of a year and another 100,000 receive one-time emergency grants; 360,000 recipients in any given month, of whom about 8,500 are receiving one-time assistance
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)/ food stamps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.7 million recipients as of March 2015
HRA Administered Medicaid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.445 million enrollees as of March 2015 (excludes enrollees in NYS Health Exchange beginning 1/1/14)
Emergency Food Assistance Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,120,031 average monthly meals/people served in fiscal year 2014
Home Energy Assistance Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 796,145 recipients in heat year 2014*
Child Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 282,190 cases with orders as of February 2015 • Over \$742 million in collections in CY 2014 • Over 92% of collections distributed directly to families

*heat year runs from November to October.

TABLE 2: Support for Vulnerable Populations

Adult Protective Services

- 3,884 cases being assessed for services as of March 2015
- 6,213 undercare cases as of March 2015

Homecare

- 123,005 total home care enrollees as of March 2015

HIV/AIDS Services Administration

- 32,309 cases served as of March 2015

Domestic Violence

- Over 1,000 families served per day in emergency and transitional shelters in February 2015
- 3,492 non-residential cases served in February 2015

Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program

- 7,428 students received counseling in 2014

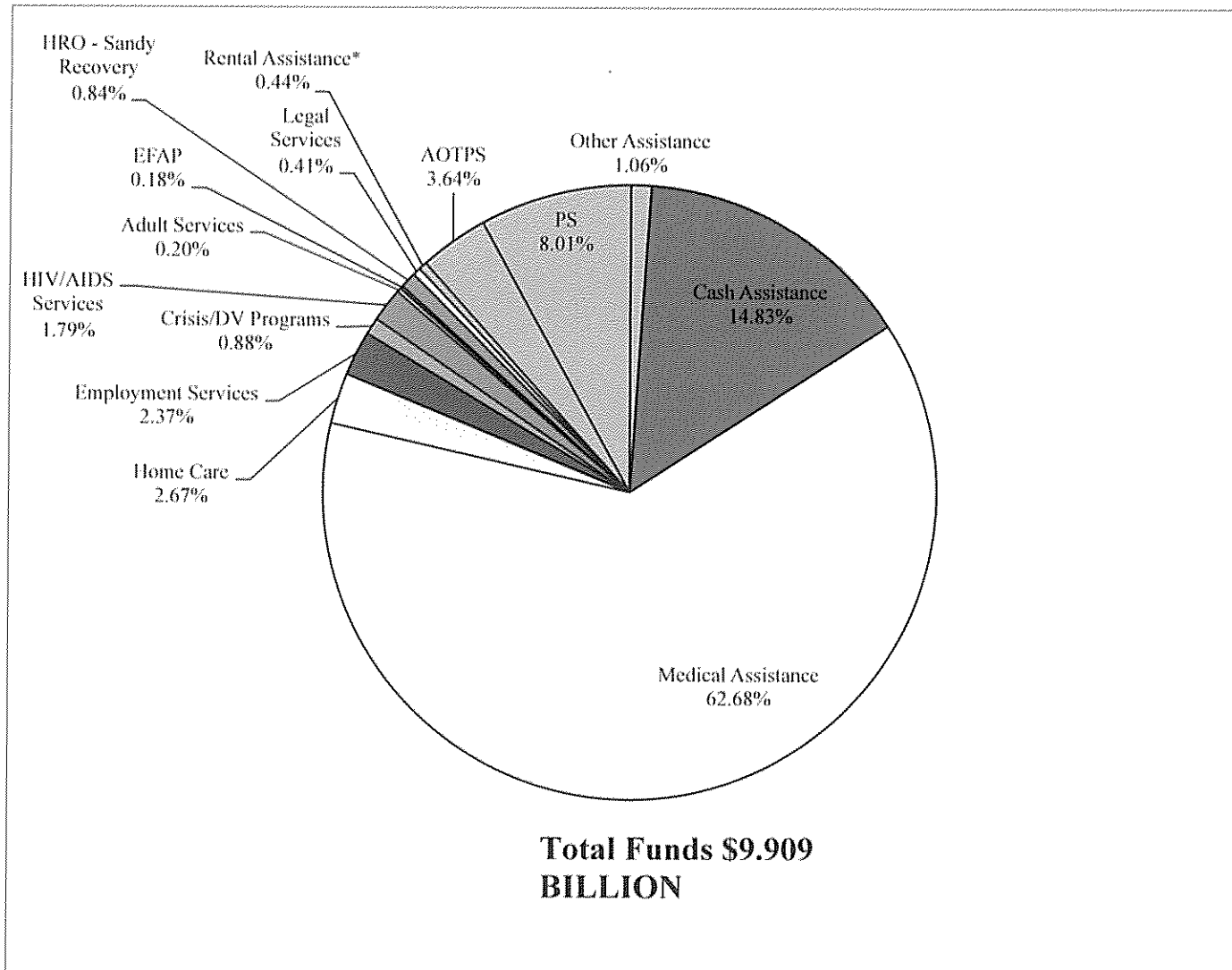
OVERVIEW: NYC HRA Staff

- 14,439 budgeted headcount in FY'16, paid for with a combination of City, State, and federal funds
- Public servants who chose to work at HRA to help New Yorkers in need; many dedicating their entire careers to public service
- Diverse workforce: 70% women, 59% African-American, 18% Hispanic, 15% White, and 8% Asian
- Unionized workforce

DC 37 Local 1549	DC 37 SSEU Local 371	DC 37 Local 2627	DC 37 Local 1407	DC 37 Local 924
CWA Local 1180	Teamsters Local 237	The Civil Services Bar Association of Local 237	The Organization of Staff Analysts	The New York State Nurses Association
	The United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners	IBEW Local 3	Local 30 of the International Union of Operating Engineers	

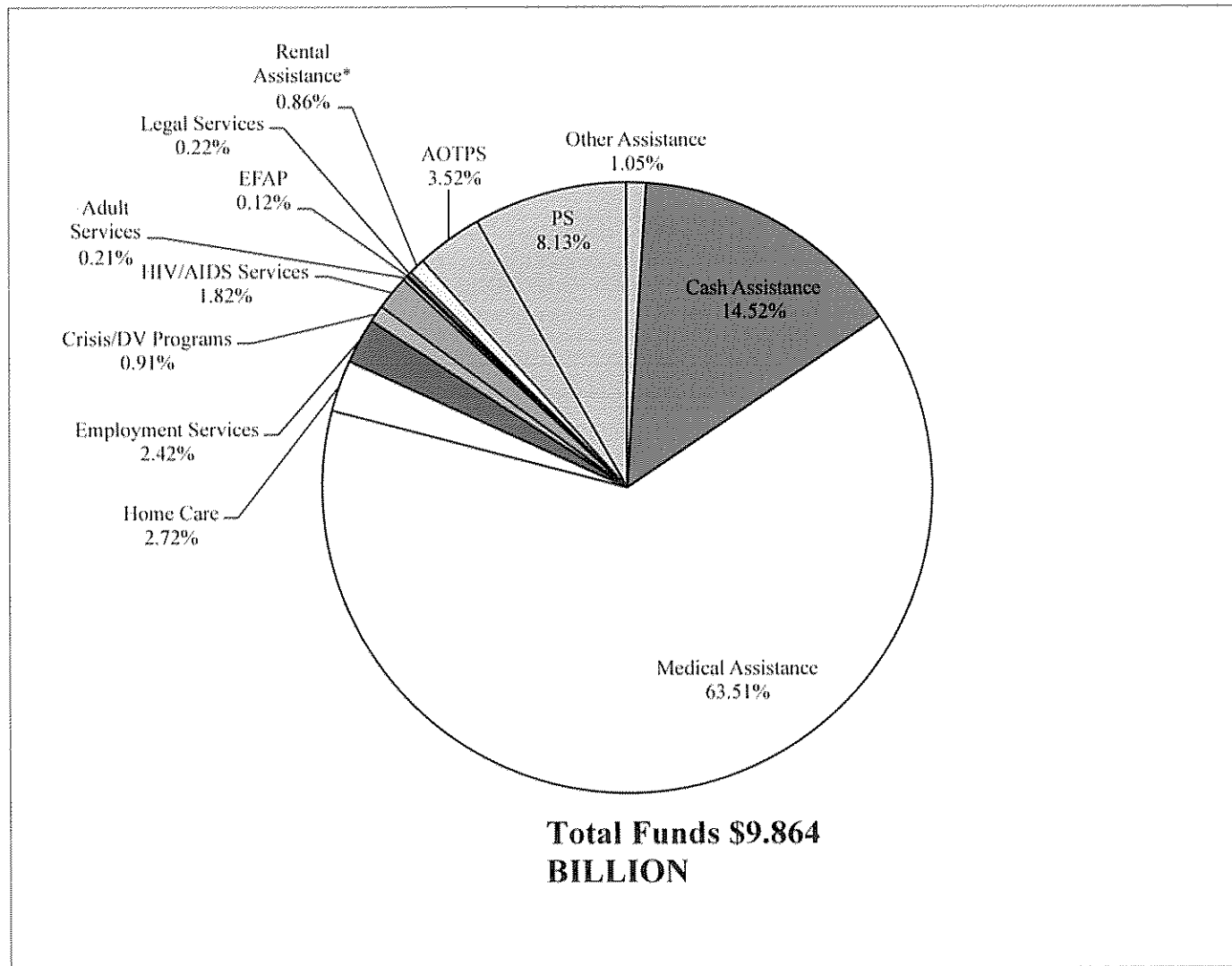
CHART 1:

HRA Executive Budget FY 2015



*includes LINC rental assistance and CityFEPS

CHART 2: HRA Executive Budget FY 2016



*includes LINC rental assistance and CityFEPS

Executive Budget Overview

- In the Executive Budget, \$28.6 million (\$29.7 million tax levy) and 57 positions were added in 2015; in 2016, the increase was \$162.8 million (\$131 million tax levy) and 328 positions were added.
- The HRA budget as of the Executive Plan totals \$9.9 billion (\$7.66 billion tax levy) in 2015, and is virtually unchanged in 2016, with an increase of .4% (\$33 million) in tax levy funds.
- The tax levy increase is due to:
 - rental assistance increases for additional placements in 2016 compared to 2015;
 - additional legal services including expansion of the anti-harassment initiative;
 - new staff in 2016 to implement reasonable accommodation requirements;
 - growth in the IDNYC program to manage additional applications.
- Total headcount is 14,535 in 2015 and 14,439 in 2016 (City funded headcount is 10,601 increasing to 10,689).

Executive Budget Overview: Capital

- HRA's ten year capital budget is \$191.8 million of which \$137.5 million are City funds:
 - \$78.6 million for technology to streamline operations, including key investments to Client Benefits Re-engineering;
 - \$76.1 million for facilities maintenance, equipment and improvements;
 - \$33.9 million for the installation of telecommunications equipment;
 - And \$3.2 million for vehicles.

2016 Executive Budget: Major Initiatives and Reforms

- \$32 million (\$18 million City funds) for LINC rental assistance, increased LINC rent levels, Federally-funded Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA), City FEPS and related programs.
 - Allows for a combined total of 8,480 move outs in FY'16 through funding for LINC, CityFEPS and Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)
- \$20 million (increasing to \$36 million in FY'17 as providers ramp up) for anti-harassment legal services and \$4.3 million for related outreach – an increase from the prior Administration which funded an anti-eviction initiative at \$6.4 million that is also increasing to \$13.5 million in FY'16.
- \$51 million for Cash Assistance and \$21.9 million for additional rent arrears (\$58.9 million City funds) to support an average of 360,000 receiving ongoing benefits and 8,600 receiving one-time grants, while maintaining the flat annual caseload of 500,000. The total Cash Assistance budget is \$1.48 billion (\$651 million City Funds).

2016 Executive Budget: Major Initiatives and Reforms

- \$5.6 million for additional immigration legal assistance and services to address Executive Action.
- \$14.8 million (declining to \$7.5 million in 2017) for additional staff and OTPS for IDNYC; the projected decline is based on projected future demand following the extraordinary ramping up process this year to meet the current demand. However, if the level of demand remains higher than projected, adjustments can be made on an expedited basis as evidenced by the expedited response to the unprecedented demand this year.
- \$13 million (\$9 million City funds) for reasonable accommodations for clients with disabilities, including 74 baseline staff and one-time contractor and consultant costs.
- \$12.3 million (\$4.8 million City funds) for 252 reform positions, including additional call takers, homeless prevention and legal services staff, and HASA case managers.

2016 Executive Budget: Savings and Efficiencies

- Savings of \$21.3 million (\$9.6 million City funds), growing to \$28.5 million (\$12.7 million City funds) in 2017, from reductions in unnecessary and duplicative administrative functions and positions, which are repurposed to support HRA's new reform staffing and other important operational changes.
- Administrative savings of \$380,000 (\$249,000 City funds) in HASA as a result of a new contract to manage the emergency housing portfolio for homeless clients with HIV/AIDS.
- Improved claiming in 2015 is providing additional one-time revenue from federal fringe benefits, producing City savings of \$72 million.

HRA Reforms: Re-engineering Update

HRA's Re-engineering initiative is about making it easier for clients to access benefits, and reducing the burden of things like data entry on staff so they can focus on helping people in need. To do this, we are using the latest technology to give clients greater access and making our internal processes more efficient.

- Clients can apply and recertify for SNAP/food stamps online through ACCESS NYC and will be able to conduct interviews by phone.
- Clients can fax documents, or scan them at HRA electronic document submission centers.
- Later this year, clients will also be able to view information about their case and update their information remotely.
- We are launching a new initiative that will allow clients to submit documents via their smart phones.

Major Initiatives: SNAP Access

1.7 million New Yorkers currently receive federal SNAP/food stamps from HRA but data suggest that more qualify but do not receive benefits, particularly seniors and immigrants.

- Make enrollment for federal benefits easier
 - Funding in FY'16 restores the headcount cut by the prior Administration, thereby improving services
 - Clients can now use PCs to submit applications and designated staff have been assisting clients with accessing services on-site.
 - On-demand interviews are being implemented so clients can call at their convenience
 - Improving AccessNYC so clients can both apply and recertify online
 - Launching an initiative so clients can use a smart phone to submit documents
- Launch major outreach campaign
 - Targeted ads on subways, buses, and bus shelters, and in neighborhood locations such as check cashing stores, bodegas, hair and nail salons, barber shops and laundromats.
 - Partnering with dozens of community organizations, food pantries and advocates to generate a strong social media outreach effort and gain support for the campaign by leveraging the digital presence of community partners and with specially designed posters and brochures, #SNAPhelps.
 - Materials will be available in English and the six Local Law languages (Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Korean, Arabic, and Haitian Creole.)

HRA Reforms: Employment Plan

Recurring annual assistance in a given year is provided to 500,000 clients and 360,000 in any month;

about half are children, many more are seniors or have permanent or temporary disabilities and for that reason not subject to work requirements.

Of the approximately 90,000 who are subject to work requirements, 25,000 have jobs; however, they make so little they still qualify for public assistance.

- HRA is changing the way that it provides employment services, moving from a one-size fits all approach to improved and individualized assessments, emphasis on education, training and employment-related services and long-term sustainability and eliminating unnecessary punitive and duplicative actions.
- HRA's past approach was to track job placements for *only* 6 months, but 25-30% of HRA's reported placements & assistance ended up with clients returning to seek recurring Cash Assistance again within 12 months.

HRA Reforms: Employment Plan

- Reforms to HRA's employment programs are based on these principles:
 - Maximize Education, Training, And Employment-Related Services
 - 60% of employable clients lack a high school diploma
 - Allow recipients up to age 24 to participate in full-time basic education
 - Increase access to targeted training for jobs in high-growth industries and utilize available Career Pathway programs
 - Allow participation in four-year college degree programs
 - Replace “One-Size-Fits-All” Approach With Improved Assessments & Programs That Address Specific Clients' Needs & Abilities
- Concept papers seeking proposals for new vendor contracts to implement the reforms are being released.

Major Initiatives: Homelessness Prevention

Substantial Investment in homelessness prevention services

Homelessness Prevention Administration within HRA oversees new and expanded programs to enhance homelessness prevention and early intervention and streamline services.

- Homelessness Diversion Units (HDUs) located at all HRA Job Centers and at DHS' PATH facility are utilizing diversion tools that include short-term financial support
- HRA is deploying on-site staff at DHS Homebase offices around the City and at the NYCHA administrative hearings office in addition to staff at the Housing Courts
- The Early Intervention Outreach Team (EIOT) conducts outreach to families and individuals in need of legal assistance or emergency rental assistance based on early warning referrals from the Housing Court
- The Landlord Ombudsman Services Unit (LOSU) addresses the needs and concerns of landlords and management companies that provide permanent housing for families and individuals receiving public assistance
- The Rental Assistance Program implements the various LINC initiatives and CityFEPS
- The Legal Assistance Initiatives Program manages HRA's consolidated legal services programs
- Family Independence Administration's Central Rent Processing Unit centrally processes, issues and delivers emergency rental assistance payments

Major Initiatives: Legal Services Initiatives

An unprecedented commitment of \$49.2 million in FY'16, growing to \$65.2 million in 2017.

Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection Program

- HRA received \$5 million in the February Plan to begin the initiative in FY'15; to ensure services began immediately, funds in the remainder of FY'15 were contracted to two legal service providers, LSNY and Legal Aid, who already have citywide anti-eviction contracts.
- \$20 million in 2016 and \$36 million in the baseline as the providers fully implement the services, with an additional \$4.3 million for outreach to inform residents of the upcoming changes and ensure they are aware of their legal rights.
- For residents currently living in 6 neighborhoods identified for rezoning and 13 zip codes in and around rezoning areas to:
 - prevent tenant harassment and displacement,
 - keep families and individuals in their homes,
 - maintain affordable housing and
 - stabilize neighborhoods.
- HRA is preparing an RFP and will have new contracts in place by the Fall of 2015.

Major Initiatives: Legal Services Initiatives

- **The Executive Budget adds:**
 - \$5.6 million for legal assistance and related services for immigrants, focused on Executive Action for New Yorkers seeking to adjust their immigration status.
- **This anti-harassment and immigration funding is in addition to the \$23.6 million in the 2016 baseline:**
 - \$13.5 million for anti-eviction services, including programs consolidated at HRA during FY'15 and funds added in the November Plan to increase the prior Administration's program from \$6.4 million to \$13.5 million
 - \$5.4 million for immigration related legal services
 - \$2.1 million for civil legal services for seniors
 - \$2.6 million for legal services to secure federal disability benefits
- **In 2015, HRA also oversees \$18.2 million in legal services funding added by the Council during the budget process.**

Major Initiatives: Rental Assistance to Prevent and Alleviate Homelessness

- **LINC Rental Assistance** – adds funding for increased rent levels and to fully fund the LINC programs in the out-years
 - \$7.2 million in total and City funds in FY'16 and \$13.1 million in total and City funds in FY'17 to fund rental assistance at HUD fair market rents.
 - \$2.1 million City funds beginning in 2016, increasing to \$18.5 million (\$20.5 million City) in 2017 and \$52.9 million (\$53.8 million City) in 2018 for continuation of the existing LINC programs and for the new LINC VI. The Executive Budget supports a projected 6,355 new LINC placements in 2016, in addition to the nearly 2,000 move outs in 2015.
- **LINC Aftercare** - \$1.6 million in total funds (\$1.3 million in City funds) for additional LINC Aftercare services in 2016 and beyond.
- **LINC Landlord Campaign** - \$1.0 million in total and City funds in FY'15 and \$2.7 million in total and City funds in FY'16 to implement a grass-roots campaign to promote access to affordable housing for homeless families and adults.

Major Initiatives: Rental Assistance to Prevent and Alleviate Homelessness

There now exist six unique LINC programs for homeless New Yorkers.

- LINC I: Rental Assistance for working families;
- LINC II: Rental Assistance for families with multiple shelter system stays over a period of time and multi-system involvement;
- LINC III: Rental Assistance for survivors of domestic violence;
- LINC IV: Rental Assistance for seniors and for adults receiving Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability, or veterans disability benefits;
- LINC V: Rental Assistance for working adults; and
- LINC VI: Rental Assistance for families with children currently in shelter who exit to live with relatives or friends.

Major Initiatives: Rental Assistance to Prevent and Alleviate Homelessness

<u>Shelter Relocations</u> <u>(Dec. 2014 – April 2015)</u>	<u>HPD</u> <u>SECTION 8</u>	<u>NYCHA</u> <u>Priority</u> <u>Referral</u>	<u>LINC</u> <u>TOTAL</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Progress To Date (Households)	242	1786	2009	4,037
Progress To Date (Individuals)	842	6215	4973	12,030

*As of May 1, 2015, prior to CityFEPS rollout

Major Initiatives: Rental Assistance to Prevent and Alleviate Homelessness

- **CityFEPS Rental Assistance**

- HRA and DHS implemented a new rental assistance and homelessness prevention program called CityFEPS.
- It is modeled on the state Family Eviction Prevention Supplement (FEPS) program, but the rent levels are increased to the Section 8 range that landlords will accept in the current market.
- \$578,000 in total funds and \$173,000 in FY'15 and \$8.475 million in total fund and \$2.542 million in FY'16 and \$12.0 million in total funds and \$3.6 million in City funds in FY'17. CityFEPS funds a single cohort of 1,000 families; assumes 125 families will move into housing in FY'15 and the remaining balance of 875 will move into housing in FY'16.

- **Federal HOME Tenant Based Rental Assistance**

- Our new HOME Funded TBRA Program will provide assistance to 1,250 households that are either currently residing in shelter or are chronically street homeless. Eligible households will have at least one child or adult in receipt of federal Supplemental Security Income or Social Security benefits.
- This is funded at \$10.8 million in total funds, including \$590,000 in City funds for inspections in FY'16; and it increases to \$18.5 million in 2017.

Major Initiatives: HASA

- As of March 2015, HRA serves 32,309 medically eligible individuals through HASA programs and services.
- To enhance services for clients, we are implementing a HASA Master Lease Contract to administer housing placements at a cost of \$1.7 million in FY'16 and \$2.3 in the baseline.
- Developing an RFP for a program within our existing budget to enhance employment services for people with HIV who are eligible through our HASA program or our new Employment Plan.

HRA Major Initiatives: IDNYC

- Through a collaboration with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and the Mayor's Office of Operations, HRA is proud to serve as the "back office" for IDNYC.
- The infrastructure for this program, including the front-facing enrollment staff as well as the back-end review staff and all equipment, sits within HRA. This is why the whole of the IDNYC budget is in HRA.
- HRA support includes: back-end application processing, hiring of personnel, procurement and space renovation.

HRA Major Initiatives: IDNYC

- \$6.5 million in FY'15 and \$14.8 million in FY'16 for total funding of \$20 million and \$25 million respectively. If the level of demand remains higher than projected, adjustments can be made on an expedited basis as occurred this year for the unprecedented ramp up
- Processing 20,000 applications a week
- Currently operating in 26 locations, including revolving “pop-up” sites

HRA Reform Initiatives

Providing Reasonable Accommodations and the Lovely H. Settlement

- As discussed in HRA's Preliminary Budget testimony, we will implement significant reforms to provide greater accessibility to clients with disabilities as part of a proposed Settlement that would end the nine years of litigation of the Lovely H. case.
- **Reasonable Accommodation/Lovely H.** – Funding provided for 74 HRA staff, increased vendor services due to volume, one-time costs of infrastructure needs, and SSI federal appeals services in a new RFP.
- **WeCARE/Lovely H.** - related reforms:
 - Clients can submit documents by mail, fax and email; Receipts provided for submissions;
 - Clients offered copies of their Biopsychosocial (BPS);
 - Clients offered assistance in obtaining needed medical documentation for WeCARE or Reasonable Accommodation requests.

HRA Reforms

Made the Child Support Arrears Credit Program application available on the HRA website to provide easier access to debt reduction programs

Designing program to include Harm Reduction Services as a referral option for clients

Implemented WeCARE Second Chance appointments

Automated the Financial Waiver process between the HRA Office of Child Support Enforcement and community-based organizations.

Notifying Non-Custodial Parents that they can enroll in the Arrears Credit Program to reduce child support debt owed

Developed tracking system for complaints relating to services for LGBTQI clients

HRA Reforms

Examples of Ongoing Reforms Implemented Since the Preliminary Budget Hearing

Reforms to address HRA policies that have harmed clients, have had an adverse impact on staff workload and morale, and subject the City to potential financial penalties:

Developing a plan to include financial literacy in new service model

Developed fillable version of the FIA School Training and Enrollment Letter (W-700D) to eliminate the need for in-person submission and reduce administrative burden on participating training and educational programs (particularly CUNY) in verifying enrollment and hours of participation

Implemented Shelter Exit Transition (SET) Program for single adults in DHS shelter

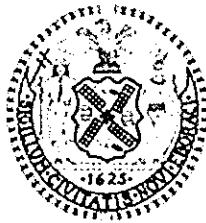
Implemented independent job search pilot as part of our State-approved Employment Plan

Implemented interim Medicaid Renewal on-demand fax unit pending State Medicaid takeover

Enrolling clients in HSE, ESL, ABE in full-time education activities



**Administration for
Children's Services**



Gladys Carrión, Commissioner

Testimony to the New York City Council

Committees on General Welfare, Juvenile Justice, and Women's Issues

May 19, 2015

"New York City Council Fiscal Year 2016 Executive Budget Hearing"

Good afternoon Chairs Ferreras, Cumbo, Levin, and Cabrera and members of the Finance, Women's Issues, General Welfare, and Juvenile Justice Committees. I am Gladys Carrión, the Commissioner of the Administration for Children's Services, and with me today is Susan Nuccio, our Deputy Commissioner for Financial Services and Jill Krauss, Deputy Commissioner for Communications and Community Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to update you on our 2016 Executive Budget and to address the improvements that ACS is making to our systems, for our providers, and most importantly for the children and families that we serve.

Children's Services' mission is to promote the safety, permanency and well-being of New York City's children and young people. Those who are served by the child welfare, juvenile justice, and in subsidized child care systems deserve nothing less than what we provide for our children: access to a good education, quality services to meet their physical and emotional needs, continuous support from and connections to stable adults and the ability to transition into young adulthood and maintain positive healthy relationships throughout their lives. With this in mind, the agency is increasingly focused on child well-being.

This administration's commitment to serving vulnerable New Yorkers allows ACS to focus on the well-being of young people in our care. Since Mayor de Blasio took office, I am very proud to report that ACS has committed nearly 700 new positions dedicated to supporting and protecting children and families, ten of which are self-funded. The staff increases are a result of the reform work on which I have previously briefed the Council - including Operation SAFE, which dedicated 368 (six of which are self-funded) positions to protect some of our most challenged families, as well as 83

positions to strengthen supervision and training and to develop new initiatives. Since the preliminary budget, an additional 225 positions will be funded to support our work.

Budget Overview

ACS' operating budget for Fiscal Year 2016 provides for operating expenses of \$2.9 billion, \$902 million, of which are City funds. In the Executive 2016 budget, ACS gained \$28.7 million in funding for new needs, of which \$21.3 million is City Tax Levy dollars, which will be used to expand access to and oversight of our Early Care and Education system, to improve services at the Nicholas Scopetta Children's Center, and to increase the administrative functions of the agency, including additional Information Technology staff.

Improvements for ACS Systems

Early Care and Education

The 2016 ACS Budget proposes adding over \$19 million new dollars to bolster our Early Care and Education Services in several areas. In order to improve the stability and quality of the services in contracted settings, when fully implemented Fiscal Year 17, \$5.9 million dollars will fund 63 new positions, four of which are self-funded. ACS will hire 23 staff to ensure compliance with *EarlyLearn* and Head Start contract requirements and provide technical assistance and training to contracted providers. We also will hire 24 maintenance and building trades' staff to allow a timelier and more cost efficient response to facility issues, seven staff to analyze data and maintain new software systems and nine overhead staff to support this early education improvement plan.

ACS will also expand access to services. The administration has baselined \$12.6 million dollars to fund low income vouchers. The Council and Administration jointly funded this effort last year in order to provide care to families who had been on the waiting list to receive low income vouchers. We expect the baselined \$12.6 million to fund approximately 1,700 children from low income families to receive a full year of subsidized care.

Finally, ACS is using almost one million to reduce the fee paid by parents whose children receive part-time care in *EarlyLearn* settings. Most of our *EarlyLearn* programs are funded by UPK dollars. UPK, which is a free program, is now funding a larger portion of the day, so ACS is decreasing parent fees correspondingly, which will provide some relief to our 5,500 families who pay a part-time fee.

Nicholas Scoppetta Children's Center

In order to better meet the medical and programmatic needs of children newly placed into care, ACS is creating 117 new positions at the Nicholas Scoppetta Children's Center at a cost of \$5.9 million, of which \$2.4 million is City Tax Levy. The enhancement will enable ACS to replace nursing, child care, and support positions that are currently contracted through a temporary employment agency with permanent city employee positions. Because the Children's Center serves significant numbers of medically fragile children, as well as those who present behavioral challenges, we must be able to rely on permanent staff, especially on nights, weekends and holidays to maintain a safe and supportive environment. To achieve this stability, we are adding 18 nursing staff and 99 congregate care staff – child care supervisors and managers,

educational and recreational specialist and play therapists – including a conversion of existing contracted temporary services into permanent positions.

ACS Office of Information Technology

ACS' Office of Information Technology provides IT services including systems development, database management, network and telecommunication services, and desktop support, each of which are integral to the work that we and our contracted providers undertake. When fully implemented in 2017, a total of \$3.7 million will be dedicated to support this office. With new funds, we will replace 20 consultants with full-time employees and add 13 new positions. These 33 key positions will bring in leadership-level experience and maintain a consistent knowledge base within the division to allow for a greater ability to plan and implement IT system improvements that will benefit ACS' workforce of over 7,000 staff.

Improvements for Providers

Cost of Living Adjustment

During his Executive Budget address Mayor de Blasio announced a 2.5 percent cost of living income adjustment (COLA) for approximately 50,000 full-time employees of non-profits that contract with the city, as well as an increase of the minimum hourly wage for these employees to \$11.50. This workforce includes many of the women and men employed by the non-profits with which ACS contracts to provide services. We appreciate the Mayor's recognition of our partner agencies' frontline workforce in the city's budget and of the hard work they do every day on behalf of the youth and families our agency serves.

Procurement of New *EarlyLearn* Services

This past December, ACS issued an *EarlyLearn* RFP which sought qualified vendors to provide quality child care services to approximately 4,800 children within 39 zip codes throughout all five boroughs. The proposals were reviewed by individuals with experience in child care services, operations and finance, and on May 12th, 41 contractors were recommended for awards to provide services at 60 centers and in five Family Child Care Networks. Once they successfully complete the responsibility determination and contract registration process, we expect that new *EarlyLearn* services will begin on July 1. On May 18th ACS opened a procurement for 222 seats in five zip codes that were not awarded in the RFP. The deadline for proposals to be submitted via HHS Accelerator is June 8.

Improvements for Youth & Families

Employment

Research shows that early and meaningful exposure to career paths significantly increases the likelihood of high school graduation, improves future employment opportunities and increases earning potential. We know that access to employment and skills programs is often limited for less advantaged youth, especially youth in foster care. One of my first missions when I joined ACS was to identify opportunities for us to prepare and equip young people with the skills necessary to obtain and maintain professional careers. The goal is to both strengthen the skill set of young people in our care, and to build a skilled workforce of New York City youth from which all employers in the City can benefit.

Internships for Youth in Care

One of the ways in which ACS is preparing youth in care for careers is through our Summer College/Graduate Internship program. ACS created a roster of youth in care between the ages of 16 and 24 from which our hiring managers can interview and hire young people for available internships within the agency. In 2014, ACS hired 51 youth in care as a result of this targeted recruitment outreach and recruitment is underway for this summer's class of interns.

Pathways to Civil Service

As the largest local government in the United States, the City of New York offers a wide range of opportunities for job applicants with all kinds of interests and backgrounds. With the support of New Yorkers for Children, DCAS and Local 371, ACS is launching an employment program, Civil Service Pathways for Youth, which will offer youth transitioning from foster care an opportunity to prepare for civil service employment and self-sufficiency. The Program begins on July 6 and will allow 60 youth over the age of 17 to participate in workshops introducing them to civil service careers, mentorship and test preparation.

Center for Youth Employment

The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City has collaborated with City agencies, including ACS, and a host of private sector partners to launch the Center for Youth Employment which connects young New Yorkers ages 14-24 to summer jobs, mentorships, and internships in order to develop skills, connect them to supportive mentors, obtain guidance towards college and careers. One of the Center's immediate

goals for summer 2015 is to double the number of summer jobs for NYC's most vulnerable youth in foster care or shelters to 2,000.

Summer Youth Employment Program/DYFJ

ACS' commitment to connecting young people with quality summer employment experiences also includes justice-involved youth. Since 2013, both of our secure detention facilities – Crossroads in Brooklyn and Horizon in the Bronx – have hosted a Summer Youth Employment Program for youth detained. Youth are employed in various capacities within the detention center with our housekeeping, maintenance, food service, DOE and case management teams. Those youth who begin employment while detained and are released before the program ends are placed with employers in the community so that they can continue working. We are excited to continue SYEP at our secure facilities in this summer – a total of 35 young people will participate in the program and gain valuable experience as a member of the City's workforce.

College Access

Hilton/CUNY Start Grant

Creating positive educational outcomes for youth in foster care continues to be a priority for ACS. I'm very pleased to announce that the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation has provided a four-year, \$2.5 million grant to City University of New York's Start program. ACS and our foster care providers will partner with CUNY's Start Program to serve young people who are transitioning out of foster care and want to attend college. Under the grant, 325 transition-aged youth will have the opportunity to enter CUNY Start, where they will receive intensive preparation in academic reading/writing, math, and other skills necessary for college success. As they progress toward an Associate's

Degree, students will receive financial, academic, and personal supports, including career counseling, tutoring, tuition waivers, MetroCards, and textbook vouchers. In order to better serve our youth, CUNY will also provide specialized training for their student advisers to help them develop an understanding of the child welfare system and the unique needs of students in foster care.

State Budget

The City's commitment to the creation and development of academic opportunities for young people in foster care is also shared by our partners in New York State. The State's 2016 budget includes new funding to support a "Foster Youth College Success Initiative" which will fund SUNY, CUNY and other higher education institutions to provide supportive services for foster youth to apply for, enroll and succeed in college. Our provider partners, the Children's Aid Society and Good Shepherd Services, are participating in a steering committee that is working with the State Education Department to implement the college success initiative statewide.

Closing

It is my sincere hope that as I endeavor to continue to strengthen the work of ACS, I can also reframe our work to impact on well-being that speak to the success of our young people. I would also like to thank our dedicated workforce for their tireless efforts to support the children and families of New York City. I look forward to a continued productive collaboration with the City Council. Thank you for your time this afternoon. I welcome your comments and questions.



New York City Council General Welfare and Finance Committees
Executive Budget Hearing For Fiscal Year 2016
Tuesday, May 19, 2015

Introduction

Good afternoon Chair Levin, Chair Ferreras, and members of the General Welfare and Finance Committees. I am Gilbert Taylor, Commissioner of the Department of Homeless Services (DHS). Joining me today are Lula Urquhart, Deputy Commissioner for Fiscal, Procurement Operations and Audits, and Diana Rodela, Assistant Commissioner for Budget and Revenue.

In my testimony this afternoon I will outline Mayor de Blasio's Fiscal Year 2016 Executive Budget for DHS, which is part of an announced \$100 million new initiative to address the needs of New Yorkers who are threatened with housing instability and who are homeless. The Mayor has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to provide the resources that DHS needs to tackle the many issues associated with homelessness. He has increased inter-agency collaboration to an unprecedented level, as to leverage the City's collective power so we can maximize our efforts.

While we are doing our work, we cannot lose sight of the larger systemic forces that result in individuals ending up homeless. Income inequality remains a central issue in our time and a leading cause of homelessness. We continue to witness a tale of two cities, as wages stagnate and the cost of living continues to escalate. Approximately 46-percent of New Yorkers live near poverty and approximately 22-percent live below the poverty line. This stark reality, combined with the drivers of homelessness such as eviction, domestic violence, and overcrowding, manifests itself in the City's shelter system which currently has a census of approximately **56,729**.

Over the last year we have made significant strides at DHS to fundamentally reimagine how our agency operates. The creation of our 2015-2017 Operational Plan has given the agency a clear framework on how to achieve our vision of reducing homelessness and improving lives. This plan offers a methodical approach towards instituting necessary reforms and improving the quality of our services. Best of all, it's already being executed and is having a tangible result on how the agency operates and the outcomes we are seeing for our clients.

At DHS, we continue to focus our efforts on reducing our census, while strengthening our ability to deliver the highest quality services to our clients. As you will see in this year's budget, we are going further than ever before in terms of ensuring the habitability of our shelters, as well as the security of our clients and staff.

The DHS Fiscal Year 2016 budget will be \$1.1 billion. The \$1.1 billion for 2016 comprises:

- \$552 Million in City funds
- \$135 Million in State funds
- \$382 Million in Federal funds
- \$4.1 Million in Community Development grant funding
- \$3 Million in MTA funding for Outreach
- \$ 851 Thousand in intra-city funding

The \$1.1 billion budget allocates \$522 million to services for families, \$368 million to services for single adults, \$36 million to administrative services and \$149 million to agency-wide personnel services.

The DHS Capital Plan for the five year period of Fiscal Year 2015 through Fiscal Year 2019 is currently \$107.8 million. Capital projects for family shelters total \$25.6 million; projects for single adult shelters total \$59 million and \$13.5 million has been allocated for IT Upgrades; \$9.5 million is designated for City council-funded projects.

With our \$1.1 billion budget we have the means to reduce our census and improve the quality of care within our system and, as you will see, this plan is netting positive outcomes.

Prevention Services

As you know, prevention services are the foundation of DHS' efforts to combat homelessness. In collaboration with our partners, we strive to stop homelessness before it begins by providing comprehensive services that combat the many drivers of homelessness.

Our Homebase Prevention Program is nationally-recognized and proven to be effective in helping clients remain stably housed and out of shelter. Of the more than 12,000 households served in FY14, 95-percent were able to remain stably housed in the community and avoid entering shelter. In FY15, a \$20 million investment allowed us to increase Homebase's offices from 14 to 23, located in the neighborhoods with the largest number of shelter entrants. The Homebase program's expansion allows us to serve 20,000 households annually.

Following the success of the "Imagine" prevention campaign in Spring 2015, DHS requested and received an additional \$1 million in funding for FY16 to continue spreading the word about our homelessness prevention programs. DHS is also enhancing its grassroots efforts to inform New Yorkers of the Homebase program going forward. This summer, we will be working with community-based organizations in the neighborhoods with individuals most at risk of homelessness to disseminate information about the prevention programs. Our Homebase locations are already engaged in this work, and DHS will support and greatly increase those efforts this summer.

Our Homebase providers recently increased their outreach work in communities by giving presentations and trainings; by sending out mass mailings of information to prospective clients and by doing grass roots street outreach. These efforts had enrollment targets for our Homebase programs exceed 100% of the goals for the past 7 consecutive weeks- with providers achieving 137% of their target for enrollment last week.

In addition to the prevention and diversion efforts being made through Homebase, DHS received \$400K for funding each year in FY15 and FY16 to enhance diversion efforts at the front door of the single adult system. These funds are administered through our partnership with Palladia Homebase, which provides on-site diversion services and aftercare. The clients will continue to receive these benefits if they remain out of shelter and maintain regular contact with the provider for aftercare services. We have been able to rapidly return clients to the community who we otherwise would not have been able to divert.

Street Outreach

In addition to prevention, DHS is committed to serving all unsheltered individuals across the city. We deploy teams around the clock, across the five boroughs, to ensure people living on the streets and in subways can move into transitional and permanent housing. We expanded our street and subway outreach work, and developed a network of transitional housing specifically to serve this population.

We have been successful in decreasing the unsheltered homeless population in the City's streets and subways through the use of these transitional housing programs. HOPE 2015 showed a five percent reduction in street homelessness since 2014 and a 28-percent reduction since 2005, the first year the count took place. Additionally, we have seen significant reductions in Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island. The DHS outreach teams keep in regular contact with over half of the street homeless population, whom they are regularly working with to bring off the streets and into shelter.

DHS added more Safe Haven and stabilization beds to our system, which are alternative housing options for street homeless individuals who are unwilling to enter traditional shelter. Clients are referred to Safe Havens by outreach teams, who prioritize Safe Haven beds for street homeless individuals who are the most vulnerable and who have been outdoors for the longest period of time. Outreach providers are able to place clients directly from the streets into stabilization beds and provide on-site services. DHS also increased its efforts to work collaboratively with community organizations and religious institutions across the City to help expand the reach of this valuable program.

The approved outreach funding—\$6.8 million in FY16, \$9.2 million in FY17, and \$18.9 million in FY18—will fund 375 additional Safe Haven beds, 63 stabilization beds, and two new 24/7 drop-in centers. This funding, which builds on a \$7.6 million baseline investment made in the November and Preliminary Plans, will assist in expanding the number of low-intensity shelter beds targeted at chronically street homeless individuals from 800 to 1,400 by FY18.

Shelter

Providing shelter and social services for those in need continues to be DHS' core function and mandate. We provide temporary, emergency, and safe transitional housing to eligible families and all individuals presenting needing shelter.

Mental Health Programs

It is essential that we provide appropriate mental health services to clients who need them. The executive budget funds \$16.3 million in FY16, and \$27.2 million in FY17 and the out years to be dedicated to mental health programming at City shelters. These funds will support 362 social workers in 72 contracted DHS shelters for families with children to coordinate mental health care across city agencies and community-based providers. This is part of a larger City effort to build a more effective and inclusive mental health system in New York City. This investment represents the first step in an unprecedented effort to ensure that we are fully addressing mental health needs of New Yorkers in shelter.

Shelter Security

The safety and security of our staff and clients at our shelters continues to be of the utmost importance. We have a legal mandate and a moral obligation to provide shelter and as such, our system's population reflects that of the greater society at large, in that it comprises many people with a wide array of histories and needs. We are responsible for providing safe shelters for the benefit of our clients and our staff who are dedicated to assisting our clients in their journey towards housing independence. The tragic death of shelter director Ana Charle last month highlights the importance of staff safety and the need to support our staff in the difficult work that they do each day. We will honor her memory by learning from this tragedy and by putting systems in place within our shelters to keep staff and clients safe. Our commitment to security is reflected in this year's budget which allocates \$5.1 million in FY16 and the out years to fund prevailing wage increases and enhanced security.

DHS will also use FY16's funding to enhance security at adult shelter sites. The allocated \$3.6 million in FY16 and the out years will fund new staff. The new staff will comprise 17 security coordinators, including one coordinator for the central office; two housing specialists; and 57 special officers for shelters serving high-risk individuals. We have also begun doing crime prevention surveys with the NYPD to assess existing security protocols and procedures at our various shelters.

Child Safety

Our child safety campaign and the work of the Safety First Teams continues to be a major part of this Administration's vision and efforts. Due to the significant number of children in our system, it is critically necessary that our agency be attentive to child safety and well-being. The Safety First teams include 30 social workers who will engage and assess high risk families with children to determine an appropriate plan of action and services when needed. The Safety First staff will coordinate with DHS Family Services and shelter providers through case conferencing, effective case management, coaching, and interventions to support the family in keeping children safe while in shelter. DHS has received \$1.7 million in funding in FY16 and the out years for these efforts.

DHS is also actively involved in the Mayor's Safe Sleep Campaign. We are working in partnership with DOHMH, ACS, HHC and other agencies on this critically important initiative.

Shelter Maintenance and Repairs

Preventative maintenance and necessary repairs are essential components of our agency's work to improve shelter conditions for individuals and families within our system. Last week, alongside the Mayor and agency colleagues from the Fire Department, Housing Preservation and Development, the Buildings Department, the Health Department, the Human Resources Administration, and the Department of Investigations, we announced the launch of the shelter repair squads which will address urgent health and safety conditions in the City shelter system. The repair squads will include teams of workers from multiple agencies across the city. Alongside our colleagues, DHS will be working to remediate physical plant issues that have been identified by the inspectors. Teams of city workers and contractors will address outstanding violations within days of identification. In addition, they will be able to rapidly dismiss violations that have proven to be

remediated. Shelters requiring additional assistance complying with health and safety requirements will have their progress closely monitored in a streamlined corrective action process.

In support of this new initiative, DHS has expanded its budget for maintenance and repair work. The executive budget provides funding of \$7 million in FY16 for maintenance and repairs to city-owned and provider-operated shelters where maintenance is not adequately covered in the contract, \$2.4 million in FY16 and FY17 to obtain certificates of occupancy for various buildings, and \$450K in FY16 and the out years for six capital managers to assist in managing the increased number of projected capital commitments.

Housing Permanency

The LINC rental assistance programs are becoming increasingly successful at exiting families and individuals from shelter into permanent housing. We have added staff to further our progress. We received \$1 million in FY16 to fund 16 housing specialists to assist single adults at DHS directly-operated sites to move to permanency. Anticipated savings from census reduction will fund the added staff in the out years. In addition to LINC we continue to assist individuals to find permanent housing through placements in NYCHA, the use of Section 8 vouchers, and the utilization of the CITYFEPS rental assistance program.

Conclusion

The Mayor's Fiscal Year 2016 budget builds upon this past year's efforts to reduce the census, improve conditions in shelter, and enhance services for our homeless clients across the city. I greatly appreciate the support of the City Council in partnering with DHS as we continue to take aggressive steps on behalf of our most vulnerable New Yorkers.

However, we also know that New York City cannot truly address the issues of homelessness without working with the State. For all the work that DHS does, and continues to do, we all know that we cannot actually combat homelessness without addressing its root causes –poverty and income inequality. It is simple arithmetic. If we increase the salaries of those earning the least, they will be better able to afford housing and not be forced to enter the system.

We need a bold move from the State: to raise the minimum wage, to reform our rent-regulation laws to preserve our affordable housing, and to adequately fund homelessness programs as well as raising the shelter allowance. The city is using every tool that we can to address the problem and now it's time for the state to join the fight.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

**City of New York Executive Budget Hearing
General Welfare Committee**

FOR THE RECORD

**Testimony of Victoria Mitchell
Executive Director of District Council 1707 AFSCME**

May 19, 2015

I am pleased to be able to represent the members of District Council 1707 at this important hearing. I personally want to thank the Committee Chair, Councilman Stephen Levin and all the Committee members for hosting this hearing to address the critical needs of New York City's unique public center-based child care system.

It is a system that is in a fiscal and programmatic crisis created by a former City administration that wanted to reduce the City's costs to public childcare while ignoring the proven evidence to expand public care was abundant.

Public center-based child care in New York City is at a crossroad. If we do not properly fund this system, our children and their futures will suffer from political and educational irresponsibility.

After twelve years of administrative decline, we believe it is possible to again elevate this necessary service. Public center-based childcare annually benefits thousands of our children in communities of need while giving poor and working parents the safe, affordable and quality childcare that provides parents both security and comfort as they contribute to the city's economy.

I want to impress this committee as the budget is considered, the need to not just talk about just increasing funding for services but to fund the system so that centers do not have to close.

The reimbursement rates imposed by the City are insufficient. The City needs to act responsibly to resolve the continual problems of centers being threatened with closure. Center lease rates, repairs and maintenance are escalating without any relief.

I represent the thousands of public day care and Head Start employees who have dedicated their careers to this avocation and are currently receiving very little in return.

The members of Day Care Local 205 have not had a raise in nine years since 2006. Many of our members are earning less the \$15.00 per hour minimum wage that is being discussed across the country. And the educational benefits that many childcare employees find so attractive to continue their careers have ceased since the introduction of Early Learn.

Many public child care providers complain that since the introduction of Early Learn the staff turnover rate has increased to 24%, unheard of in this industry before Early Learn.

In a recent survey nearly 20 percent of members are receiving food stamps and more than half of those surveyed have had to resort to Medicaid for their family coverage because the City of New York no longer has a reasonable health plan for my members.

Currently there exists a four-tier system for professional public child care educators that work in New York City. At the bottom are center-based child care educators with Masters Degrees serving children 0-3 year olds who are the bottom of the scale earning \$39,665 per year to Head Start teachers who earn \$45,233 to UPK teachers earning \$50,000 and the early childhood educators who work for the Department of Education are at the top of the scale with base earnings of \$51,161.

EarlyLearn NYC reduced vacation and sick time, damaged their educational opportunity ladder for success, placed their pensions in jeopardy, and destroyed retiree benefits. Early Learn has been a dismal failure. Its introduction was corrupted because its planning has proved to be anti-child, anti-parent and anti-employee.

To be able to resolve the tremendous problems facing public center-based child care, the Executive Budget must reflect the massive deficiencies caused by EarlyLearn by **restoring full enrollment with a reimbursement system that agencies can pay for costs with certainty and pay dedicated employees fair wages and benefits to again elevate the system so it can be a shining example for the nation and bolster the futures of our children.**

Thank you.

City of New York Executive Budget Hearings Women's Issues

**Testimony of Victoria Mitchell
District Council 1707 AFSCME**

FOR THE RECORD

May 20, 2015

On behalf of the members and the Executive Board of District Council 1707, I am Victoria Mitchell, Executive Director and a Vice President of our international union AFSCME. It is a pleasure to address my sisters in the struggle for equality, and councilmen who are concerned about the plight of New York City working women.

District Council 1707 represents nearly 20,000 non-profit social service, day care, Head Start, home care, fund raising and general education employees throughout the five boroughs, Westchester, Suffolk, Nassau and Orange Counties. Our members, due to the industries they work, are predominantly women and many are women of color and heads of households, who like our home care workers, barely exist on the wages they receive through their hard work.

Our public center-based day care and Head Start members are pioneers in their industry. They were the first to organize child care workers in the nation and have fought hard to maintain wages and benefits that are not spectacular but impressive when compared to the rest of the nation.

Currently, our day care and Head Start members have suffered tremendously under Early Learn. Early Learn was not the "transformational" program promised by the Bloomberg Administration but an unmitigated disaster that depressed the wages and benefits of women who care for our children and help prepare them to lead New York City in the future.

In a recent survey, some 17 percent of our members were forced to receive food stamps and another 54.8 percent received some form of Medicaid because the City of New York refused to provide an affordable health plan.

All jobs have dignity. All workers should receive dignity from their work and from their employers. Our members should not have to suffer because a previous administration wanted to take our city backwards relating to early childhood education.

Women of color and their families who live in communities of need should not have to suffer because there are attempts to keep industries like early childhood education economically depressed because the industry's composition employs predominantly women.

The reimbursement rates for child care imposed by the City are insufficient. The City needs to act responsibly in the Executive Budget to resolve the continual problems of centers being threatened with closure. Center lease rates, repairs and maintenance are escalating without any relief.

The members of Day Care Local 205 have not had a raise in nine years since 2006. Many of our members are earning less the \$15.00 per hour minimum wage now being championed for fast food workers by both the Governor and the Mayor. And the union's educational benefits that many child care employees find so attractive to advance their careers have ceased since the introduction of Early Learn.

Many public child care providers complain that since the introduction of Early Learn the staff turnover rate has increased to 24%, unheard of in this industry before Early Learn.

Women who work in industries that are predominantly female should not be super-exploited. They work as hard as men and should be able to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

EarlyLearn NYC reduced vacation and sick time, damaged their educational ladder for success, placed their pensions in jeopardy, and destroyed retiree benefits. **Early Learn has been a dismal failure.** Its introduction was corrupted because its purpose has proved to be anti-child, anti-parent and anti-employee.

To be able to resolve the tremendous problems facing public center-based childcare, the Executive Budget must reflect the massive deficiencies caused by EarlyLearn. The Council must support the restoration of **full enrollment with a reimbursement system so that agencies can pay for expenditures with certainty and pay dedicated employees' fair wages and benefits to again elevate the system so it can be a shining example for the nation and bolster the futures of our children.**

**Testimony prepared by
Claudette Macey for the
New York City Council Committee on General Welfare
On ACS/Child Care Preliminary Budget Hearing**

FOR THE RECORD

May 19, 2015

Good afternoon and thank you, Chairperson Levin and members of the General Welfare Committee for holding this Executive budget hearing. My name is Claudette Macey and I am the Executive Director of Fort Greene Council, Inc., a non-profit 501(c) 3 sponsor of Young Minds Day Care Center. We appreciate the opportunity to present testimony today to the City Council about our children services. Fort Greene Council, Inc. thanks the City Council for your continued commitment to addressing the needs of the parents and children we serve.

Fort Greene Council, Inc. sponsors, Young Minds Day Care, COMPASS (after school program) and UPK half day program in Brooklyn community zip code 11238.

For more than 35 years, Fort Greene Council, Inc. has been the sponsor of the Young Minds Day Care Program located at 972 Fulton Street, Brooklyn, New York 11238.

Young Minds Day Care has graduated more than 6,000 students in over 35 years.

The current ACS mandated reimbursement rate maximum for Early Learn is inadequate for several non-profits to operate, especially in gentrified areas. Additional funding to increase the reimbursement for ACS should be allocated by the City Council.

Currently our children services location at 972 Fulton Street in Brooklyn, NY, we have:

- 30 center-based childcare participants, funded by NY City Council;
- 18 NYC UPK participants, funded by NYC DOE;
- 80 COMPASS participants, funded by DYCD.

Young Minds Day Care has conducted several intergenerational activities with our senior centers, strengthening our connections to families.

We currently have a waiting list of 45 students to be enrolled in Early Learn.

We have maintained high quality staffing that provides a sound pre-school learning, a safe environment and linkages for family services over the 35 years.

We have successfully implemented the Creative Curriculum's and the Teaching Strategy Gold (on-line system of assessment).

We have a creative arts program teaching our 3-4 year olds music, singing and drumming in English and Portuguese phrases.

For FY16 we have received an award from the NYC Department of Education for full-day UPK class. We have over 60 families who have selected Young Minds, despite our 20 slot allocation from DOE.

Our continuity and reliability for childcare services to parents over the 35 plus years has meant returning generations of family members. We've had grandparent, parent, aunts and uncles referring and bring in their families to continue a family tradition.

Our Childcare program has received awards and compliment from local and international individuals and organizations. To name some; Former Public Advocate Bill De Blasio, America Reads at Pratt Institute, Professional Development Institute, Letitia James, Lynn's Kids Foundation.

We have an active Parent Involvement Committee.

Young Minds Day Care has established strong community linkages and collaboration with educational entities, libraries, religious institutions, and local business and artists.

We have worked closely with CUNY's Professional Development Institute through the funding provided by the City Council. We have implemented an Eat Well, Play Hard program over 3 years.

We believe our continued high quality service to children and families for over 35 years has proven our successful track record.

For all these reasons we believe our quality proposal for Early Learn should be awarded to Fort Greene Council's Young Minds Day Care.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/19/15

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gladys Carrion, Commissioner

Address: 150 William St.

I represent: NYC ACS

Address: 150 William St. NY NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/19/15

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Susan Nucio, DC

Address: 150 William St

I represent: NYC ACS

Address: 150 William St NY NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/19/15

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jill Krauss, DC

Address: 150 William St

I represent: NYC ACS

Address: 150 William St NY NY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/19/2015

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ~~Steven Banks~~ Steven Banks, Commissioner

Address: _____

I represent: HRA

Address: 150 Greenwich St, NY, NY

**THE COUNCIL *answer*
THE CITY OF NEW YORK *questions***

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/19/15

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ellen Levine

Address: _____

I represent: HRA

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/19/15

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jennifer Yeaw

Address: HRA, Chief of Staff

I represent: _____

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

Name: LORELEI ATALIE VARGAS (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 66 JOHN ST.

I represent: ACS

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/19/15

Name: GILBERT TAYLOR (PLEASE PRINT) Comissnar

Address: 33 Beaver St

I represent: DHS

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/19/15

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Diana Rodale

Address: DHS

I represent: DHS

Address: 33 Beaver

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/19/2015

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LULA URGUHAN

Address: 33 Beaver St

I represent: DHS

Address: 33 Beaver St, NYC

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms