

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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December 9, 2015  
Start: 10:13 a.m.  
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Stephen T. Levin  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Annabel Palma  
Fernando Cabrera  
Ruben Wills  
Vanessa L. Gibson  
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## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Letitia James  
Public Advocate

Steven Banks  
HRA Commissioner

Gilbert Taylor  
DHS Commissioner

Donna Morgan  
Picture the Homeless

Clayton Brooks  
Covenant House

Michael Polenberg  
Safe Horizon

Wendy O'Shields  
Safety Net Activists

Joselle Ruth  
Coalition for the Homeless

Joshua Goldfine [sp?]  
Legal Aid

Christy Parque  
Homeless Services United

Richard Jimenez  
NYLAG

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

Kevin Kenneally  
NYLAG

Jeremiah Murphy  
Picture the Homeless



1  
2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good morning,  
3 everybody. I'm Council Member Stephen Levin, Chair  
4 of the Council's Committee on General Welfare. I  
5 would like to thank everybody for coming to today's  
6 important hearing. We are here today to discuss how  
7 this Administration is addressing homelessness in New  
8 York City and its effectiveness in reducing the  
9 sheltered and unsheltered population. As we are all  
10 aware, New York City is experiencing record levels of  
11 homelessness. There are now well over 57,000  
12 individuals, including families sleeping in shelter  
13 each night and over 3,000 individuals sleeping on the  
14 street and in the subways. In order to address the  
15 growing homelessness crisis, the de Blasio  
16 Administration has taken several steps to move  
17 homeless individuals and families into permanent  
18 housing through various programs, including the  
19 living in Living in Community Rental Subsidies  
20 Program, otherwise known as LINC, the City Family  
21 Eviction Prevention Subsidies, otherwise known as  
22 CITYFEPS, Special Exit and Prevention Supplement,  
23 otherwise known as SEPS, Tenant-based Rental  
24 Assistance, otherwise known as TBRA, HomeBase, Anti-  
25 Eviction Legal Services, and other programs. In

1 addition, Mayor de Blasio recently announced the city  
2 will provide 2.6 billion dollars in funding to  
3 develop 15,000 units of supporting housing over the  
4 next 15 years. Since 2014, the city has  
5 significantly increased funding for many programs to  
6 reduce homelessness, especially LINC and anti-  
7 eviction services. The city also provided additional  
8 funding for the expansion of HomeBase in which the  
9 number of offices increased from 14 to 23, and yet,  
10 the homeless shelter census still remains high. As  
11 of September 2015, less than 700 LINC participants  
12 moved out of shelter for FY16, and that, for those of  
13 you that don't know, that's from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015,  
14 and that total accounts for all six LINC programs.  
15 Furthermore, DHS has revealed that only 20 percent of  
16 the LINC vouchers have been used. There have been  
17 several anecdotal reports that landlords are refusing  
18 to accept LINC vouchers despite the city's efforts to  
19 incentivize them or to accept the vouchers by  
20 providing them bonuses. On December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015,  
21 Comptroller Scott Stringer wrote a letter to  
22 Commissioner Kimerlan Malize [sic], sorry, Mallallace  
23 [sp?] of the Commission on Human Rights that to  
24 address the source of the income discrimination  
25

1 complaints, particularly pertaining to LINC. In the  
2 letter, the Comptroller noted that "some posts on  
3 Craigslist have 'no vouchers' in the title while  
4 others include 'no vouchers' in the description."  
5 Today, I am extremely interested in learning how many  
6 people have moved out of the shelters, especially  
7 through the LINC programs and how many people are off  
8 the streets and placed in permanent housing. Ladies  
9 and gentleman, our goal in today's hearing is to cut  
10 through the bull, and there has been a lot of it over  
11 the past few months. We have no interest in engaging  
12 in finger pointing, playing the blame game or scoring  
13 any political points here today. Frankly, this is an  
14 issue that is too urgent and too complex for that.  
15 We are interested today in getting a clear-eyed  
16 picture of homelessness in New York City as it stands  
17 today. We're interested in the data and how we can  
18 interpret that data. We are interested in the trends  
19 over the course of the past few years using DHS and  
20 HRA data as well as the MMR to get a better sense of  
21 where things have gone and where they are going. We  
22 are interested in the following questions: What has  
23 this Administration done in the past two years to  
24 address it? How are we measuring the success of  
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1  
2 these programs? Are these programs in fact  
3 succeeding? If yes, why are they succeeding? If  
4 not, why are they not succeeding, and how do we plan  
5 to fix them? What else can we be doing today? What  
6 additional resources do we need to improve the  
7 situation moving forward? This Administration, the  
8 Mayor and the Commissioners, have taken it on the  
9 chin in recent months with regard to homelessness,  
10 and I think that many of these attacks have been  
11 frankly unfair, but as we all know, life's not fair.  
12 However, the fact of the matter is that this  
13 Administration inherited a homelessness crisis that  
14 was already way out of control when they took over on  
15 January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014. Most of it was out of site for  
16 most New Yorkers. Unless you were homeless or at  
17 risk of becoming homeless yourself or knew somebody  
18 who was, you might not know that homelessness just  
19 about doubled in our city the previous decade. This  
20 Administration has had to build up an infrastructure  
21 through programs where they didn't exist before or  
22 were underfunded, and they deserve credit for that.  
23 That said, the Administration must also be held  
24 accountable to the public for their performance, and  
25 as I said earlier, we are here today to get a clear

1 picture of that performance and where we are headed.

2 I now welcome testimony from Commission Steven Banks

3 from the Human Resources Administration and

4 Commissioner Gilbert Taylor of the Department of

5 Homeless Services. I ask you both gentleman to raise

6 your right hand? Do you affirm to tell the truth,

7 the whole truth and nothing but the truth in your

8 testimony before this committee and to respond

9 honestly to Council Member questions?

10  
11 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I do.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

13 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Good morning. Thank

14 you for your opening statement, Chair. It's a

15 pleasure to testify before you this morning and to

16 begin to answer your questions that you raised in

17 your statement. There are some parts of my testimony

18 that I would like to provide in detail and then you

19 have it for the record for the rest of it. Just to

20 focus on, as illustrated by the experiences of our

21 clients, it's well documented and well known that the

22 cost of living has steadily increased, yet wages are

23 stagnant. Households that depend on earnings of low

24 wage workers can quickly be derailed by unforeseen

25 emergencies and expenses facing eviction and

1  
2 homelessness as a result. This is especially so for  
3 families and individuals who depend on the income  
4 from minimum wage workers. For them, these  
5 unforeseen emergencies can mean the loss of their  
6 home and all of the associated collateral damage.  
7 Moreover, 54 percent of renter households in New York  
8 City pay at least 30 percent of their income on  
9 housing costs, and more than 33 percent of renter  
10 households spend 50 percent or more of their income  
11 on housing. According to an analysis by the  
12 Comptroller from 2002 to 2012 medium apartment rents  
13 in New York City rose by 75 percent compared to 44  
14 percent in the rest of the United States, and by the  
15 end of that period the city had 400,000 fewer  
16 apartments reentering for a thousand dollars or less.  
17 As these figures make clear, lack of affordability,  
18 housing instability and associated homelessness are  
19 serious problems that were not created overnight, as  
20 you indicated in your comments, and therefore,  
21 they're not problems that will be solved overnight.  
22 Today's housing environment is one that has been  
23 shifting for some time, and to resolve this crisis  
24 we'll require sustained commitment over time. The  
25 Administration is addressing this challenge head-on,

1 implementing both short and long term measures,  
2 including working to help more New Yorkers earn a  
3 living wage, assisting families and individuals avert  
4 the human and social cost of homelessness, and  
5 working to create and preserve 200,000 units of  
6 affordable housing. Both the immediate and long term  
7 responses to homelessness are critical as the  
8 Administration works to provide every New Yorker with  
9 safe, affordable places to live and access to  
10 benefits and services that can help avert  
11 homelessness and shelter entry in the event of hard  
12 times. HRA has always provided some homelessness  
13 prevention services, but understanding from day one  
14 that homelessness had become a more serious problem  
15 during the years before the change in the  
16 administrations. We consolidated all of the HRA  
17 Homelessness Prevention Programs into a single unit,  
18 the Homelessness Prevention Administration, and then  
19 expanded it substantially. In addition, since our  
20 first year in office we restored and rebuilt rental  
21 assistance programs, which are essential to  
22 preventing and alleviating homelessness and  
23 exponentially expanded Anti-Eviction and Anti-  
24 Harassment Legal Services, which helped to both keep  
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1 families and individuals in their homes and preserve  
2 affordable housing. I also want to take this  
3 opportunity to highlight three recent announcements  
4 all aimed at meeting the long term permanent  
5 affordable housing needs of New Yorkers. In October,  
6 the Administration announced an expansion to the  
7 domestic violence shelter system for the first time  
8 in five years in response to increasing need. We'll  
9 be working with our providers to expand shelter space  
10 to accommodate a total of 13,300 children and adults  
11 in a year, nearly a 50 percent increase over the  
12 current 8,800 individuals served annually. In both  
13 emergency and transitional shelters survivors receive  
14 support services including counseling, preparation  
15 for permanent housing, assistance in locating  
16 adequate housing, childcare services, help applying  
17 for benefits such as public assistance, access to job  
18 readiness, and placement programs. These specialized  
19 shelters provide survivors with services that will  
20 help them safely return to the community and  
21 independence as soon as possible. Secondly,  
22 recognizing the proven track record of supporting  
23 housing over three decades, the Administration  
24 announced a historic expansion to create 15,000 units  
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1 which combine permanent affordable housing with  
2 supportive services including both mental and  
3 physical healthcare access, alcohol and substance use  
4 programs and other services. just last week to mark  
5 World AIDS Day we announced a 23 million dollars  
6 commitment by the Mayor in partnership with the City  
7 Council to prevention and treatment and a commitment  
8 to work with our state and council partners to  
9 implement HASA for All to give HRA the resources and  
10 support it needs to extend HASA's life-saving  
11 benefits to an additional 7,300 New Yorker with HIV  
12 whether they are symptomatic or not. These  
13 initiatives are clear examples of investing in  
14 successful programs that address some of the  
15 complicated circumstances driving homelessness in our  
16 city. Let me highlight the impact to date of the  
17 various programs. While it is early, our programs  
18 are producing clear results. It took a long time to  
19 reach the level of homelessness that we have now and  
20 it will take time to reduce it, but the very real  
21 successes from our investments and programs are  
22 clear. In fact, our rental assistance programs and  
23 other permanent housings have 22,214 children and  
24 adults in 7,567 households out of shelters since they  
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1 were implemented just over a year ago. So far,  
2 during the past year, 16,745 New Yorkers have  
3 received eviction prevention and anti-harassment  
4 legal assistance, including working household heads,  
5 and when our programs are fully in place in FY17,  
6 this will increase to almost 33,000 households a  
7 year, including well over 113,000 people next year.  
8 to accomplish this impact for low income families and  
9 individuals we are increasing support for these  
10 essential legal services, homelessness prevention and  
11 tenant support programs ten-fold from approximately  
12 six million in FY13 to 62 million in FY17. We've  
13 also helped more people with emergency and rent  
14 assistance, keeping thousands of New Yorkers in their  
15 homes. In FY13, HRA provided rent arrears to 42,000  
16 households at a cost of 124 million dollars. In FY15,  
17 the HRA provided rent arrears to nearly 53,000  
18 households at a cost of 180 million dollars. The  
19 average cost per case is 3,400 dollars, well below  
20 the cost of shelter. The increase in spending of 46  
21 percent was due to 11,000 more households being found  
22 eligible and to rising rents that are reflected in  
23 increased grants. As rent levels have increased, the  
24 average emergency grant was 15 percent higher than in  
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1 the past. These programs are cost-effective and  
2 generate savings and averted shelter costs. In FY15  
3 Legal Services' cases averaged about 2,000 dollars  
4 compared to 37,000 dollars a year for shelter.  
5 Investing in Legal Services gives us a powerful tool  
6 to address the deep-rooted and complex challenges  
7 that low income New Yorkers face and allows the city  
8 to advance its efforts to provide access to justice  
9 in civil legal matters. I also want to note that  
10 clients routinely report that the prevention services  
11 are invaluable and help keep them in their homes and  
12 help level the playing field against unscrupulous  
13 landlords. For example, a legal services provider  
14 recently helped preserve the home of a senior with a  
15 disability. The tenant qualified for a senior  
16 citizen rent increase exemption, however, the  
17 landlord did not account for the benefit correctly  
18 and undercharged the tenant for over a year. When  
19 the landlord realized his mistake he billed the  
20 tenant for over 12,000 dollars. The tenant would  
21 eventually exhaust her savings trying to pay that  
22 rent and the unexpected 12,000 dollar bill. The  
23 landlord then sued her in Housing Court, and the  
24 Legal Services provider took the case and represented  
25

1 the client in court. The court granted the motion  
2 for summary judgment, dismissed the landlord's  
3 eviction, and based upon equitable considerations the  
4 court found that the landlord should not be able to  
5 evict the tenant or claim rent for more than four  
6 months before the case was brought. The tenant  
7 eventually paid the rent for the months prior to the  
8 case being initiated and eviction was dismissed. In  
9 the past, this is someone who wouldn't have gotten  
10 help and would have ended up in the shelter system.  
11 Today we're here to discuss the Administration's  
12 efforts to prevent and alleviate homelessness and to  
13 address income inequality, and I want to report  
14 briefly on a number of the new prevention programs  
15 and HRA's role in those programs. First, as we've  
16 said in prior hearings, we created the Homelessness  
17 Prevention Administration and have deployed  
18 Homelessness Diversion Staff in all of HRA's centers  
19 that are aimed at helping people obtain rent arrears  
20 and rent assistance. We also have deployed staff at  
21 the Path [sic] facility and at DHS's other intake  
22 facilities to help avoid families coming into the  
23 shelter system as well as individuals. We've also  
24 established an early intervention team to work with  
25

1 Marshalls, Housing Court Judges, the Housing  
2 Authority, and our own staff to address clients that  
3 have problems paying the rent to try to prevent  
4 evictions. This initiative was created in December  
5 2014, and to date, the early intervention initiatives  
6 reached out to 20,000 clients. We've also  
7 implemented a Neighborhood Homeless Prevention  
8 Outreach Program that's piloting outreach initiatives  
9 to prevent homelessness among certain eligible  
10 families receiving case assistance in selected Bronx  
11 and Brooklyn zip codes from which many families apply  
12 for shelter. This program was implemented in June  
13 2014 and has already reached more than 600 at-risk  
14 families to keep them out of the shelter system.  
15 These units are critical as they all work to keep  
16 people housed and out of shelter, and with these  
17 intervention and prevention approaches we're better  
18 able to identify and connect families and individuals  
19 to programs and services that might include an  
20 application for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance or  
21 referral to Adult Protective Services. Additionally  
22 we have the Rental Assistance Unit which resolves the  
23 thousands of cases that I describe to provide  
24 emergency rental assistance, and staff is located in  
25

1 all seven Housing Courts in all five boroughs.

2 Rather than pay the substantial of cost of shelter

3 after eviction, and potentially losing affordable

4 unit, it makes more sense to pay the rent arrears to

5 preserve permanent housing and avoid the trauma of

6 homelessness. Landlords are essential partners in

7 preventing homelessness, and HRA's Landlord Ombudsmen

8 Unit addresses the specific needs of landlords to

9 obtain services to keep people in their homes. We've

10 resolved or responded to 7,046 landlord inquiries

11 between July 2014 and the beginning of this month.

12 Starting in July--starting in early 2014 and learning

13 from the past, the Administration promptly

14 acknowledged the need for rental assistance programs

15 to prevent homelessness and begin working to address

16 the need by rebuilding a program that had literally

17 been dismantled in 2011. As you know, I was the

18 lawyer that litigated the case against the city to

19 try to prevent the state and city termination of the

20 Advantage Rental Program. That case unfortunately

21 was lost by a four to three vote in the New York

22 Court of Appeals in 2012, and having inherited the

23 situation, the Administration began rebuilding that

24 apparatus during 2014 seeking state approvals where

1 possible and in other instances funding the programs  
2 with city tax levy dollars. The HRA's Rental  
3 Assistance Program implements the Living in  
4 Communities Program, the city's Family Eviction  
5 Prevention Supplement Program, and the Special Exit  
6 and Prevention Supplement Program, and the Home  
7 Tenant-Base Rental Assistance Program in partnership  
8 with DHS. These programs provide for leasing and  
9 ongoing payments in the Administration of rental  
10 assistance. The programs are very straight forward.  
11 Let me give you some information on them that you  
12 asked for in your statement. The CITYFEPS program is  
13 based upon the State FEPS program. The State Family  
14 Eviction Prevention Supplement has been in place  
15 since 2005 at the same rent level that was  
16 established in 2005. The City program is implemented  
17 with a rental assistance level at that same level  
18 that Section 8 is, 1,515 for a family of three or  
19 four. It was implemented in June of 2015. It's now  
20 December 2015. In that short period of time more  
21 than 900 families have received FEPS rental  
22 assistance to prevent entry into shelter or to be  
23 relocated from shelter. The program was projected to  
24 help a thousand families over the course of a year.  
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1  
2 Already more than 900 families have been helped. In  
3 the LINC I Program, 832 families have been assisted.  
4 The LINC II Program, 471 families have been assisted.  
5 The LINC III Program run by DHS, 466 families have  
6 been assisted. The LINC III Program run by HRA, 348  
7 families have been assisted. The LINC IV Program,  
8 962 single adults have been assisted. The LINC V  
9 Program, 681 single adults have been assisted, and  
10 the LINC VI Program, 35 individuals have been able to  
11 return to live with their families. Through NYCHA  
12 2,147 families have been assisted, and through  
13 Section 8, 630 families have been assisted. That is  
14 a total of 7,566 households totaling 22,214 children  
15 and adults who have been helped through the various  
16 relocation programs and prevention programs that HRA  
17 and DHS have put in place over the last year. It's  
18 important--

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] I'm  
20 sorry to interrupt. Can you repeat those numbers?

21 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Sure.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I want to make sure  
23 that they're jiving with what we have here.

24 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Sure. Nine hundred  
25 and 94 FEPS families have been found eligible for the

1  
2 program. More than 900 have already moved out of  
3 shelter or have been provided with prevention  
4 assistance, and we have 1,000 as the total goal of  
5 that program for an entire year. In six months it's  
6 met almost the entire goal that consists of 3,304  
7 individuals. The LINC I Program is 832 households.  
8 It consists of 2,895 people. The LINC II Program,  
9 471, consists of 1,639 people. The LINC II Program,  
10 471 households, consists of 1,639 people, that's  
11 children and adults. The LINC III Program through  
12 DHS is 466 households or families. That's 1,622  
13 people. The HRA LINC III Program, 348 families,  
14 1,219 people, children and adults. The LINC IV  
15 Program is 962 senior citizens and other single  
16 adults and adults with disabilities. Some of those  
17 are adult families so it includes 1,131 people. The  
18 LINC V Program is 681 people for single adults, and  
19 there are some adult families so it's 768 people, and  
20 LINC VI is 35 households, 122 children and adults,  
21 and to NYCHA, 2,147 households. That's 7,462  
22 children and adults. And Section 8, it's 630 people-  
23 -households. That's 2,042 children and adults. Now,  
24 there are many programs across a different  
25 populations, and I know we've discussed this before

1 in different hearings, and I just want to highlight  
2 this point. For the past year in rebuilding these  
3 programs we wanted to learn from the mistakes of the  
4 past, which is not to have a one size fits all  
5 program, and so many different kinds of programs have  
6 been put in place to deal with the multiple needs  
7 that different families and adults have in the  
8 shelter system. And so, the programs have been  
9 targeted to try to adjust a range of needs instead of  
10 that one size fits all approach with Advantage, which  
11 led to substantial numbers of families returning to  
12 the shelter system because of the way the program was  
13 implemented. Nobody wanted to be ended, but there  
14 were certainly flaws in the program that needed to be  
15 corrected. The programs that the city has  
16 implemented over the last year, again, I appreciate  
17 that you highlighted [sic] we had to literally put  
18 them in place where none had existed, are meant to  
19 address a range of needs. And so for example, the  
20 LINC VI Program, which is meant to help people return  
21 to the community to live with families or friends is  
22 a program that never existed before, and that's 122  
23 people that benefitted from it. Of course, we keep  
24 trying to help additional people through that  
25

1 program, but if that program doesn't work for them,  
2 they can be helped through one of these other  
3 programs. Each of the programs--and I think it's  
4 probably bears mentioning for the record who they  
5 serve. So, LINC I is for families in shelter who are  
6 working fulltime but are unable to afford stable  
7 housing. LINC II assists families in shelter who have  
8 had multiple shelter stays. LINC III is for domestic  
9 violence survivors. LINC IV provides rental  
10 assistance for single adults age 60 or older and  
11 adult families in shelter including a senior or some  
12 with a disability who are unable to find stable  
13 housing on their own or relocate from the system.  
14 LINC IV is also available to single adults and adult  
15 families at risk of entry into the shelter system.  
16 LINC V assists single adults and families in shelter  
17 who are working but are unable to afford stable  
18 housing on their own to relocate from the city  
19 shelter system, and like LINC IV, LINC V is also  
20 available to single adults and families at risk of  
21 entry into the shelter system, and LINC VI assist  
22 families with children and adult families and single  
23 adults move out of shelter to reunify with their  
24 families. And CITYFEPS are programs that's aimed at  
25

1 preventing entry into the shelter system and with  
2 helping people move out of the shelter system, aimed  
3 at preventing evictions and aimed at moving families  
4 out of shelters that are targeted for closure. And  
5 the SEPS Program, which is just only recently started  
6 is targeted for single adults, and it's modeled on  
7 the FEPS program. The HomeBase Rental Assistance  
8 Program, Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program,  
9 TBRA, is a federally funded program now administered  
10 by HRA, and we received over 2,000 applications for  
11 the 1,200 federally subsidized home TBRA slots and  
12 eligible families will begin to be able to look at  
13 apartments this month and next month. In terms of  
14 legal services, under the prior Administration as we  
15 indicated before, the funding was at about six  
16 million dollars and when fully implemented in FY17  
17 the funding will be at 62 million dollars to address  
18 33,000 households with more than 113,000 adults and  
19 children each year. The effort includes two primary  
20 programs and the Council's been tremendously  
21 supportive of these efforts, which we appreciate, the  
22 Anti-Eviction Legal Services Program, which when  
23 fully implemented is funded at 25.8 million dollars  
24 to serve 19,000 households each year. Programs aimed  
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1 at the communities in which the highest number of  
2 children and adults are losing their homes and  
3 entering shelter. The Anti-Harassment Tenant  
4 Protection Program when fully implemented in FY17  
5 with 36 million dollars in annual funding will serve  
6 up to 13,700 households each year, and this program  
7 is aimed at preventing tenant harassment in  
8 communities designated for rezoning. And finally, I  
9 want to talk a little bit about partnering for the  
10 future. As we know, an ounce of prevention is worth  
11 a pound of cure, and we're working to make sure that  
12 the tools of government that can prevent and  
13 alleviate homelessness are accessible and readily  
14 available to those who are in need. We also know  
15 that investment in these preventive and restorative  
16 services is money well spent. As I just noted, the  
17 cost of legal services and rent arrears is much less  
18 than the cost of shelter, and that does not include  
19 many of the other costs that homelessness imposes on  
20 adults and children, including the loss of jobs, the  
21 loss of social supports that makes them more  
22 vulnerable to future crisis, disruption of medical  
23 care and disruption of education. In order for HRA's  
24 programs to be successful in preventing and  
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1  
2 alleviating homelessness for families and  
3 individuals, it is essential that there is a  
4 sustained investment from both the city and state for  
5 today and in years to come. Moreover, additional  
6 investment is needed in supportive housing, rental  
7 assistance and increased public assistance shelter  
8 allowance, and so much more in order to prevent  
9 homelessness and to keep children and adults in  
10 stable homes and to move children and adults from  
11 shelter to permanent housing. Thank you for the  
12 opportunity to testify today. We have accomplished a  
13 great deal over the past 23 months, but we know we  
14 have much more work to do and look forward to  
15 partnering with you during the coming year.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,  
17 Commissioner Banks. I just want to note that we are  
18 joined by Council Member Annabel Palma of the Bronx.  
19 Thank you. Commissioner Taylor?

20 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Good morning. My  
21 name is Gilbert Taylor and I am the Commissioner of  
22 the Department of Homeless Services. Thank you for  
23 the opportunity to present testimony to the General  
24 Welfare Committee about the work of DHS. My  
25 testimony will complement that of my colleague,

1 Commissioner Banks by describing more so some of the  
2 qualitative changes that we've made within our agency  
3 to the four core areas of our work including  
4 homelessness prevention, street and subway outreach,  
5 shelter and social services, as well as housing  
6 permanency programs that were fully described in  
7 Commissioner Banks' testimony. When I started as  
8 Commissioner in January of 2014 it was clear that  
9 many reforms were needed. For instance, we didn't  
10 have a comprehensive rental assistance program in  
11 place. After Advantage, as was already referenced,  
12 was cut in 2011 the city had seen a consistent  
13 increase in homelessness without any programs in  
14 place to help families and individuals exit shelter.  
15 There was no systematic shelter repair or inspection  
16 processes in place within DHS. There were no  
17 formalize policies regarding case management in  
18 shelters, and truly the disinvestment in critical  
19 programs supporting the city's homeless population  
20 combined with increasing inequality, low wages, lack  
21 of affordable housing and the increased cost of  
22 living have caused so many New Yorkers to find  
23 themselves in very difficult situations that no one  
24 should have to experience. Approximately 46 percent  
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1 of New Yorkers live near or at the poverty line, and  
2 approximately one out of every five New Yorkers are  
3 below that line. This is disheartening. This  
4 disheartening reality directly manifests in our  
5 shelter system now housing approximately 58,000  
6 individuals, the majority of whom are families with  
7 children. When the de Blasio Administration came  
8 into office, we systematically began to create, fund  
9 and implement new rental assistance programs. We  
10 expanded existing prevention programs and created new  
11 ones. We expanded street homeless outreach, took  
12 over the subway outreach contract and expanded  
13 transitional housing options such as stabilization  
14 and safe haven beds for homeless individuals who were  
15 resistant to shelters. We created the Shelter Repair  
16 Squad to systematically inspect and repair all of our  
17 shelters. We ramped up our supports and services for  
18 minor children, the largest and most vulnerable  
19 population in our shelter system. I'm proud to  
20 announce that through the new subsidy based programs  
21 we created after coming into office that 22,215 New  
22 Yorkers have exited shelter and moved into permanent  
23 housing. We've also enrolled over 104,487 New  
24 Yorkers into HomeBase programs, a proven homelessness  
25

1  
2 prevention program helping New Yorkers access legal  
3 services, emergency rental assistance and other  
4 supports to ensure that they remain in their  
5 community. One of hot key focus areas is preventing  
6 homelessness before it begins. Shelter must be a  
7 last resort. HomeBase is nationally recognized and  
8 proven to be 95 percent effective. Prevention  
9 programs are best for families and individuals and  
10 they come with financial savings to New York City tax  
11 payers. This city saved one dollar and 37 cents for  
12 every city tax levy dollar that was invested in  
13 HomeBase. HomeBase helps families and individuals  
14 remain in their homes and out of shelter, and we know  
15 that HomeBase works by the many examples that come to  
16 our attention every day such as Keisha, a mom who was  
17 raising her three children with limited resources and  
18 a paycheck away from eviction. Keisha saw our  
19 HomeBase add on the subway and sought assistance at  
20 one of our 23 offices. A social worker immediately  
21 was able to help Keisha develop a plan, obtain a  
22 lawyer, pay down her rent arrears, and enroll in a  
23 Home Care Attendant Program. Most importantly,  
24 Keisha and her three children were able to remain  
25 stably housed. Since July 1<sup>st</sup> of 2013, over 104,487

1 individuals have been served by the HomeBase program.  
2  
3 Our budgetary expansion was reflected in the number  
4 of families and individuals we served as we nearly  
5 doubled our efforts from 34,000 individuals in FY14  
6 to 59,000 individuals served in FY15. In FY16 to  
7 date, HomeBase as already enrolled 11,487 clients.  
8 HomeBase continues to support families to avoid the  
9 trauma of homelessness and to ensure that families  
10 stay connected within their communities. This  
11 milestone was met through intensive outreach.  
12 Earlier this summer, DHS launched its first ever Day  
13 of Action to spread the word about the program near  
14 selected HomeBase offices in high-risk neighborhoods  
15 in each of the five boroughs, and we will continue  
16 our Prevention Outreach efforts year round. Towards  
17 the end of meeting people where they are at, our DHS  
18 provider CAMBA [sic] also launched a mobile HomeBase  
19 effort entitled, "The You Can Van." In addition, in  
20 a joint effort to further promote Homelessness  
21 Prevention Services to at-risk households, DHS, the  
22 Department of Education, and the Human Resource  
23 Administration put in place a summer strategy to  
24 proactively reach out to families who reported to DOE  
25 that they were living in vulnerable and unstable

1 housing situations. To actively address this issue,  
2 the city prioritized outreach to the top 25 schools  
3 with the most children at risk and did a Day of  
4 Action to connect with HomeBase services followed by  
5 telephone campaign where more than 20,000 calls were  
6 made to parents that might need assistance. In  
7 addition to preventing homelessness for families and  
8 individuals already housed, DHS is committed to  
9 serving all street homeless individuals in the city.  
10 Street homeless individuals are defined as people  
11 living without shelter on the streets in the New York  
12 City transit system or other outdoor public spaces.  
13 We are committed to helping individuals living on our  
14 street and subways to come into shelter and to get  
15 the services they need and deserve. Throughout the  
16 city we deployed teams around the clock to engage  
17 people living on the streets and in subways to  
18 encourage them to move into transitional and  
19 permanent housing. In order to maximize our ability  
20 to help individuals transition indoors and to accept  
21 housing placement, we have considerably enhanced our  
22 services being offered, and the funding committed to  
23 this population. We have made an unprecedented  
24 increase in the services for street homeless  
25

1 individuals including outreach, drop-in centers and  
2 special shelter beds. The latter two are both  
3 innovative programs modeled--innovative program  
4 models designed to reach people living on the streets  
5 who are reluctant to enter the city shelter system.  
6 Specifically, drop-in centers are store front  
7 programs where clients can literally drop in to seek  
8 shelter, to get a meal, to take a shower, and also to  
9 connect to case management and other social services.  
10 these programs are open on a 24/7 basis and connect  
11 to a network of churches of synagogues that run small  
12 shelters in their buildings that clients can use,  
13 clients in drop-in centers can access. Special  
14 shelter beds include models such as Safe Havens and  
15 Stabilization Beds that were designed with input from  
16 individuals on the street. They generally appeal to  
17 individuals who reject the mainstream shelter system  
18 because they tend to be smaller, afford more privacy  
19 and have fewer rules and more flexibility. Since  
20 January of 2014, DHS's Outreach Teams have made,  
21 2,571 placements from our streets into shelter. Our  
22 street outreach work is especially crucial during  
23 extreme temperatures such as those that we had this  
24 summer and last winter. These enhancements are in  
25

1 addition to the substantial increases in funding and  
2 outreach efforts in the New York City Transit System.  
3 In July of 2014, it went from 800,000 dollars to six  
4 million dollars. In partnership with the MTA, DHS  
5 has tripled the number of outreach workers in the  
6 subways from roughly 20 to 60 fulltime staff. This  
7 investment has paid great dividends by outreach  
8 workers having made over 700 placements from the  
9 subway system during the first year. We now perform  
10 outreach services in all 469 subway stations across  
11 the city. Outreach teams ensure that all subway  
12 stations and train cars are assessed for homeless  
13 activity on a routine basis, and our goal is to help  
14 transition as many people as possible off the streets  
15 and subways into homes of their own. We're also  
16 working for the first time on a comprehensive plan to  
17 monitor and close down all encampments across the  
18 city. We define encampments as locations where at  
19 least two individuals consistently bed down and  
20 there's a structure erected such as a tent or an  
21 established living space. We launched this effort in  
22 September when we worked in partnership with the  
23 NYPD, the Department of Transportation, New York City  
24 Sanitation, the Parks Department and others to close  
25

1  
2 21 encampment locations. Throughout this effort we  
3 were able to not only close the 21 encampments, but  
4 we placed 55 percent of the individuals who we  
5 encountered. We removed 400 tons of debris and over  
6 2,600 syringes at these locations. In coordination  
7 with the NYPD and the Mayor's Office of Operations we  
8 continue to visit these locations multiple times  
9 daily to monitor them for repopulation and to address  
10 any issues that arise. Reports indicate that sites  
11 remain clean and no homeless individuals have  
12 repopulated the locations. Additionally, in November  
13 we have started a second initiative and have  
14 identified 25 new encampment locations and are  
15 coordinating efforts with our partners to close down  
16 these encampments to address the needs of homeless  
17 individuals at these locations. In order to be truly  
18 successful in helping people come in doors from the  
19 cold, we need to not only build the capacity and  
20 infrastructure of our Outreach Teams, but we also  
21 need to continue to invest in the development of  
22 special beds for individuals who are unwilling to  
23 enter traditional shelter. To this end, DHS has  
24 added 214 safe haven and stabilization beds to our  
25 system since January of 2014. The total Safe Haven

1 budget for FY16 is 24.8 million dollars. We are now  
2 working aggressively to develop an additional 500  
3 beds this winter. To this end, DHS announced its  
4 Opening Doors Initiative in collaboration with the  
5 Mayor's Clergy Advisory Council, the Archdiocese of  
6 New York, and other houses of worship. The goal of  
7 Opening Doors is to partner with faith leaders  
8 throughout the city to use their unoccupied space to  
9 provide shelter and social services to the city's  
10 street homeless population. We are on target to  
11 launch the first round of Opening Doors in January of  
12 2016. Providing shelter and social services for  
13 those in need continues to be DHS's core function and  
14 mandate. We provide temporary emergency and safe  
15 transitional housing to eligible families and all  
16 individuals in need of shelter. As part of our  
17 operational plan, DHS is working to improve social  
18 service delivery in shelter by creating an enhanced  
19 model of practice. Using already established methods,  
20 the model is a four-layered approach to providing  
21 quality services to all clients in shelter. This  
22 model of practice requires that all DHS shelter  
23 providers use the following in their work of clients.  
24 The first layer is consistent in comprehensive  
25

1 documentation of case activities and CARES. CARES is  
2 an Electronic Case Management System used by DHS and  
3 all of its providers to collect client-leveled  
4 information about reasons for entering to shelter  
5 through to a permanent placement out of shelter. The  
6 second layer is Critical Time Intervention, CTI,  
7 which is an evidenced base practice model that  
8 engages a family or individual in shelter,  
9 identifying client needs to assist them through  
10 placement back into the community. The third layer  
11 consists of rapid rehousing, which focuses on housing  
12 first, incorporating a comprehensive housing plan and  
13 search. The fourth layer is motivational  
14 interviewing, a client engagement method that enables  
15 a client to express his or her needs to a case  
16 worker, shelter staff, and the combination of all  
17 four of these elements has strengthened our work  
18 system wide and improved outcomes for our clients.  
19 To attend to the safety and wellbeing of the 23,000  
20 children within our shelter system, DHS has expanded  
21 the scope of work in our Family Services Division.  
22 In the fall of 2014, we launched a Safety First  
23 Initiative. The Safety First Team was a group of  
24 Master's-level social workers charged with assessing  
25

1 over 1,900 families deemed to be at high risk for  
2 child neglect or abuse based on meeting three or more  
3 of the following factors: being a single parent,  
4 being a parent under the age of 21, having more than  
5 three children, having children under the age of  
6 four, having medically fragile children, and having  
7 had prior child welfare involvement. Following this  
8 pilot initiative and lessons learned, DHS received  
9 funding to establish a Clinical Services Unit. The  
10 Clinical Services Unit launched in the fall of 2015,  
11 comprised of one director, three supervisors and 24  
12 Master's-level social workers who engage providers  
13 and our most vulnerable families to determine plans  
14 of action and services as needed such as referrals  
15 for mental health treatment or educational advocacy.  
16 The team coordinates with DHS Family Services and  
17 shelter providers through case conferencing, coaching  
18 and interventions to support the family in keeping  
19 children safe while in shelter. DHS is also creating  
20 permanency specialist teams within the agency to work  
21 with program and shelter staff to support their  
22 efforts in helping clients exit shelter and move into  
23 permanent housing. Beginning in January of 2016,  
24 these highly trained teams will be comprised of 30  
25

1 multidisciplinary staff who will review cases, offer  
2 technical assistance to providers and DHS staff and  
3 support efforts to create independent living plans  
4 for all clients. The Permanency Specialist teams  
5 will support our agencies aftercare efforts  
6 connecting clients to community-based supports and  
7 services to help them maintain housing in the  
8 community. This spring, in order to further improve  
9 our shelter system for all residents, the  
10 Administration created the Shelter Repair Squad,  
11 bringing together for the first time five monitoring  
12 agencies, DHS, HPD, DOB, FDNY, and DOHMH, to  
13 systematically inspect and repair all homeless  
14 shelters in New York City, committing 12.5 million  
15 dollars through FY16. There was no previously  
16 existing inspection and repair methodology for our  
17 shelter system, and the Shelter Repair Squad will now  
18 conduct biannual inspections of all New York City  
19 shelters to ensure the environments are healthy and  
20 safe for our clients and staff. Since the Shelter  
21 Repair Squad was launched, over 10,000 violations  
22 have been cleared, and we've started work on all  
23 long-term repairs at DHS facilities. Eighty-three  
24 percent of violations at the inspected shelters have  
25

1  
2 been closed out and action plans have been created  
3 and are being implemented to resolve all outstanding  
4 issues. DHS is also part of NYC Safe, an evidence-  
5 driven program to support the narrow population of  
6 New Yorkers with untreated serious mental illness who  
7 pose a concern for violent behavior. NYC Safe has  
8 changed the way in which the city intervenes to stop  
9 and respond to violence committed by mentally ill  
10 individuals whether housed or homeless. This  
11 initiative includes a series of interventions that  
12 together create a continuum of services to meet the  
13 specific needs of this vulnerable population from  
14 timely intervention and follow-up with a law  
15 enforcement responds when necessary. The city has  
16 invested 3.5 million dollars to hire additional  
17 clinical support staff and DHS mental health shelters  
18 for single adults including case managers, social  
19 workers and psychiatrists at 11 shelters citywide.  
20 In addition, DHS received five million dollars to  
21 increase the number of peace officers at mental  
22 health and larger shelters throughout the city. In  
23 the fall of 2014, the city working collaboratively  
24 with the state introduce the Living in Communities  
25 Rental Assistance Programs, also known as LINC, to

1  
2 move our clients out of shelter and into permanent  
3 housing. LINC is a program that targets families and  
4 individuals based on their specific needs, and unlike  
5 the Advantage Program, LINC also offers aftercare to  
6 families to keep them stably housed. LINC is helping  
7 families like Cynthia's who was living in shelter  
8 while she worked fulltime. Cynthia wanted desperately  
9 to have her own apartment, but working a minimum wage  
10 job, she found that she was unable to save enough  
11 money to move into one. Then Cynthia qualified for  
12 the LINC program and was able to successfully move  
13 out of shelter with her daughter into their own  
14 apartment. These are the kinds of real life stories  
15 that DHS is working to promote and that this  
16 Administration is making happen. These and other  
17 programs such as CITYFEPS and HPD Section 8 have  
18 succeeded in exiting the referenced 22,215 clients  
19 from shelter into permanent housing through subsidy  
20 based programs in the beginning of FY15 to present.  
21 The final goal of our agency's work is to strive  
22 towards organizational excellence in all of the work  
23 that we do, ensuring that our systems support best  
24 practices to improve outcomes for our clients.  
25 Towards the end of achieving organizational

1  
2 excellence in all of the agency's work, DHS has put  
3 in place quality assurance tools to support the  
4 implementation of the model of practice that was  
5 described earlier. These tools include launching  
6 HomeSTAT within the agency and developing a  
7 continuous quality improvement unit within a division  
8 of policy and planning. HomeSTAT is a management  
9 accountability and quality improvement tool that was  
10 created to examine DHS's practice and work in  
11 shelters. During HomeSTAT, a list of action steps  
12 and recommendations are generated and then provided  
13 to the facility and/or program under review to  
14 improve practice and housing permanency work. It is  
15 also a way in which to help shelter staff improve and  
16 share best practices with clients. As part of our  
17 operational goal related to organizational  
18 excellence, the Division of Policy and Planning  
19 within DHS created its continuous quality improvement  
20 unit in May of 2015. CQI is a method to evaluate and  
21 improve client services on an ongoing basis. This is  
22 done by performing case record reviews, site  
23 inspections and interviews with clients and staff.  
24 CQI provides performance findings that pinpoint the  
25 service delivery needs that are working well and

1 those that need improvement. New York City has a  
2 legal mandate to offer shelter to those who seek it.  
3 However, we understand that we must balance our  
4 responsibility to provide such shelter with engaging  
5 communities and being more proactive and transparent.  
6 To that end, we have begun to work closely with  
7 communities hosting our shelters we're partnering  
8 with sounding community organizations and  
9 institutions of faith to ensure that all individuals  
10 in shelter have the support they need to get back on  
11 their feet. In addition, after a new shelter is  
12 opened, DHS works with the community through the  
13 Community Advisory Board where faith leaders, not  
14 profit providers, local business owners, neighborhood  
15 residents, and elected officials convene to ensure  
16 operations are running smoothly and to better  
17 integrate shelters into communities through the  
18 formation of partnerships. For instance, at a  
19 Queens's shelter's CAB it was announced that the  
20 Queens Public Library came to the location and held a  
21 library card drive where 18 adults and five children  
22 were issued library cards, and other members of the  
23 CAB are working with collecting donations for  
24 families who are staying in the shelter. These joint  
25

1  
2 collaborations and spirit of generosity of helping  
3 those who are in need represents that we are truly  
4 one New York. Thank you for the opportunity to  
5 testify, and I look forward to answering any  
6 questions that you might have.

7           CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,  
8 Commission Taylor. We're also joined by Council  
9 Member Ruben Wills of Queens. So, I might jump  
10 around a little bit, if that's alright. I want to  
11 start off by asking a little bit about unsheltered  
12 individuals in New York City. Commissioner Taylor,  
13 your testimony addresses that. Obviously, there's  
14 been, you know, a huge--a lot of attention that's  
15 been paid to the issue of unsheltered single adults  
16 living on the street or in the subway system over the  
17 last several months, kind of starting this summer, as  
18 you're aware, and it's become a bit of a media  
19 firestorm and everybody seems to have an opinion  
20 about it, and I wanted to try to drill down a little  
21 bit on what the actual numbers are saying. So, do we  
22 have an accurate count of how many homeless  
23 individuals are living on the street at any given  
24 time? I mean, I know that there's the Hope Count.  
25 The Hope Count is on. For those of you that don't

1 know, Hope Count is a HUD mandated count that  
2 happens. It's a point in time count that happens  
3 once annually, usually on a very cold night in late  
4 January, and you know, one of the critiques of the  
5 Hope Count obviously is it's on one of the coldest  
6 nights of the year. It is only counting those  
7 individuals that truly have no other place to go. Do  
8 we have a sense of kind of a more accurate sense of  
9 reflecting the reality on the ground, how many  
10 individuals say today are homeless and living on the  
11 streets or in the subways or other public spaces?

13 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, Chairman,  
14 that's a good question. It's important to note, you  
15 know, the context behind street homelessness, and I  
16 have said before that the drivers for street  
17 homelessness and subway homelessness tend to be  
18 untreated mental illness and substance abuse. We  
19 know that people who are on the streets are very  
20 vulnerable. The Hope Count is our main metric by  
21 which we actually assess the numbers of street  
22 homelessness in New York City. It's a HUD prescribed  
23 count. It takes place once a year. The next Hope  
24 count is actually January 26<sup>th</sup> of 2016, and we have  
25 that number from this year, which gave us a sense of

1 what it was at that point in time. It's also  
2 important to mention that one of the reasons why the  
3 Hope Count takes place when it does is because the  
4 methodology predicts that on the coldest nights in  
5 New York City, the people that you would encounter  
6 are those who are truly unsheltered and truly those  
7 who are in need of services to help bring them  
8 indoors. We also have information from our providers  
9 in terms of the clients that they are working with on  
10 their caseloads, right, and so they have a list of  
11 clients that they're actively engaging in all of the  
12 five boroughs to bring in, which is a smaller number  
13 than the total population and that is what's on the  
14 street.  
15

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And I'll--I'm going  
17 to ask about that in a moment, but in terms of-- I  
18 mean, look, the reality is that over the last few  
19 months, you know, a lot of people have expressed  
20 opinions. Commissioner Bratton expressed--he used, I  
21 think he used the term "exploded" in terms of the  
22 number of individuals living on the streets.  
23 Everybody seems to have--there's the editorial  
24 boards, you know, there's, you know, the Post to the  
25 Daily News. Everybody seems to have an opinion about

1 this, and so I'm trying to get an accurate sense.  
2  
3 The Hope Count is again, it's a point in time in the  
4 middle of the winter, and in a lot of ways I think  
5 that the average New Yorker is going to look at that  
6 and say, "Well that's not reflecting what we're  
7 seeing." And so, you know, I mean, obviously  
8 Commission Bratton is, you know, took the liberty of  
9 saying that publicly at an event. That is not  
10 reflected in the Hope Count numbers. Do the Hope  
11 Count numbers show a decrease in January of 2015 from  
12 January 2014? So that's obviously--that increase  
13 that maybe people are seeing or perceiving is not  
14 reflected in the Hope Count numbers. So, I'm just  
15 wondering do you have a more kind of a sense or does  
16 DHS have an ability or some metric to be able to get  
17 a sense of what's actually out there on the street?

18 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, continuing to  
19 answer your question, right.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

21 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, the Hope Count  
22 is one metric. The caseloads are another metric.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

24 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Our providers are  
25 out in all of the five boroughs, as I had testified

1 to, 24 hours a day seven days a week looking for  
2 anyone who presents as unsheltered. It's important  
3 to mention that everyone who is on the street is not  
4 necessarily street homeless.  
5

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Of course.

7 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: And so, you know,  
8 thinking about the dynamics, the street dynamics that  
9 can actually, you know, lead to the perception of an  
10 expansion in street homelessness is something to  
11 consider. But I also think it's important to just  
12 reflect upon when this Administration took office  
13 last year, right, the first real announcement was  
14 that of contemplating and putting out an affordable  
15 housing plan and really recognizing that in this city  
16 there was a dearth of affordable housing and  
17 recognizing in this city there was a need to take on  
18 what were the realities of a system that was at  
19 50,000 individuals in shelter and certainly many  
20 other people who were living on the street, and so  
21 there was full recognition that this was a serious  
22 issue, and street homelessness is part of it.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah.

24 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: And the investments  
25 that we testified to in terms of augmenting our

1  
2 street homeless work will get us to a place where we  
3 will have more time proximate metrics, what you're  
4 asking for.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I believe that that's  
6 true. What I'm trying--what I'm asking is, do we  
7 have a sense today of how many individuals are  
8 unsheltered either on the street or in the subways or  
9 in other public spaces aside from the Hope Count,  
10 because the Hope Count is again shows it's on one of  
11 the coldest nights of the year. Is there anything  
12 that would say how many individuals are living on the  
13 streets or in the subways or in public spaces?

14 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, there's no--

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] During  
16 the summer months.

17 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, there's no other  
18 count but the Hope Count right now, right? And so  
19 hearing fully and completely the question in terms of  
20 well how do you have the count be ongoing, it's  
21 something that the Administration is looking at.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Well, do you believe  
23 then--I mean, obviously Commissioner Bratton said  
24 that the population has exploded. Do you believe  
25 that that's true, or?

1  
2           COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: I believe that there  
3 has been some increase, but I can't quantify that.

4           CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, but okay, so  
5 if you believe that there's been some increase, I  
6 mean, I'm agnostic about this. I don't know, but you  
7 know, that's the public perception out there. How  
8 does that--that is not in any way accounted for in  
9 the Hope Count obviously, right?

10          COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, it will be in  
11 terms of the methodology that we're going to use for  
12 the next count, but also beyond the Hope Count, just  
13 thinking as one city about ways in which we can  
14 collect this information--

15          CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Yeah.

16          COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: We're working very  
17 closely with the Mayor's Office of Operations as well  
18 as with our providers to, you know, really thinking  
19 about what makes sense in terms of having the best  
20 information, real time all the time and in process of  
21 actually getting that to come to fruition very  
22 quickly.

23          CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Do you--have  
24 the caseloads--I know that obviously you've added  
25 more case workers, a greater amount of funding and

1  
2 greater staff levels. Have the raw number of cases  
3 of outreach, street outreach teams, has that gone up  
4 in the last year, or how is that tracked over the  
5 last year and a half since--

6 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing] So,  
7 the caseloads for our outreach teams have gone up,  
8 most significantly in the subways because of the  
9 significant investment in financial resources as well  
10 as staff.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right. So how much  
12 of that has been reflected in just an increase in the  
13 staff level? I mean, is that--in other words, are  
14 you finding more people because you have more people  
15 out there as street outreach--

16 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing] I  
17 would believe that we are, right, and so as you  
18 invest in the programs and we have more feet on the  
19 ground and we have more people who are expertly  
20 skilled in engaging clients who are unsheltered and  
21 on the streets, they're able to actually get them  
22 onto caseload and work to bring them into shelter and  
23 through housing option off the street. So, we have  
24 really looked at this closely and the tested  
25 methodology that our providers use around engaging

1 street and subway homeless clients has helped them to  
2 increase the caseloads by getting more people  
3 actively engaged in the work of outreach.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. You understand  
5 I'm trying to take kind of a little bit of a bird's  
6 eye view here and get a sense of where things are and  
7 if there's an issue here that needs to be addressed  
8 in a comprehensive way. I understand that there are  
9 efforts in place, but is there a--is there a  
10 difference in the trajectory over the past two years  
11 that there was with regard to unsheltered individuals  
12 than there was prior to the last two years?

13 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, that's a good  
14 question, and I will say yes in that, you know, it's  
15 important to remember with the level of investment  
16 being increased, right, across all of our programs in  
17 terms of the interagency collaboration that we have  
18 been doing, which is phenomenal in this  
19 Administration, working with all of our partner  
20 agencies, NYPD, Sanitation Department, Parks  
21 Department, not just on encampments but just on our  
22 broader outreach work. It's a collective effort that  
23 all of the involved city agencies are actually  
24 stepping into, and what's happening as a result of  
25

1  
2 that collective work is that we're able to engage  
3 more people who are unsheltered living on the streets  
4 to actually bring them indoors.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But that's not--my  
6 question isn't are you--my question is not whether  
7 you're engaging more people. My question is are  
8 there more people that are becoming homeless and  
9 living on the streets and are existing homeless  
10 living on the street?

11 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, it goes back to  
12 your first question in terms of the actual, the  
13 count, right?

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

15 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: And so, I will tell  
16 you this, we know that until we have a sufficient  
17 allocation of supportive housing which will help this  
18 population until such time as we have, you know,  
19 sufficient levels of mental health treatment which  
20 will help people who are becoming unsheltered--you  
21 know, we have those investments that are happening on  
22 the city side, right? And so we're working to really  
23 tackle it comprehensively.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: No, I know that--what  
25 I'm asking is has--is there something that's

1  
2 happened? The narrative out there, right, as you  
3 know, as you guys both know, the narrative out there  
4 is that de Blasio has done something wrong with  
5 homelessness. That is--that's clearly the narrative.  
6 That's the public perception. That's what's being  
7 reported in the press. That's what people are saying  
8 all--you have presidential candidates saying this.  
9 This is a national--this has become a national  
10 perception, not just the perception of New Yorkers,  
11 but this seems to be some national storyline or  
12 narrative.

13 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: But it's incorrect.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And I agree with you  
15 that it's not necessarily--what I'm asking is, has  
16 anything changed in the last two years since you both  
17 have been here, a year and a half, two years, versus  
18 say the previous two years? Is there any reason to  
19 believe that things could be--I mean, obviously  
20 you're doing so many more things than were in place  
21 before. That is clear to me. That is a fact. That  
22 is--but why then is there this narrative out there  
23 that things have gotten somehow so much worse under  
24 the de Blasio Administration?

25 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, just to--

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] And this  
3 is a perception thing. Maybe--

4 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing] So, to  
5 answer your question, the narrative isn't correct. I  
6 will tell you this. I will tell you, and I'll let my  
7 colleague also answer. You know, we--and that's why  
8 I'm saying it's important to put it in context,  
9 right?

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

11 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, if in deed  
12 there are individuals who don't have a place to live,  
13 if in deed they are affected by mental illness, if in  
14 deed they are substance misusing, which is the case,  
15 if they are shelter resistant, as well as our own  
16 requests--we at DHS and the City has said if you see  
17 someone who's unsheltered call 311, report it, you  
18 know, let us know about it so that we can respond and  
19 we can do our best, and people have done so. But I  
20 will tell you--

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Well, I  
22 know but you can't--you can't say that--

23 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing] I also  
24 just want to say that it's important to understand  
25 that there is a context behind this, right? And over

1  
2 the past two years as we've tried to do what we can  
3 to increase resources for this population, there has  
4 still been terrible wage disparity, income  
5 inequality. There's been all the drivers to  
6 homelessness that have continued to exist that we're  
7 taking on and tackling, but continued to persist, and  
8 I'll let my colleague also respond briefly to you--

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Sorry,  
10 let me rephrase the question. Is, just why do you  
11 believe that despite all of your efforts there is  
12 this perception that has now become a national  
13 perception that homelessness has gotten much worse,  
14 in particular street homelessness has gotten much  
15 worse under the de Blasio Administration? I mean,  
16 there's--why do you believe that that is the  
17 narrative that is out there being espoused by Chris  
18 Christie and Donald Trump or whoever? It's--there's,  
19 I mean, it's an issue because if it's--obviously if  
20 it is corresponding to reality on the ground, then we  
21 need to know what that reality is. If it's not  
22 corresponding to reality on the ground, then I'm  
23 afraid that it's not being effectively debunked. And  
24 so, can you just speak to that as to why do you  
25 believe that there's this disparity between the

1  
2 reality on the ground and prevailing narrative that's  
3 out there.

4 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, I will go back  
5 to what I said in terms of the drivers for  
6 homelessness continue to persist in this city, right?  
7 And that results in people becoming unsheltered and  
8 also people coming into shelter, and so there's both,  
9 right? And so we have those who are in our shelter  
10 system and that number has gone up, and we have those  
11 who are the street, and I will tell you--

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] But  
13 people don't--it's not--that, this perception is not  
14 being driven by the--they reference the number of  
15 individuals living in the shelter system. That is  
16 true, but that is not what's driving the narrative.  
17 What's driving the narrative is this perception of  
18 unsheltered individuals.

19 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Correct, but that  
20 also does--it's conflated with those who are on the  
21 street who are not necessarily unsheltered, the  
22 panhandlers, other people who are affecting quality  
23 of life conditions that are on the street as well  
24 that have also become more pronounced. And so--

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] And do  
3 you believe that that's become more pronounced in the  
4 last two years?

5 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: I do believe that  
6 that has become more pronounced in this city, and  
7 when you take the two together, what you see, what  
8 the perception becomes is that there's more  
9 unsheltered individuals, and there has been an  
10 increase, right? And so we have invested--

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] We don't  
12 know. Do we know if there's been an increase? It's  
13 not reflected in the Hope Count, so how do we know?

14 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Because well, the  
15 Hope Count data is a point in time, right? And so our  
16 information comes from our providers who are telling  
17 us what they're seeing as well as from the general  
18 public, alright? And so we're fully cognizant of the  
19 fact that there is an issue, right? We've never said  
20 that there wasn't an issue, but we're doing  
21 everything that we can to address it. I hope I'm  
22 answering your question.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: It does. I mean, I  
24 think that there's a concern. I mean, I don't know,  
25 Commissioner Banks, do you want to add to that, or?

1  
2           COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, since you give  
3 me an opportunity to put things into historical  
4 context, let me take the opportunity. So,  
5 unsheltered homelessness and homelessness in the  
6 shelter system are not unrelated phenomenon, and so  
7 it's important actually to look at the numbers over  
8 time to have a sense of what it is that we are  
9 addressing with these comprehensive programs. So,  
10 this is not from the perspective of blame. I think  
11 you set exactly the right tone, but facts are facts.  
12 So, in January 1, 1994 there were 23,526 New Yorkers  
13 in the city shelter system. January 1, 2002 there  
14 were 33,194 New Yorkers in the city shelter system.  
15 On January 1, 2014 there were 50,689 New Yorkers in  
16 the New York City shelter system with a significant  
17 increase after the state and city ended the advantage  
18 program in 2011. That's the context in which all of  
19 the issues with respect to how many people are in  
20 shelter and how many people may be unsheltered is  
21 unfolding currently. And the drivers that led to  
22 that increase between January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1994 and what the  
23 Council and the Administration have inherited and are  
24 dealing with now are the issues that Commissioner  
25 Taylor has highlighted and that I've highlighted,

1  
2 problems with getting access to mental health,  
3 limited access to supportive housing, the gap between  
4 a state shelter allowance and prevailing housing  
5 costs, the loss of 400,000 affordable housing units  
6 in New York City because of issues relating to rent  
7 regulation enforcement or the lack thereof, the gap  
8 between wages and prevailing housing costs, all of  
9 these factors have an impact on sheltered  
10 homelessness and unsheltered homelessness. The  
11 initiatives that the Administration has put forward  
12 over the last 23 months were not initiatives that  
13 were put in place between January 1, 1994 and January  
14 1, 2002, January 1, 2002 and January 1, 2014. So,  
15 when I've said and other times I've testified before  
16 the Council and I know that the council's been very  
17 supportive on this, that these things didn't happen  
18 overnight, and addressing them is going to take some  
19 time, but if you look at the initiatives just over  
20 this limited period of time, 200,000 affordable  
21 housing units, mental health, comprehensive mental  
22 health, 15,000 supportive housing units, the ten-fold  
23 increase in legal services programs, the 11 percent  
24 increase in eviction prevention programs, a billion  
25 dollars' investment in rental assistance, all of

1 those things are real. The perceptions however that  
2 you're highlighting are real. These programs are  
3 going to take hold and are taking hold and will have  
4 an impact.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But are you frustrated  
7 that the prevailing perception out there is that  
8 somehow this Administration is making homelessness  
9 worse? That's the perception. Is that something  
10 that's frustrating, and do you have a strategy for  
11 how to deal with just the perception of it?

12 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, I've said this  
13 to you before, remember, I was a Legal Aid lawyer for  
14 33 years, so I know all about perceptions and I know  
15 all about frustrations, but I'm an optimist by  
16 nature, and we're going to keep working forward with  
17 programs. We're going to work--keep implementing and  
18 implementing programs that have a proven track record  
19 of success that the Council, advocacy organizations  
20 everyone has called for for years, and they're now  
21 being implemented for the first time in years, and  
22 they're starting to have an impact. We've had this  
23 discussion in prior hearings. The number of people  
24 in the shelter system would have been substantially  
25 higher without the implementation of all of these

1  
2 programs that were, again, rebuilt from scratch  
3 literally over the last year and a half. So, we're  
4 going to keep doing the work because New Yorkers  
5 depend on us to do the work and we're going to keep  
6 making the investments which are dramatically  
7 different from the kind of investments that have been  
8 made before. The programs are taking hold. They  
9 will have an impact. Perception is important and our  
10 programs are going to keep addressing both realities  
11 and concerns.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: With regard to Safe  
13 Haven beds, is there a--I know that this  
14 Administration has added Safe Haven beds and  
15 continues to do so through the faith based  
16 initiative. Are there individuals on a--is there a  
17 waiting list for Safe Haven beds currently, or are  
18 there individuals that would want to go into a Safe  
19 Haven bed, but that don't have access to one because  
20 of lack of space?

21 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, since January  
22 of 2014 we've added 214 Safe Haven beds to our  
23 portfolio. With Opening Doors and other initiatives,  
24 we're slated to add another 500 by the winter months  
25 of 2016. And to answer your question very directly,

1  
2 yes, it is a premium in terms of a commodity that  
3 many of our street homeless clients would welcome and  
4 would access. There are more street homeless clients  
5 who want Safe Haven beds than we actually have. So,  
6 there's a waiting list, right. Our outreach  
7 providers manage that waiting list and they actually  
8 prioritize for entry into those beds clients how are  
9 most vulnerable, and whenever a bed turns over, we do  
10 make placements from Safe Havens to permanent  
11 housing, we immediately fill it with another client  
12 who's in one of our drop-in centers or who's on our  
13 outreach caseload to bring them into a safe setting.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Speaking of Drop-in  
15 Centers, there's an article in Politico New York a  
16 couple months ago that showed that the number of  
17 individuals accessing our Drop-in Centers and staying  
18 overnight in our Drop-in Centers has increased in the  
19 last--from July 2014 to July 2015. Is that what  
20 you're seeing on the ground, and how do you--is that  
21 an indication to you at all of kind of where it is?  
22 Are you using that as an indicator about where things  
23 are in terms of unsheltered?

24 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, utilization of  
25 our Drop-in Centers has increased. You know, we

1  
2 actually have our street teams encouraging our  
3 clients to use the Drop-in Centers because we know  
4 when we get them indoors we can engage them around  
5 their housing need. It's a very good thing, because  
6 then we're actually at a place where we can speak  
7 with clients when they come in, capture them in the  
8 movement to talk to them about coming off of the  
9 street. We have expanded our hours of operation for  
10 our Drop-in Centers to 24 hours a day now. It had  
11 not been that before this--well, before last--in the  
12 last budget cycle we had funding that was put in  
13 place in order to expand that, but keeping them open,  
14 you know, really does enable us to reach more  
15 clients, and we direct street clients to our Drop-in  
16 Centers so that again, as I had mentioned, we can  
17 talk to them about a more permanent housing  
18 arrangement for them, and so we're happy they're  
19 being used.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. But is that a  
21 reflection? Do you believe that that's in any way a  
22 reflection of kind of the number of individuals that  
23 are unsheltered?

24 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, I think it's  
25 consistent with the level of need, and it goes back

1  
2 to what Commissioner Banks spoke to. When you look  
3 at it as a system as an aggregate, right, and so you  
4 see more individuals in shelter. We understand the  
5 dynamics on the street and then we see the caseloads  
6 on our street, agencies actually going up, and we see  
7 the utilization at Drop-in's going up, so it all  
8 correlates. And I think that it's important because  
9 that's another way in which we can reach those who  
10 are unsheltered and try to get them to come indoors.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, Commissioner,  
12 thank you. I'm going to turn it over to my  
13 colleagues, but I do want to acknowledge Council  
14 Member Fernando Cabrera of the Bronx, Barry  
15 Grodenchick of Queens and Carlos Menchaca of  
16 Brooklyn, and we were joined briefly by former  
17 Council Member Robert Jackson of Manhattan. Robert,  
18 RJ? You still here? Hey, Robert, welcome. I'm  
19 going to turn it over to Council Member Annabel Palma  
20 for questions.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Thank you, Mr.  
22 Chair. You know, I just--I want to start by thanking  
23 both of you for your testimony. I know that this is  
24 very frustrating because it's an issue that was  
25 inherited and while I called you Commissioner Banks

1 when you first got elected to or selected to Chair  
2 HRA, and I said that was one of the best decisions  
3 the de Blasio Administration has made, I still  
4 believe in my heart it has been one of the best  
5 decisions that the de Blasio has made was to put you  
6 in charge of HRA to be able to work on behalf of what  
7 many advocates including myself were calling for in  
8 terms of policy changes, and a lot of the programs  
9 that were dismantled under the Bloomberg  
10 Administration, and I know that this issue we're not  
11 going to be able to address overnight and it's going  
12 to take a few years for us to see the effects or the  
13 impacts that the changes have done. I still, you  
14 know, believe that there's a breakdown, because while  
15 we had nothing before now we have new policies and we  
16 have these programs. There's still a substantial  
17 amount of people in need of housing or not being able  
18 to exit, and so the frustration becomes where is that  
19 breakdown? You know, if we at the city level are  
20 doing everything that we can to make sure that we  
21 address the issue, how are we engaging the state and  
22 the federal level to recognize the right--this issue  
23 at the city level has gotten--that we have inherited  
24 has gotten out of hand and that we need true  
25

1  
2 partnerships from our council parts at other levels  
3 of government to make sure that we can--to the  
4 public, right? So, the perception can understand  
5 that this implementation of programs that we're doing  
6 now is going to have a good effect, and it's--and  
7 they're going to work, but they can't work if the  
8 city's doing it on its own.

9 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Thank you very much  
10 for your kind words. I appreciate them. I think it's  
11 a significant event when you have the kind of  
12 bipartisan support in the State Senate and in the  
13 Assembly for a comprehensive support of housing plan,  
14 and we're hopeful that in the coming session that the  
15 prioritization that this bipartisan group of senators  
16 and assembly members have articulated will prioritize  
17 supportive housing. The city's stepped up and we  
18 look forward to working with our state partners in  
19 the coming session to move forward. I think Senator  
20 Golden and Assembly Member Hevesi have certainly been  
21 leaders in this and Senator Golden was at the Mayor's  
22 announcement and we're looking forward to working  
23 with them to continue to move forward with addressing  
24 the need for supportive housing.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: I know that many  
3 of the calls that I get in my office as well as my  
4 colleagues in terms of families who are, or  
5 individuals who are eligible for the LINC programs  
6 and the programs that are being offered now to exit  
7 shelter one of the main obstacles for them is that  
8 they don't meet income criteria or that the landlords  
9 are not accepting their programs. What are we doing  
10 to make sure that--I mean, we know that we have laws  
11 in place, right, to make sure that landlords don't  
12 discriminate against the program, but when a landlord  
13 implements an income criteria, what are we doing to  
14 engage those landlords to understand that these  
15 individuals are eligible for a program because they  
16 have an income--they have limited incomes?

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I mean, you're quite  
18 right. Source of income discrimination is unlawful  
19 under our local law. HRA and the City Commission on  
20 Human Rights have created a fact, a fact information  
21 for families and individuals in the shelter system.  
22 It makes it very clear. It says, "Do you receive  
23 housing assistance? It's illegal for landlords to  
24 refuse to rent to you. A landlord cannot refuse to  
25 rent an apartment to you because you're paying the

1 rent with government assistance, including housing  
2 vouchers such as Section 8, LINC, HASA benefits,  
3 FEPS, SEPS, or cash assistance." And it advises  
4 people to call 311 to report a landlord or broker who  
5 rejects your voucher or refuses to process the  
6 paperwork to renew it, refuses to rent an apartment  
7 to you because of where your money comes from,  
8 refuses to do repairs to your apartment because of  
9 where your money comes from, tries to discourage you  
10 from applying for an apartment, and we caution people  
11 to listen for phrase like, "We don't take payments  
12 from this program, or we'd prefer another source to  
13 pay the rent. Don't you have any other income?  
14 Okay, that program is fine, but someone else should  
15 guarantee the rent. We'll take that program, but you  
16 still have to pay the first month's rent, security  
17 deposit and broker's fee and cash up front." We  
18 encourage people to call 311 and set up a special  
19 number at HRA, 718-291-4141, 718-291-4141. The Human  
20 Rights Commission has 85 active cases investigating  
21 housing discrimination, 20 of those were proactively  
22 initiated by the Commission, 65 based upon  
23 complaints. The HRA has provided support for the  
24 Housing Works lawsuit that's been brought with  
25

1  
2 respect to a landlord that refuses to accept HASA  
3 benefits, and I know that the Legal Aid Society has  
4 filed a similar suit involving other rental  
5 assistance. We take this issue seriously and we  
6 stand ready to work with any individual family who  
7 has been focused on this. I know the Comptroller has  
8 shed some light on this as well, and we stand ready  
9 to work with anyone to stamp this out. It was made  
10 unlawful by a local law of the Council, and the Mayor  
11 was the prime sponsor of that law when he was a  
12 Council Member, and we think it's an important law to  
13 enforce.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: And I appreciate  
15 like the campaign and that we are making sure to  
16 educate the public, right, on the--all the  
17 individuals, right, that are on the other side, but I  
18 guess I want to hear more how we're trying to engage  
19 landlords, the real estate industry, right? This,  
20 you know--I've always said I'm not against anyone  
21 making money. This is what drives this country. This  
22 is, right, what we're all about, and I believe that  
23 this city's big enough for everybody, but I need to  
24 understand that this Administration has--you know how  
25 they're engaging the real estate industry and asking

1  
2 them to do their part in terms of making sure we are  
3 able to provide housing to individuals with the needs  
4 that we're talking about in a way where, you know,  
5 they're benefitting, but our families are benefitting  
6 as well.

7                   COMMISSIONER BANKS: Understood. We've  
8 set the rental level consistent with the federal  
9 Section 8 level at 1,515. It's higher than the level  
10 that the state had originally authorized for the LINC  
11 program. It's also higher than the level that is  
12 paid for from the State FEPS program and of course  
13 higher than the state shelter allowance at 450  
14 dollars. From the beginning of the implementation of  
15 these programs about a year ago we've spent  
16 substantial time engaging landlords. It's been  
17 reported in the press there's an active campaign to  
18 recruit landlords to participate, calls,  
19 advertisements, efforts to engage landlords. I now  
20 that Commissioner Taylor and I and other city  
21 officials have met landlords, the Mayor has as well,  
22 to encourage and participate. That's where the  
23 apartments that enabled us to move out, you know,  
24 more than 5,000 families and individuals in the  
25 rental assistance programs and additional housing

1 program [sic] apartments, that's where that came  
2 from, that kind of out of outreach. We're not  
3 letting up. We're continuing literally every day to  
4 reach out and engage landlords. The Rent  
5 Stabilization Association ran advertisements for the  
6 program and information that we provided in their  
7 newsletter. They've been supportive in enabling us  
8 to do that, and we continue to engage the landlord  
9 community to make more units available. They have  
10 been making units available, and we know that they  
11 will keep doing that. Having said that, with rent  
12 regulation challenges over the past years, fewer  
13 units are affordable in the city. We talked about  
14 400,000 units being lost that were renting at 1,000  
15 dollars or under 1,000 dollars. So, that is a  
16 reality and that's why ultimately the 200,000 units  
17 housing plan is so important to preserve and create  
18 new housing, but in the meantime, we're going to  
19 continue to really push the rental assistance  
20 programs that you would want us to with engagement  
21 with both landlords to participate with various bonus  
22 that we've made available and other kinds of  
23 incentives that we made available and that in  
24

1  
2 addition the work that we're doing with brokers to  
3 encourage them to participate as well.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Because of the  
5 shelter census going up, is the city at risk of  
6 losing any of the state funding that is contingent  
7 upon DHS--contingent upon the savings that DHS seized  
8 through their--that are redirected to the program?

9 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Right. Those  
10 dollars are supporting LINC, the LINC II program.  
11 Most of the programs that I described, the majority  
12 of them of those LINC programs and CITYFEPS and SEPS  
13 are 100 percent city-funded.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: So we're not  
15 looking at--we're not in jeopardy of losing any state  
16 funding because of what we're seeing?

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: As I said in  
18 response to the Chairperson's question, we're an  
19 optimist, optimistic about continuing to work with  
20 our state partners to provide the additional  
21 resources that we need, and we're certainly making  
22 use of the resources that we've been given to  
23 continue to move families out of the shelter system  
24 and individuals out of the shelter system.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Now, my--I will  
3 close with, I know that there are major issues  
4 impacting the island of Puerto Rico which has driven  
5 a lot of folks to leave the island and come not only  
6 to New York but Chicago, Florida and Texas and other  
7 parts of the states where you have high  
8 concentrations of Puerto Rican families living there  
9 because of that issue. Has there been any discussion  
10 with the Governor of Puerto Rico? I know that  
11 Governor Cuomo had been involved in some discussions  
12 at that level, but I want to know this Administration  
13 has been able to have conversations with that  
14 governor, with Governor Cuomo in terms of the issue  
15 that's happening over there and the folks that are  
16 being driven over here. I know that in my office  
17 I've had several individuals come seeking shelter who  
18 just came straight from JFK. They have not even been  
19 to anyone's home but came from JFK because they need  
20 services where there's healthcare or other services.

21 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, Council Member,  
22 you know, we are very closely looking at all  
23 individuals and all families who come into our system  
24 seeking shelter and making every effort at the  
25 inception of our work with them to try to prevent

1  
2 shelter entry safely and really exploring whether  
3 there are other options, whether there are other  
4 housing arrangements that can be pursued, offering  
5 concrete services that are mostly administered  
6 through HRA, that can actually redirect and  
7 individual or family from having to enter shelter,  
8 and we would do that for any families who would  
9 present from Puerto Rico or from any jurisdiction.  
10 To answer your question very directly, I have not  
11 participated in conversations with the Governor of  
12 Puerto Rico and I don't know whether this  
13 Administration has. I think that we can get you that  
14 answer, but as it pertains to our work and our  
15 sheltering effort, and I know you know this well  
16 because we've shared, and you know, thank you for  
17 being a great partner, information about HomeBase and  
18 information about our diversion efforts, but we  
19 really leveraged them as much as we can for anyone  
20 who's coming in to try to make shelter be that last  
21 resort, and in instances where we cannot, then if  
22 someone enters shelter then we'll work with them but  
23 try to overcome the barrier they may have to housing  
24 and get them placed.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: And I raise that  
3 issue because I don't know if that's a big fact of  
4 the issue we're seeing in the rise of street  
5 homelessness especially around single men, and so I  
6 know that in the Bronx where we in the past have seen  
7 the street population diminish, we're now seeing an  
8 increase of single men, especially of Puerto Rican  
9 descent on the streets, and so it's the reason why I  
10 raise that issue, but you know, I know that, again,  
11 the issue we're discussing is an issue that have been  
12 inherited in terms of the lack of services that were  
13 not provided before, and so I want to make sure that  
14 you know the city understands that we have new  
15 policies. We have new programs, we just still have  
16 so much more work to do to make sure that we get our  
17 numbers across, and there still seems to be a  
18 breakdown somewhere that we're not trying--you know,  
19 that we can seem to wrap our hands around, and so I  
20 want to continue to work with this Administration to  
21 make sure that we can identify what that breakdown  
22 is, whether it's do we need to get, you know, people  
23 connected to higher paying jobs or get them skills to  
24 get connected to higher paying jobs that will enable  
25 them then to exit shelter and never, you know, and

1  
2 sustain themselves in a way where they don't have to  
3 come back and depend on the services that we--that we  
4 provide for homeless families, but there still seems  
5 to be a breakdown that we can get a--you know, wrap  
6 our hands around, and I'm having a hard time  
7 understanding with all the new policies and new  
8 programs in place where that breakdown is in terms of  
9 not only this Administration but like I mentioned the  
10 state and the federal level as well. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,  
12 Council Member Palma. Council Member Ruben Wills?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Thank you, Mr.  
14 Chair. Good morning, Commissioners. We have a few  
15 questions and I want to jump around on a couple of  
16 topics on, and I'm not going to go into anything  
17 super local. These are just going to be general  
18 questions. My first question is, was actually asked  
19 by Council Member Palma about this City Human Rights  
20 Commission. Thank you for answering that question  
21 already. Is there any available data that could be  
22 shared today on the number of move-outs including a  
23 target and percentages achieved among the 700 Fiscal  
24 Year 2016 SEPS recipients? Like, how many people  
25 have been moved out successfully from that program?

1  
2           COMMISSIONER BANKS: I can go through the  
3 information that we went through before. You're  
4 asking for FEPS and LINC and all those programs?

5           COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Uh-hm.

6           COMMISSIONER BANKS: A total of 7,566  
7 families and households have been moved out of  
8 shelter from those programs and that includes 22,214  
9 men, women and children. For CITYFEPS it's 994  
10 households have been approved and either moved out or  
11 linked to a specific apartment or are about to move  
12 out. That includes 3,304 men, women and children.  
13 LINC I it's 832 households, 2,895 men, women and  
14 children. LINC II, 471 households, 1,639 men, women  
15 and children. LINC III through DHS 466 households,  
16 1,622 men, women and children. LINC III, the HRA  
17 program, 348 households, 1,219 men, women and  
18 children. LINC IV, 962 households, 1,131 men and  
19 women. It's either single adults or adult families.  
20 LINC V, also for single adults and adult families,  
21 681 households, 768 men and women. LINC VI it's 35  
22 households, 122 men, women and children. For NYCHA  
23 it's 2,147 households, 7,472 men, women and children.  
24 Section 8, 638 households, 2,042 men, women and  
25 children.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Thank you. What  
3 action does the city take after a non-LINC IV  
4 recipient exhausts his or her renewals to prevent  
5 them from becoming chronically homeless again?

6 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I'm sorry, I couldn't  
7 quite hear the question.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: What action does  
9 the city take after the non-LINC IV recipient  
10 exhausts his or her renewals to prevent them from  
11 becoming chronically homeless?

12 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Okay. So, the LINC  
13 IV program is a program that has renewals up to five  
14 years, and if you're a senior citizens you can remain  
15 in that program. So, the program just started about  
16 a year ago, and so we're just reaching renewals now  
17 for the first year, and people, we expect the people  
18 in the program to be renewed.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: What about non-LINC  
20 IV programs?

21 COMMISSIONER BANKS: In the other  
22 programs?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Other LINC.

24 COMMISSIONER BANKS: As I've said, they've  
25 all just started a year ago, and we're coming up on

1  
2 the first year renewals, and at this point we expect  
3 the people to be renewed.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: So, the target or  
5 the goal is to make sure that--let's say someone is  
6 in a LINC program and they then secure income, but  
7 they're securing the income to allow them to reach  
8 the level to move out of the program and secure  
9 housing on their own is within the last quarter  
10 before their renewal comes up. What mechanism or  
11 what protocol is set to say that you have income now  
12 and you don't need to be on the program? But we know  
13 that spending habits have to be developed. We know  
14 that savings have to be developed. So let's say that  
15 within that last quarter before they go up for  
16 renewal, what happens when they already reach their  
17 benchmark? Are they immediately removed off the  
18 program or are they kept on a program and still given  
19 guidance to make sure they have the savings adequate.

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Some of the programs  
21 are targeted to people who receive disability  
22 benefits or seniors, so for example, LINC IV. Other  
23 programs are targeted to individuals that have been  
24 multi-systems users. I think that if I may, the  
25 programs that you're very much focused on would be

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COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

the programs that have people in them who are working.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: So, LINC I and LINC V in particular, and so there is a regular review process as part of the renewal in terms of what income levels are there. there's a very much a focus on trying to make sure that people are obtaining employment so that they can be able to afford the rent as the program phases out, but remember only one year into a program that has potentially renewals up to five years. Obviously, one of the big factors here and it's an outside factor is the increase in the minimum wage, which would have an impact on families and individuals' ability to pay this rent. I think your question is a very well-taken question. I'm happy to follow up with you offline if you have particular ideas.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: But the program is in its first year, and we expect people to be renewed this year.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Okay. What is the  
3 capacity for limit for single adult shelters operated  
4 by a provider under contract with DHS?

5 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: The--I just want to  
6 make sure I understand your question, Council Member.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: What is the  
8 capacity limit for a shelter with a provider under  
9 contract with DHS?

10 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, our--there's a--  
11 our single adult shelters are capped by Local Law to  
12 I believe a 200 bed count for--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: But I'm talking  
14 about shelters that are under contract and not  
15 shelters that are run by DHS. So, if you have a  
16 provider that contracts with you, are they still--is  
17 it your rule or policy in your opinion that they're  
18 still capped at that 200?

19 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: I believe the local  
20 law requires a cap. There are a few shelters that  
21 are operating that were, I believe, grandfathered in  
22 that have more than 200 beds in them, but I'm fairly  
23 certain the Local Law now requires a 200 bed cap.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Okay. Are annex  
25 sites required to seek an operating certificate from

1  
2 the state, the Office of Temporary and Disability  
3 Assistance?

4 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: I believe that they  
5 are. All single shelter sites that we would open  
6 have to be reviewed by the state and they have to be  
7 inspected by OTDA.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Alright. And when  
9 does the Department juror [sic] authority to not have  
10 a public hearing on an amended contract or amendment  
11 to a contract?

12 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: I'm not sure if I  
13 fully understand the question, Council Member. I  
14 would say that it's part of our procurement process.  
15 If we're amending a contract that that amendment  
16 would be public and that we would notify, I believe,  
17 communities and elected officials will have a fair  
18 share and then if there was a need for a public  
19 hearing on the amendment that that would take place,  
20 but it can get that I and report it back to you.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Okay. So my last  
22 question/comment would be, Council Member Levin spoke  
23 on the perception of the mismanagement of the  
24 homeless issues that we have in the city, and we've  
25 already--and Council Member Annabel Palma spoke about

1 landlords. What is actually--besides what you  
2 already spoke about, Commissioner Banks, what is  
3 actually being done to deal with the perception of  
4 landlords? Not from the law point of view to hammer  
5 them, but the perception of landlords who have been  
6 burned or have friends who have burned by recipients  
7 of programs such as Section 8? We have a few cases  
8 in my office where landlords were not paid for eight  
9 months to a year and the agencies did not want to  
10 give them their back money because of something like  
11 a banister or something dealing with a violation  
12 issue wasn't fixed, but we found out on some cases  
13 the tenants just didn't allow them to come in,  
14 because once you start dealing with nonpayment issues  
15 it because personality conflicts and all of that is  
16 in it. so a lot of landlords, and I don't want to say  
17 by right but I want to say by condition have become  
18 in a way where they don't want these programs because  
19 they don't feel that the agencies are going to have  
20 their best interest as well as the tenant's best  
21 interest at heart when it comes down to dealing with  
22 conflicts.

24 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, I think as I  
25 guess we've discussed before, one of the biggest

1 challenges in rebuilding rental assistance that have  
2 been dismantled previously was to deal with the  
3 legacy of Advantage in which landlords felt the way  
4 you described, which was that the rug was pulled out  
5 from underneath of them and they were left along with  
6 the tenants frankly to hold the bag, and I must say,  
7 it took many efforts to outreach to the landlord  
8 community, work with the RSA and others, outreach by  
9 the Mayor, outreach by Commissioner Taylor, myself,  
10 Deputy Mayor Glen, and others. It took a period of  
11 time and rebuilding that program to engage landlords  
12 and we're very pleased to report the substantial  
13 number of landlords that participated that enabled us  
14 to move out all these households, but I do agree with  
15 you that the experience that many landlords had with  
16 the ending, the precipitous ending of that program,  
17 continues to be something of concern in the property  
18 owner community, and we continued to work with them  
19 to show them that we are establishing our own track  
20 record now of working effectively, providing bonus  
21 payments, providing the payments, providing a special  
22 fund in case there's issues relating to damages, and  
23 we have we believe brought back substantial number of  
24 landlords how had a very bad experience with the  
25

1  
2 precipitous closure of the Advantage Program, and  
3 we're going to keep with those efforts as we go  
4 forward. There may be cases where there are  
5 differences of opinion with respect to what the  
6 landlord says and what the tenant says, and we're  
7 going to provide our services as best we can in those  
8 kind of circumstances, but overall we spent an awful  
9 lot of appropriate time and effort to re-engage the  
10 landlord community as we rebuilt the programs, but I  
11 think your point is well taken.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Thank you,  
13 Commissioners. I just also want to thank Ben Max  
14 [sic] for his concern about the wellbeing for the  
15 Council Members today. Thank you sir.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council  
17 Member Wills. Council Member Carlos Menchaca?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you,  
19 Chair, and thank you, Commissioners, for coming today  
20 before us, and I'll follow a little bit up on the  
21 kind of transition from Advantage to LINC and ask a  
22 little bit about the efficacy of, I think, the kind  
23 of core mission of LINC is to kind of keep families  
24 in the neighborhoods. How much of that is in  
25 coordination with landlords that are yet to be part

1  
2 of the program and really allowing for a dialogue  
3 that is thoughtful in neighborhoods to keep families  
4 in those neighborhoods where they originated from?

5 COMMISSIONER BANKS: It's an excellent  
6 question and an important value that you're  
7 highlighting. There are a number of factors that  
8 come into play. You know, one factor that comes into  
9 play is the fact that when we implemented CITYFEPS  
10 and SEPS and several of the LINC programs, the aim is  
11 to try to prevent people from losing their housing to  
12 begin with so that they can remain in the  
13 neighborhoods where they are and to preserve that  
14 unit that they're in as an affordable housing unit  
15 because we know in the way that at least in the past,  
16 in particular the rent regulation has worked, because  
17 a vacation potentially takes that unit out of the  
18 affordable housing stock forever. So, we've designed  
19 the programs to be helpful to people in the community  
20 to be able to stay in the community. We continually  
21 work with landlords small and large to--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: [interposing]

23 How do you do that?

24 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Through the effort at  
25 City Hall. I'm sorry, through the effort that the

1 city has supported HRA to deploy essentially a small  
2 landlord's campaign. They're constantly calling  
3 landlords trying to recruit them to participate.  
4 We're making use of those apartments as we move  
5 families out. Commissioners make calls. I talked to  
6 a landlord the other night with five apartments in  
7 the Bronx who was apologetic that it was only five.  
8 We said we'll take them. If there are landlords that  
9 you know of in your district, I'd be happy to meet  
10 with them, sit down with you. It is really an  
11 important part of our initiative to be able to keep  
12 people in their homes, and if we can enable people to  
13 return to communities from which they've come, but  
14 another factor in the background of all this is the  
15 overall lack of affordable housing problem and the  
16 loss of 400,000 affordable units.

18 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: And also just to  
19 add, Council Member, within DHS we have hosted  
20 numerous forums, housing forums, somewhere [sic] we  
21 invited brokers and landlords to really explain and  
22 showcase the programs. We've also created a  
23 marketing unit within one of our division that is  
24 effectively marking the programs with print  
25 materials, mass mailings, doing everything we can to

1  
2 push out the information about LINC, what it actually  
3 offers, who we're serving, and the sense of community  
4 that surrounds the program and its original intention  
5 as it was designed.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Yeah, and I  
7 just wanted to let you know that we are having one in  
8 Sunset Park tomorrow at the Sunset Park Rec Center,  
9 and we're looking forward to that conversation.

10 That'll be the first time we assemble all the  
11 agencies, which leads me to my next question about  
12 the interagency, the web that is continuing to grow  
13 as you put more resources into solving homelessness.  
14 What are all the agencies that are working on these,  
15 on this one topic, but on all the programs? Can you  
16 talk to me a little bit about what those agencies  
17 are?

18 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Sure. I mean, there  
19 are so many agencies that are involved in this  
20 collective effort. You know, there was a real  
21 recognition in this Administration that it was not an  
22 issue that could be taken on by one solitary actor. I  
23 work very closely with Commissioner Banks, but I also  
24 work well and very closely with our colleagues at the  
25 housing agencies, HPD, NYCHA, our Health and Human

1 Service Agencies, ACS, as well as DOHMH. They all  
2 have a role in terms of helping us to program for the  
3 clients who are being served by our system in all of  
4 our program areas, right? And so from homelessness  
5 prevention to street outreach to those who are in  
6 shelter and those who have moved from shelter to  
7 housing permanency, we've cast our net wide, and the  
8 response has been exceptional in terms of agencies  
9 stepping up to help New Yorkers who are either  
10 threatened with housing stability in shelter or who  
11 have exited shelter and moved to housing permanency  
12 to wrap around them to make sure that they have what  
13 they need.

14  
15 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: And the only  
16 reason I kind of want to just hear it here and allow  
17 people at home to hear just the massive nature of  
18 this project is, and I think we're going to have to  
19 look at it on the oversight side to understand how we  
20 can--how we can kind of pull this aside and really  
21 understand the new bonds that were created with  
22 multiple agencies and how they're actually hitting  
23 our streets and our neighborhoods and our council  
24 districts, and so I'm encouraged by the want and the  
25 resources, but I'm fearful of the growing natures of

1  
2 this effort in so many different agencies, and when  
3 we think about all the things that are happening, all  
4 these other issues, non-homelessness, education,  
5 etcetera, we tend to lose our efficiency as we grow  
6 this project. And so I want to make sure that the  
7 Chair understands that. For me, I'm going to want a  
8 little bit more oversight with the focus on so many  
9 different agencies that are coming together to solve  
10 this issue. Next, and I'm not going to belabor this  
11 too much, but I guess I wanted to get a report if you  
12 have any. There's a taskforce that was assembled  
13 this summer for three-quarter housing, and I'd like  
14 to see if there's any report thus far or anything you  
15 can share with us that is an update on this taskforce  
16 that really wanted to as I understand get to the  
17 bottom of this type of existence in our city.

18 COMMISSIONER BANKS: This is a problem  
19 like many of them that we have described in this  
20 hearing and other hearings that's built up over many  
21 years. The mayor wanted us to address the problem  
22 that had not been focused on in the past, assembled a  
23 taskforce, HRA and the Mayor's Office of Operations,  
24 and HPD will play a primary role along with the Fire  
25 Department and the Buildings Department, and--

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: [interposing]

Can you define the problem for everybody really quick.

COMMISSIONER BANKS: The problem is one of la--the problem starts with the following, that the state's shelter allowance is 215 dollars a month, and so individual adults can't find housing for that in the New York City housing market, and over time, many years, decades, a system of housing developed in which landlords would rent to multiple individuals at that state set shelter allowance that has not been increased since 2003, that individuals--the landlords would rent to multiple individuals to generate additional revenue from those payments, and so it resulted in in many cases overcrowded housing. And in addition, there was a problem that arose in which the relationship between substance use treatment providers and housing operators resulted in individuals essentially being provided with housing and returned for attending the provider's own or associated substance use program, which is a violation of the Medicaid law. I think, as you know, HRA has a role in enforcing the Medicaid law and preventing providers from engaging in fraudulent

1 activity, and so we began to investigate such  
2 activities and work with other parts of law  
3 enforcement, and some of those cases are, have been  
4 made and are continuing to be made to address the  
5 unlawful conduct of requiring a resident to attend a  
6 particular substance use program in return for  
7 housing at the 215 dollar rate. We began to run a  
8 metric over the course of the past year to see where  
9 there might be 10 or more HRA clients housed, which  
10 would be a marker for a potentially overcrowded  
11 conditions, and using that research that we had done,  
12 the Mayor created the taskforce to focus on this  
13 problem, and so HRA, HPD, the Mayor's Office of  
14 Operations, Fire Department, Department of Buildings  
15 went out and inspected 64 locations that we had found  
16 based upon that metric, and found that about half of  
17 the locations were overcrowded, and in order to un--  
18 I'm not sure this is the right verb, but in order to  
19 address the safety needs and un-overcrowd the  
20 housing, we offered on a voluntary basis the  
21 opportunity for people to be taken out and  
22 essentially put into what would be the kind of  
23 temporary accommodations you'd get if you had a fire  
24 or other kind of a safety situation. So, basically  
25

1 an emergency removal. We offered it voluntarily. We  
2 were gratified that we found people wanting to be  
3 removed and they did, and ultimately there are about  
4 280 individuals who we removed from these facilities  
5 and provided them with safe temporary housing. We  
6 didn't want to leave them in those circumstances, and  
7 so the Mayor authorized us to do two things, to  
8 implement a rapid rehousing program, and we  
9 contracted with Samaritan Village. The Comptroller  
10 approved an emergency declaration given the emergency  
11 situation that enabled us to get in place a provider  
12 and we are providing rental assistance to people who  
13 were removed in order to reconnect them to housing so  
14 they don't end up essentially without housing for a  
15 period of time. In addition, one of the largest  
16 providers of three-quarters housing, Norco [sic]  
17 Freedom was sued by the US Attorney and the State  
18 Attorney General in Federal Court and ultimately was  
19 found to have acted improperly based up on Medicaid  
20 fraud that I described, and with a city/state  
21 approach we've been able to begin to put in place a  
22 plan to relocate the residents of those facilities  
23 with the city paying the rapid rehousing cost and the  
24 rental assistance cost for that ultimate relocation.  
25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Right, and this  
3 is all a result of the taskforce coming together--

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing]  
5 Correct.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: this summer and  
7 you really focusing resources and bringing your data.  
8 And is there a completion date for the taskforce for  
9 the final report at some point, or you're still kind  
10 of moving into centrally response?

11 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, I think  
12 there's two aspects to response. One is dealing with  
13 the emergency situation of people in overcrowded  
14 conditions that had existed for years, but we went  
15 out and found them and did something about it. There  
16 is the immediate response to connect those  
17 individuals with permanent housing and that we're  
18 funding at city expense, and then there is the  
19 continued looking for additional locations that may  
20 have escaped the metrics previously and were  
21 continuing to do that. We're working with a thousand-  
22 -it's now less than a thousand residents of Narco  
23 [sic] Freedom to connect them to permanent housing.  
24 There's a lot of immediate short term activities that  
25 are ongoing, and I think that one of the things that

1  
2 we're going to look to report on is once we've  
3 completed the immediate activities, what are some of  
4 the long term solutions that we can recommend based  
5 upon what we've seen and what we've done.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: And I'm  
7 assuming a lot of that's going to require state help  
8 and partnership.

9 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well, as you've  
10 heard me say many times, we will look forward to  
11 working with our state partners in a collaborative  
12 way.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Great, great.  
14 Thank you for that. And I'm hopeful that everybody  
15 at home and here really understand this particular  
16 piece its coming to Sunset Park and we just want to  
17 understand that as you start enforcing and responding  
18 to some of the crisis points. And my last question  
19 is really about our youth in the shelter system, and  
20 this is everything from families and really--when we  
21 think about homelessness and all the resources we're  
22 putting into creating housing options, the LINC  
23 program, etcetera, where are our youth in this, and  
24 this is kind of connected to my first question when  
25 we kind of broad based this entire operation, and are

1 we offering our youth that are in shelter and as time  
2 grows for families that are in shelter, are we doing  
3 anything to make sure that we're supporting them at  
4 the level that we need to as they've left whatever  
5 community they're from? And I'm talking about  
6 education programs. I'm talking about recreational  
7 programs, afterschool programming, and can you tell  
8 us a little bit about where that focus is and  
9 essentially any kind of accountability within your  
10 team on people who are looking into that?

12 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, that is an  
13 excellent question. It is one of the areas within  
14 DHS that we have done the predominance of our work.  
15 Starting last year in January of 2014. When we came  
16 in we made concrete decisions about places where we  
17 would and would not shelter families with minor  
18 children. So, discontinuing the use of Auburn Family  
19 Shelter for families with children, discontinuing the  
20 use of Catherine Street where there were congregate  
21 bathrooms. We also began last year by doing a  
22 comprehensive assessment of all of our families with  
23 children who were in our system, actually sent out  
24 staff to meet with the families, sent out staff to  
25 talk to our providers to get a sense of exactly what

1  
2 their needs were, and really looking at who was in  
3 our system from the child's [sic] ones [sic] and what  
4 we needed to do in order to increase and make better  
5 their experience. And so I'm happy to report that in  
6 partnership with many agencies, some of which I've  
7 named, we've been able to really get our hands around  
8 developing a model of practice that's reflected in my  
9 testimony that will benefit families with children,  
10 but also creating some unique and specialized  
11 interventions for children who are in our system,  
12 both education, recreational, vocational, and invest  
13 experiential [sic] right? And so we've hired a cadre  
14 of social workers who are working with parents and  
15 caretakers. We have a very significant and robust  
16 interagency collaboration with Child Welfare, with  
17 ACS, and we have access to preventive services for  
18 families who need them. We're working very closely  
19 with DYCD with a afterschool--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: [interposing]  
21 I'm going to pause you here, because I know there are  
22 other questions, but it sounds like there's a study  
23 that was conducted and--

24 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing] There  
25 was and there continues to be.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Is that  
3 something we can get as far as results that came from  
4 those studies. We'd like to review that.

5 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, I will review  
6 what we have and absolutely, you know, just share  
7 what we have with you, but we have an educational  
8 plan that's been created for the children who are in  
9 our shelter system that's on our website. Though, a  
10 lot of our information is readily available on our  
11 website in terms of the programing that we've done,  
12 but we've done a significant amount of work, and to  
13 the credit of our Family Services Division within DHS  
14 it has been a top order of priority.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Great. So,  
16 we'll review that as a committee and we'll follow up.  
17 Thank you so much for that.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council  
19 Member Menchaca. I want to turn it over to our  
20 Public Advocate Letitia James. I just want to  
21 acknowledge that we were also joined by Committee  
22 Member Vanessa Gibson as well.

23 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Thank you. Let  
24 me first begin by thanking Committee Chair Steve  
25 Levin for holding this important hearing and allowing

1 me to say a few words. Good afternoon to  
2 Commissioners Taylor and Banks. First, let me thank  
3 you for your intervention programs, your diversion  
4 programs, your rental assistance programs, your  
5 domestic violence programs, your HASA programs, but I  
6 think what I'm most proud of is recently I had the  
7 opportunity to represent someone in Housing Court,  
8 and I was so happy and pleased that I was gathered by  
9 some friends who circled me. At least I counted 15  
10 Legal Services lawyers who were on the second floor  
11 of Brooklyn Housing Court representing individuals in  
12 Housing Court, and I was there for a couple of--I was  
13 three for about an hour and the number grew larger  
14 and larger and larger with Legal Services lawyers all  
15 representing individuals, and so I really want to  
16 thank you for that effort and that initiative. It  
17 really assisted so many individuals who desperately  
18 need an attorney as they entered into Housing Court.  
19 So, let me just say that it is a famous adage that a  
20 true measure of a society is how it treats its  
21 weakest and most infirm, and today, despite all the  
22 progress that our city has achieved to make our  
23 streets safer and cleaner and to strengthen the  
24 city's economic prospects, we still face and  
25

1  
2 extraordinary challenge in caring for the neediest  
3 amongst us. As the Coalition for the Homeless has  
4 found, homelessness in New York City has reached its  
5 highest levels since the Great Depression with about-  
6 -with almost 60,000 homeless individuals, 14,000  
7 homeless families and 23,000 homeless children, and  
8 my office sees aspects of the problem firsthand. We  
9 receive visits and phone calls from literally dozens  
10 of New Yorkers each month who have nowhere else to  
11 turn for the most basic of human services, and a  
12 number of them have complained about the conditions  
13 in some of our shelters, and so I want to not really  
14 focus on the complaints, which we can talk to  
15 privately. I recently had a meeting with  
16 Commissioner Banks, my regular scheduled meeting, and  
17 I know that Commissioner Taylor, we also have our  
18 regularly scheduled meetings, and I'll bring some of  
19 those issues to your attention. What I want to do is  
20 emphasize larger concerns and larger objectives and  
21 larger problem-solving that would go a long way in  
22 addressing this issue. First, all of us in this room  
23 including members of the City Council and all the  
24 advocates who care about the homeless and care about  
25 the crisis in affordable housing, you need to join me

1 in Albany. We need to pass New York, New York Four,  
2 period. We need to come together. The era of using  
3 our jails, our hospitals and psychiatric centers to  
4 address our homeless crisis must be behind us. We  
5 all know that permanentive [sic] supportive housing  
6 is the most effective way of addressing chronic  
7 homelessness, particularly amongst people with mental  
8 illness or severe health issues, and for this reason,  
9 New York, New York Four is vitally important to  
10 moving our city out of its current crisis. I am tired  
11 of these "gotcha" media moments that unfortunately  
12 too many media outlets focus on. We need to pass New  
13 York, New York Four, and the problem lies right now  
14 in Albany, and I urge all of you to join me in Albany  
15 during the legislative session as we lobby to make it  
16 a reality. Two, I urge all of you to call upon our  
17 state elected officials to match the Mayor, to urge  
18 them to match the Mayor's commitment to supportive  
19 housing, particularly his commitment to build 15,000  
20 units of supportive housing. The State of New York  
21 is now sitting on a surplus. They have found new  
22 found money as a result of litigation, and we need to  
23 urge the leaders in Albany to make homelessness and  
24 the crisis in affordable housing their number one  
25

1 priority. So, one, New York, New York Four must be  
2 passed in this legislative session. Two, we must  
3 lobby Albany to match the Mayor's commitment to build  
4 15,000 units of affordable housing. They must do the  
5 same if not more. Three, they must use their surplus  
6 to fund NYCHA. Unfortunately, the State of New York  
7 has not received its fair funding from public  
8 housing. Lastly, I am urging that we issue, in the  
9 City of New York, an RFP for supportive housing and  
10 for affordable housing. I am no fund--I am no fan,  
11 as most of you know, of the State's 421A program. It  
12 has been abused, but if in fact it is the--if in fact  
13 the State Legislature and those who are negotiating  
14 come to an agreement, we must leverage the benefits  
15 provided to developers in order to set aside units  
16 for individuals who are homeless. We must also,  
17 again, set aside beds for LGBT youth and for youth in  
18 general who unfortunately are sleeping on our streets  
19 and engaging in destructive behavior because they  
20 have no place else to turn. I'm working with my City  
21 Council Members on a legislative fix to address the  
22 three-quarter housing. We must also maintain and  
23 rehabilitate affordable housing in the City of New  
24 York, and lastly but not leastly [sic], I urge all of  
25

1  
2 us to focus on an issue that I am, which is a  
3 priority to me, and that is homeless children and  
4 young adults, particularly the 77,000 homeless  
5 students in the New York City school system where  
6 unfortunately they have a significant high drop-out  
7 rate. We need to focus on districts in the Bronx and  
8 East New York where the graduation rates for homeless  
9 youth are at a low. We have 34 percent and we must  
10 take special care to ensure that these students do  
11 not fall behind in the cracks, whether it's providing  
12 them tutoring and shelters or paying special  
13 attention to make sure that they are--their IRP--  
14 IEP's are properly transferred when a child abruptly  
15 moves from one school to another. We can and must do  
16 more, and I've met with several agency heads, and I  
17 know that I will meet with these two Commissioners  
18 again and again so that we can get this right.  
19 Again, I want to thank Council Member Chair, but this  
20 really is a call to action to all of you in this room  
21 who have thousands behind each and every one of you.  
22 We need to head to Albany and we need to demand that  
23 Albany do the right thing and use these surplus funds  
24 to address homelessness and the crisis in affordable

1 housing. We've got to get serious and we've got to  
2 get serious now. Thank you.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,  
5 Public Advocate James. Commissioners, do you want to  
6 respond?

7 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Thank you, Public  
8 Advocate, for all of the work. We appreciate our  
9 partnership with you and I also appreciate your  
10 observations in Brooklyn Housing Court that the  
11 programs we're implementing are having a real impact  
12 on the ground. When I hear that I say, "If only they  
13 were in place years ago, but they're in place now."

14 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: And I thank you for  
15 your continued support of our efforts and for your  
16 continued collaboration with our offices. We serve  
17 the most vulnerable New Yorkers in our system.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,  
19 Public Advocate James. Before I turn it over to  
20 Council Member Fernando Cabrera, Commissioners, I--in  
21 particular Commissioner Taylor, the prompt for this  
22 hearing, as you may know, was the fact that DHS is on  
23 track to exceed the shelter budget and has requested  
24 in the November plan 90 million additional dollars to  
25 be approved by this City Council. Can you explain to

1 us how DHS plans to spend the additional 90 million  
2 dollars? And in addition to that, our Council  
3 Finance Staff has had some trouble getting clarity as  
4 to exactly how this is going to be allocated, and  
5 obviously since we need to approve this, we need full  
6 clarity on that. So, would you commit to having DHS  
7 Finance Staff, Budget Staff sit down with our Council  
8 Finance Staff before next Wednesday, which is when  
9 we're set to vote?  
10

11 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Yes, we will. To  
12 answer your question just very quickly, Chairman  
13 Levin--so the FY17 November Plan is actually adding  
14 138 million dollars in one-time funding to DHS's FY16  
15 budget of which 88 million dollars of city tax funds,  
16 and so these are predominantly for adult shelter and  
17 family shelter re-estimates. Also, just to make  
18 mention that the last time that we had funds added to  
19 our budget as part of that cycle was I believe in  
20 January of 2015, but my staff will sit with you and  
21 will give you--I'm sorry, a shelter re-estimate  
22 funding added to our budget since January of 2015.  
23 My staff will sit down and go through line by line  
24 with you what the funding is actually for. It's 88  
25 million dollars in city tax levy.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Eighty-eight million  
3 dollars. Can you tell us today what at least in  
4 broad strokes how that breaks down in terms of  
5 between emergency contracts, hotel services--

6 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing] So, I  
7 can give you the actual line items, and then we can  
8 give you the more specific details--

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Sure.

10 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: in terms of shelter  
11 type, but the adult shelter re-estimate is actually  
12 59 million dollars, all city tax levy. The family--

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Plus 59?

14 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: I'm sorry?

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Plus 59 on FY16.

16 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: That is correct,  
17 plus 59. That's part of the 88.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

19 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Fifteen of it is  
20 for family, for the adult shelter estimate.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I'm sorry, right,  
22 right, right.

23 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: The family shelter  
24 re-estimate is a total of 78.5 million, but the city  
25 tax levy portion is 29.4 million dollars. And then

1  
2 there are two other smaller allocations that we can  
3 actually talk through, but the predominant--

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] That  
5 accounts for the vast majority.

6 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: For the vast  
7 majority of the 88 million.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Got it.

9 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Fifty-nine million  
10 for adult shelter re-estimates, and 29.4 million for  
11 family shelter re-estimates.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Okay, thank you  
13 very much, Commissioner. I want to turn it over  
14 Council Member Fernando Cabrera for questions.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank you so  
16 much, Mr. Chair, Commissioners. I first want to echo  
17 what Council Member Annabel has spoken about, the  
18 great job that you're doing. You don't get enough  
19 credit. You inherit technically a mess, and two  
20 years, just two years we have seen more strategy,  
21 more design, a design that I think that is going to  
22 alleviate and hopefully eventually we will get to see  
23 the homeless problem go down--eliminated. I have two  
24 questions. One is regarding the Opening Doors  
25 program that I'm really excited about. If you could

1  
2 give us an update as to where we're at related to the  
3 houses of worship, Opening the Doors, and what's the  
4 forecast?

5 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, the Opening  
6 Doors initiative was intended to help us to bring on  
7 500 additional Safe Haven beds hosted in houses of  
8 worship. As I had referenced in the testimony, we  
9 had partnered predominately with organizations that  
10 were part of the Mayor's Clergy Council as well as  
11 the Archdiocese of New York and other houses of  
12 worship that we were able to introduce the program  
13 to, and I'm happy to report that right now we are on  
14 track to--we have 436 of the 500 beds committed, and  
15 so we're going through the procurement process of  
16 actually bringing them on, including the work that's  
17 related to getting the sites ready, and certainly  
18 continuing our dialogue with different faith based  
19 organizations in order to bring on more. We're  
20 having another open house next week for houses of  
21 worship and continuing to promote the program, but we  
22 do know that this is definitely a resource that can  
23 be life-saving, you know, for the clients who will be  
24 served in these beds, particularly as the winter  
25 months come upon us, and so this program I think is

1  
2 one that will be very successful and will continue on  
3 forward.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: So, do you have  
5 funding to expand it beyond the 500? I mean, it  
6 seems to me it is probably the best for the buck  
7 design that you have right now, and so would that be  
8 something that you guys are contemplating on doing?

9 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, we want to get  
10 every bed up and running. We're confident that we'll  
11 do so. We think that the demonstrated success of  
12 this model is one that will continue to be invested  
13 in. I will tell you since this Administration took  
14 office we had added the 214 beds, and now we're  
15 adding an additional 500 in full recognition and  
16 deference to the fact that it can make a difference  
17 in the life of anyone that's living on the street or  
18 in the subways. And so I'm optimistic that this will  
19 really be, you know, a resource that will continue--  
20 continue to be available to us going forward.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: I want to move  
22 quickly because I know we have a lot of advocates  
23 who've been very patient and waiting and they want to  
24 testify, so I'll be parsimonious with my questions,  
25 which is basically one more. Whenever someone

1 leaves--as we know, some people they go into a  
2 shelter system during the winter time it's cold, and  
3 then during the summer they live in streets or in  
4 parks and so forth. When they come back because they  
5 were already part of the system, did they get a new  
6 medical assessment in every single shelter? Is  
7 everything that was done before done again, or they  
8 just allowed to come right back in?

10 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, for all clients  
11 who are in our shelter system, the main objective is  
12 to actually place them into permanent housing and to  
13 place them as quickly as we can and support them with  
14 the aftercare services which is the structure and the  
15 design of the LINC programs and the other initiatives  
16 that we've testified to at today's hearing. For  
17 clients who may leave our system and if they go--if  
18 they're in a housing situation that unfortunately is  
19 no longer available to them, if they should re-enter  
20 our system, there's definitely a period of assessment  
21 in which we work with our clients to get a sense of  
22 what their needs are. Before the assessment period  
23 there's also a real attempt to prevent the shelter  
24 entry. So, understanding is the housing environment  
25 still available, is it something that can be re-

1 accessed. Is there a way that we can actually connect  
2 you to a housing living situation outside of shelter  
3 so that you don't have to come back in, but if you do  
4 come back in, you know, our assessment process is  
5 really trying to understand what our clients need,  
6 right? And part of that process for some of our  
7 clients may be--may include a medical assessment in  
8 the event that it's some type of medical issue that  
9 is hindering their ability to live independently.  
10 For other clients it may be, you know, an assessment  
11 related to a mental health situation or for other  
12 clients it could just be an assessment related to,  
13 you know, an issue that is really at the forefront of  
14 their experience as to why they're coming to shelter.  
15 So, a comprehensive look is what we're doing with all  
16 of the individuals who are coming through the front  
17 door, whether they've been with us before, but our  
18 ultimate goal is to rally keep anyone who we've had  
19 in shelter housed in a housing environment that we  
20 moved them to.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: So how do you  
23 assess whether someone needs an assessment?

24 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Well, I will tell  
25 you, Council Member, it's part of our process, the

1 way in which the system is configured for all entries  
2 into shelter. To the single adult shelter system  
3 there's an assessment period. We have shelters that  
4 are resourced to conduct assessments, and that period  
5 is actually for us to learn who the clients are, to  
6 get a sense of exactly what their needs are, to work  
7 with them during that 21-day period, to discern  
8 whether or not we can actually re-direct them to  
9 housing arrangement, right? To do our investigation  
10 and our inspection, talk to resources, help with any  
11 type of mediation, connect them to concrete resources  
12 that may be available through HRA or other  
13 organizations, but really spending some time getting  
14 to know who are our clients are and during that time,  
15 doing everything that we can to try to prevent them  
16 from having to move deeper into the shelter system,  
17 but really as quickly as you can to try to rapidly  
18 rehouse them.

19  
20 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Okay, thank you  
21 so much.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council  
23 Member Cabrera. Council Member Barry Grodenchik of  
24 Queens?

25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you,  
3 Mr. Chairman. I wanted to focus on the paragraph  
4 about domestic violence services, and I'm happy to  
5 see that you're adding to the great need that exists,  
6 something that's occupied me for a long time. My  
7 math is pretty good. I'm married to a math professor,  
8 but I notice that you currently have 8,800  
9 individuals served, and you're going up to 13,300,  
10 which is another 4,500. One, I'm just taking my  
11 glasses off because it says we're going to be adding  
12 700 Tier Two traditional family units and emergency  
13 beds. Are there more in those family units? Are we  
14 accom--I assume we're accommodating more than one  
15 person, otherwise the math doesn't work.

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: First of all,  
17 congratulations--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: [interposing]  
19 Thank you.

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: on your recent  
21 victory. I recall that you're a math expert when you  
22 were in another legislative body.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I don't know  
24 if I'm an expert. I married well.

1  
2                   COMMISSIONER BANKS: The mathematics  
3 works in two different directions. One is there's  
4 multiple people in households, and two, there's  
5 turnover in terms of people coming in and out of the  
6 system. So, the 8,000--the number that are currently  
7 being served are being served in a system that  
8 includes a combination of emergency beds and Tier Two  
9 units that accommodate multiple people, but they also  
10 turn over because people find other options and move  
11 out.

12                   COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Commissioner,  
13 would you be able to accommodate 13,300 people at  
14 once? I mean, God forbid we need--

15                   COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] No.

16                   COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: that many.  
17 Okay.

18                   COMMISSIONER BANKS: No, we would not.

19                   COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay.

20                   COMMISSIONER BANKS: But our hope is, our  
21 aim of implementing additional beds is with the  
22 additional rental assistance coming through the  
23 CITYFEPS program and the LINC III programs that it  
24 helps connect people to housing in the community  
25 which is so important, and of course, as the

1 legislative process proceeds in Albany, as the Public  
2 Advocate said, there are priorities that we have in  
3 terms of expanding rental assistance to address the  
4 needs of domestic violence survivors which are very  
5 real.  
6

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: And when can  
8 we expect these units to be online?

9 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Again, with the  
10 support of the Comptroller's Office we did an  
11 emergency procurement process, and the emergency beds  
12 should be coming online very shortly of providers.  
13 We're blessed in New York with a terrific network of  
14 providers, and they have come forward with the  
15 emergency units for the first 300 beds, and we expect  
16 those to be out very shortly. The process for  
17 securing the Tier Two units, the additional 400 units  
18 is a longer procurement process and that is on track  
19 to bring them up also very quickly.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you,  
21 Commissioner.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,  
23 Council Member Grodenchik. Commissioners, so I have  
24 several more questions here, but we have to clear the  
25 room at 1:00 p.m., and we do have a number of

1 individuals that are here to testify as well, so I'm  
2 going to ask you to keep your answers brief and  
3 concise.  
4

5 COMMISSIONER BANKS: To the extent we  
6 can, we certainly will.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: With regard to the  
8 new funding that is being requested both on the  
9 single adult side and the family side, what--is that  
10 going to be--what types of shelters is that going to  
11 be for? Is that going to be for hotels, cluster  
12 sites, contracted new shelters? What is the plan  
13 specifically for those?

14 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, it's actually  
15 covering all shelter types for both populations, I  
16 believe for families with children as well as for  
17 adult, single adult shelters. So, for families with  
18 children it would be a combination of what you  
19 describe with the hotels. It would also be Tier  
20 Two's. It would also be other shelter types as well.  
21 I just want to confirm with my--

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Cluster  
23 sites?

24 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: It could be  
25 clusters as well, yes, the full portfolio.

1                   CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And what is--what's  
2  
3 DHS paying right now for hotels and how many hotel  
4 rooms are in the system?

5                   COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, Council Member,  
6 I can get you that information. I don't have it  
7 right at my fingertips. My staff can get it to you.

8                   CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is it--

9                   COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing] The  
10 average rate for the hotel payment as well as for the  
11 number of hotel rooms.

12                   CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Can you tell me  
13 broadly are the number of hotel units going down in  
14 the system? Is the number decreasing?

15                   COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, that is the  
16 plan to have the number decrease, yet.

17                   CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is it decreasing?

18                   COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Well, right now  
19 we're using the rooms at capacity that we have,  
20 because we need it in order to accommodate the  
21 demand, but as we bring on other shelter models, we  
22 are going to be able to decrease our reliance on the  
23 use of commercial--

24                   CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Has that  
25 started happening yet?

1  
2           COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: That has started  
3 happening, that is correct.

4           CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Are there fewer hotels  
5 in the system than there were two years ago?

6           COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: No, two years ago--  
7 there are fewer clusters in the system than there  
8 were two years ago.

9           CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. So, okay, so  
10 there are fewer clusters in the system than there  
11 were two years ago.

12           COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Yes, but we went in  
13 a different direction. Instead of using cluster  
14 capacity, which we had spoken to before, which are  
15 apartments that can be used for affordable housing--

16           CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Right.

17           COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: The decision was  
18 made in a very short term and temporary basis to use  
19 commercial hotels so that we could be attentive to  
20 the demands in a right to shelter jurisdiction.

21           CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Our  
22 understanding is that the cost of commercial hotel is  
23 around 150 dollars a night average, which comes to  
24 over 4,000 dollars a month. Is that corresponding  
25 with what you're seeing on the ground?

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COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, I would want to get a clearer sense of that number and provide you with the details because there's also a social service component that is incorporated into the cost, right?

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sure.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, it's not just a room--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] It's good that you want to break that out.

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [cross-talk] service providers.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: We want to break that out. We don't necessarily--right. Our Finance Staff has been asking for that for a little while now. We haven't received a response on that, so can we get that--

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: [interposing] Yes.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: before we're asked to vote on the November plan?

COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: Yes, you can.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Obviously, it raises a question of whether--I mean, obviously there's--and there's no good option here, but 4,000 dollars or

1  
2 more a month on a hotel room is obviously very  
3 expensive.

4 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: SO, again, let me  
5 confirm the numbers for you so that I--so that  
6 they're reported to you accurately. You know, we have  
7 that information and my Finance Staff can share it  
8 with the Council.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: With regard to the  
10 Human Rights Commission, so we had heard that--you  
11 know, we had allocated new funding for new positions  
12 at the Human Rights Commission to look into issues  
13 like we're talking about, source of income  
14 discrimination, and we had funded in FY16 new  
15 positions. Have those positions all been filled, do  
16 you know?

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think that's  
18 information we can get to you. It's information the  
19 Human Rights Commission would have. I don't have it--  
20 -

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Sure.

22 COMMISSIONER BANKS: as the HRA  
23 Commissioner, but what I do know is that our  
24 partnership with the Human Rights Commission has been  
25 very helpful in first of all making it clear that all

1 of the clients who are potential victims of income--  
2 source of income discrimination would have be able to  
3 get the information that we've provided on the "Know  
4 Your Rights" flyer that I described. In an addition,  
5 the number of cases they've taken on has--it's 85  
6 cases, 20 of which were proactively initiated by them  
7 and 65 after receiving a complaint. In terms of  
8 their staffing, I do not know the answer, but we can  
9 get you the answer.  
10

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. But obviously  
12 it's relevant. My understanding is that we increased  
13 the head count from 66 to 100, but that I heard a  
14 rumor, I don't mean to be repeating rumors in public  
15 here, but I did hear a rumor that they weren't all--  
16 they weren't fully staffed up because of other issues  
17 like there weren't enough computers for them and  
18 things like that. So, obviously, that's a source of  
19 concern. Can we find out ASAP whether all-- because  
20 we allocated this funding back in July for FY16.  
21 We're halfway through the fiscal year. Obviously if  
22 we're not fully ramped up there we need to know why  
23 because it has a real impact.

24 COMMISSIONER BANKS: We'll certainly, the  
25 Administration will certainly respond to your request

1  
2 for information. As I said, I'm familiar with the  
3 staffing and implementation at HRA. I don't know all  
4 of the details with regard to other agency, but I do  
5 see them acting as a partner with us in a way which  
6 we greatly appreciated.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great. With regard  
8 to--so the first round of LINC subsidies, the renewal  
9 period is approaching. What--are we getting feedback?  
10 I mean, are we getting feedback from landlords? Are  
11 we hearing from landlords? Are they eager to renew  
12 themselves, and how are--what measures are we talking  
13 to ensure that nobody falls through the cracks,  
14 nobody loses their subsidy if they shouldn't be  
15 losing their subsidy?

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Right. The landlords  
17 are required to renew.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

19 COMMISSIONER BANKS: The review process  
20 is with respect to continuing eligibility for the  
21 families and individuals, and we're being very  
22 proactive in trying to address that, but we're just  
23 coming up on the period of time right now.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Have you gotten any  
25 feedback from landlords doing any focus groups or

1  
2 anything like that so that--so that they're able to  
3 tell you what's been working about it and what hasn't  
4 been working about it?

5 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think as I said  
6 before, I'm an optimist and I think that limited news  
7 is good news in terms of the input we've gotten. I  
8 think the most of the input that we've got from  
9 landlord representatives and landlords themselves was  
10 about the initial start-up of the program, what were  
11 the protections going to be and are they in place.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How many--between the  
13 LINC's and the CITYFEPS and the SEPS and the other  
14 program, the TBRA program, how many leases is the  
15 city getting signed for individuals exiting the  
16 shelter system per week? Do you have that by week or  
17 by month and then disaggregated?

18 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I can get you that  
19 information, but I can tell you it's an ongoing  
20 program and it also depends on the week. So, for  
21 example, in the holiday period in December that we're  
22 upon it's going to be less.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

24 COMMISSIONER BANKS: It's going to be more  
25 at other periods of time, but let me get you the

1  
2 information and not give an answer off the top of my  
3 head.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because the reason  
5 that I ask is that we went back, we looked at  
6 testimony from DHS back in 2010 with when they were  
7 testifying about the Advantage Program, and they very  
8 proudly said that in one week they had 199 leases for  
9 Advantage leases. They said that they were doing a  
10 new Adva--one Advantage lease every 15 minutes, and I  
11 know obviously with 20,000 people that have received  
12 one form of subsidy or another, that may very well be  
13 consistent. I just--the way that they--the metrics  
14 that they used at the time were very easily, easy for  
15 us to digest. They said, you know, they're tracking  
16 it by week, since it was like one program, you know,  
17 it was very easy to say, but yeah, they were saying  
18 averaging about 150 a week or 170 a week. In one  
19 week they had up to about 200.

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think it's  
21 important to keep two things in mind--

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] I know  
23 what you're going to say.

24 COMMISSIONER BANKS: about the world in  
25 2010.

1                   CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah.

2                   COMMISSIONER BANKS: First of all, the  
3 program resulted in about a third of the people  
4 returning to the shelter system.  
5

6                   CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That's what I knew you  
7 were going to say, yeah.

8                   COMMISSIONER BANKS: I thought you would.  
9 And in part because the program was one year or two  
10 years at most, and that was a major flaw in the  
11 program, and the correction with LINC and SEPS and  
12 the others is that it's programs depending on your  
13 category. It's up to five years. So there are  
14 different programs with respect to landlord  
15 participation than Advantage. Advantage was a very  
16 quick commitment and a time-limited commitment to the  
17 landlord community. It's also a different point in  
18 time in the housing market. As we described before,  
19 400,000 units of affordable housing lost in this  
20 recent period of time, and there are many different  
21 factors that are going on in the housing market now  
22 than were going on then. We have funded substantial  
23 numbers of rental subsidies before clients to move  
24 out, and over the past year have moved out  
25 substantial numbers. Remembering that by 2010, of

1 course, rental assistance had been in place for a  
2 number of years in New York City.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

5 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Going back to the  
6 Koch Administration. There was no period of time in  
7 which there was a break like there was before  
8 2011/2014 in which landlords found other people to  
9 rent to.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Are we seeing on  
11 the ground still--I mean, the Comptroller's letter  
12 spoke to this, but are we seeing a reluctance from  
13 landlords to accept the LINC or any of the LINC  
14 programs or the FEPS programs because they're  
15 concerned? You know, the whole they got burned by  
16 Advantage excuse. Are we seeing that still? Is that  
17 still something that's prevalent? It was prevalent  
18 at first, for sure.

19 COMMISSIONER BANKS: That was certainly a  
20 factor as we rebuilt the program. It certainly an  
21 issue in the minds of landlords that it comes up, but  
22 the proof is on the ground in terms of how the  
23 program has been performing. So, let's just look at  
24 CITYFEPS, for example, which is a program structured  
25 in the way that everyone is qualified for for many

1 years, an ongoing program, set at a Section 8 level  
2 with community-based organizations that have  
3 longstanding ties in the communities as the actual  
4 entities helping connect people to the units, not  
5 limited to only people who are in the shelter system,  
6 but also to keep people out of the shelter system and  
7 keep them in their homes, and for DV survivors. And  
8 it was implemented in June of 2016--2015, and the  
9 projection was that there would 1,000 of them over  
10 the course of a year. It's now less than six months  
11 later, and we're, you know, almost to 1,000. So, I  
12 think it really shows that the landlord community is  
13 interested in participating and that families can  
14 benefit from it, and we're going to keep working on  
15 it to make sure that it continues to be effective.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is it possible to get  
18 from you guys a month by month or even a week by week  
19 charting of each, of the programs and how many move-  
20 outs we're getting so that we're--because just that  
21 it would be helpful for us to be able to track, you  
22 know, to track what you're doing on a month by month  
23 or week by week basis.

24 COMMISSIONER BANKS: We'll certainly see  
25 what's available and provide to you what we can. I

1 think I want to emphasize something I said earlier in  
2 the hearing which is that the programs operate for  
3 different client groups.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

5 COMMISSIONER BANKS: And so it was  
6 important to not be like Advantage and have a one  
7 size fits all but to have many different kinds of  
8 programs for different people.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Oh, absolutely.

10 COMMISSIONER BANKS: So, they'll move at  
11 different paces.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah, yeah, and  
13 that's--

14 COMMISSIONER BANKS: [interposing] Some  
15 will be--some will fly off the shelf like CITYFEPS  
16 and some will move more slowly like LINC VI, but none  
17 the less we want to ensure that LINC VI to enable  
18 people to move back into the community to reunite  
19 with family and friends, we want to make sure that  
20 that's one of the tools we have irrespective of how  
21 many people are taking advantage of it.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right. So, actually  
23 that's my next question, which is that so you  
24 provided to us a breakdown disaggregated by the type  
25

1 of program with FY16 move-outs the date as of  
2 September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015 compared to the target numbers  
3 and the FY16 allotment, and the final calm is the  
4 target achieved, and so I just want to read these out  
5 because--and obviously this is--within by September  
6 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015 that's, you know, three months of the  
7 Fiscal Year, so it might not be totally  
8 representative of the entire Fiscal Year as a whole,  
9 and it may not--it may be different because different  
10 programs rolled out at different times. But LINC I,  
11 in terms of its target achieved, and this is coming  
12 from the Administration. LINC I was at 54 percent of  
13 its target achieved. LINC II was at 73 percent. LINC  
14 III was at 17 percent. LINC IV was at 98 percent.  
15 LINC V was at 65 percent. LINC VI was at 46 percent,  
16 and CITYFEPS was at 161 percent, and then we didn't  
17 have the numbers for the TBRA and the SEPS. But  
18 obviously there's a wide range there, right? In terms  
19 of--and I'm not--these aren't just the hard numbers.  
20 This is the percent of the target. So, I'm assuming  
21 the target move-outs was based on the target for  
22 those three months and not for the entire Fiscal  
23 Year. So, obviously when you've got LINC IV at 98  
24 percent, obviously successful. You know, LINC II,



1  
2 are more client related than anything else. LINC III  
3 had been targeted to people that are already in the  
4 system. CITYFEPS is targeted to people as they're  
5 coming in who have been found eligible.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But also people that  
7 are in the system as well?

8 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Exactly, but I think  
9 the key factor is the different client needs  
10 reflected by the different programs. We're always  
11 going to want to have an array of tools to address a  
12 broad range of clients and not be one size fits all  
13 the way Advantage was, but we're also going to judge  
14 ourselves by how we're doing overall with move-outs  
15 and the combination of the programs is getting us  
16 where we want to be.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Are there some  
18 programs that are more appealing to landlords than  
19 others?

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think as you can  
21 see, it's not about LINC versus CITYFEPS, because you  
22 can see LINC IV is doing extremely well. That's  
23 about senior citizens and people with disabilities.  
24 CITYFEPS is about people who have been evicted or  
25

1 facing eviction or survivors of domestic violence.

2 So, it varies--

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] The two  
5 things most--

6 COMMISSIONER BANKS: depending on who the  
7 clients are.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The two things that  
9 those programs have in common on our--on this sheet  
10 is the duration, both continue indefinitely. They  
11 don't have the renewal period. Is that--is that an  
12 issue for landlords? Are they more inclined to take  
13 something that is going to continue indefinitely, it  
14 doesn't have, isn't subject to a renewal after every  
15 year?

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: In participating in  
17 the city's efforts to recruit landlords I've spoken  
18 to many landlords over the last year, and I think it  
19 depends on who the landlord is. Some people want the  
20 certainty of stability and some people want the  
21 flexibility to not be locked in over the long-term,  
22 so it really just depends on the landlord.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: DO you think that  
24 after a one year--after the first year of renewal  
25 where landlords may see that, you know, the ease with

1  
2 which a program will be renewed for a client may have  
3 some impact on whether a landlords is going to take  
4 it?

5 COMMISSIONER BANKS: We're certainly going  
6 to take a look at that and see how it goes. The ease  
7 of rental, the first year experience are all  
8 important things in evaluating both from our  
9 perspective and the landlord's perspective of how  
10 thing proceed.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Do you know, do you  
12 have a sense of the average number of apartments that  
13 somebody has to look at or has to kind of go out and  
14 try to contact before they're able to get a LINC or  
15 CITYFEPS apartment?

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think, again, that  
17 varies by client. I've spoken to providers and  
18 clients how have gotten apartments right away and  
19 some have looked for a long time and have difficulty.  
20 So,--

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Those  
22 that have had difficulty, do you have a sense of why,  
23 what are the reasons why somebody would have  
24 difficulty?  
25

1  
2           COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think it's a  
3 combination of particular client needs, challenges  
4 that clients have in looking for apartments, issues  
5 about where they want to be located, issues about  
6 whether the landlord happens to have apartments or  
7 the broker happens to have apartments that day.  
8 Again, CITYFEPS is a good example. We have  
9 oversubscribed it, and so for many families it's been  
10 tremendously successful, and for others they don't--  
11 they haven't been connected in an apartment yet.

12           CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. One of the  
13 things that was we saw or there were complaints about  
14 during the Advantage period was this issue of side  
15 deals that landlords were requesting additional money  
16 outside from the potential tenants outside of the  
17 agreed upon rent payments from DHS at the time. Is  
18 that something that you're encountering, and if so,  
19 how are you dealing with that?

20           COMMISSIONER BANKS: Have not heard it.  
21 I must say that that--that based upon the Advantage  
22 experience and Housing Stability Plus before it,  
23 every document some place of any consequence for the  
24 landlord says no side deals, and again, if there are  
25 complaints about it we'd certainly take them at the

1  
2 hotline number that I gave previously, which I'll  
3 give again.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sorry, I'm jumping  
5 around here. How many--how many people have--during  
6 the period of time that the programs have been up and  
7 running, how many people have entered the shelter  
8 system? So we've moved out 22,000 and change. How  
9 many people have entered the shelter system in that  
10 period of time?

11 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: We can get you that  
12 metric, Chairman Levin. We have that data. We can  
13 easily give it to you. I don't have it available  
14 right this second.

15 COMMISSIONER BANKS: One issue that I  
16 think it's important to keep in mind with respect to  
17 shelter entrance, though, is so entrance by reason of  
18 eviction, for example, isn't a situation in which  
19 typically people are evicted and then enter the  
20 shelter system the next day. Typically, it's a number  
21 of months if not an excess of a year before people  
22 may appear seeking shelter. So, the fact that these  
23 programs have been implemented over the past year,  
24 their impact on keratin rates of shelter entry are  
25 going to be seen as we continue to move forward.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sorry, I just have a  
3 couple more questions and I know that Commissioner  
4 Taylor had to step out for a second here. One thing  
5 that caught my eye coming out of the MMR was the  
6 percentage of children--or, sorry. The percentage of  
7 families placed in the shelter services system  
8 according to their youngest school-age child's school  
9 address, I don't know if you can speak to this, maybe  
10 we could wait for Commissioner Taylor to return, but  
11 that has decreased significantly since FY11. It was  
12 at 83 percent in FY11, down to 76 percent in 12, 70  
13 percent in 13, 65 percent in 14, and 52 percent in  
14 15. So, over four years it went from 83 percent to  
15 52 percent. Is that something that we're tracking  
16 and is there something that we can say that that is  
17 chalked up to? And what is it--that I imagine has an  
18 impact on all types of issues for a family, school  
19 obviously.

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I'm going to defer  
21 that to my colleague--

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Okay.

23 COMMISSIONER BANKS: to answer, and if we  
24 need to continue we can follow up with you after the  
25 hearing. I think it's an issue that we certainly

1 would be happy to discuss with you further. Okay,  
2 sorry. Sorry, I'll just leave this. I'll ask this  
3 last question for Commissioner Taylor. Commissioner  
4 Taylor, in the MMR, one thing that's jumped out at us  
5 is the decrease in the number of--sorry. In the  
6 families placed in the shelter services system  
7 according to their youngest school-aged child school  
8 address that number has decreased from 83.3 percent  
9 in FY11 down to 52.9 percent in FY15. Do you know  
10 what's accounting for that pretty precipitous drop  
11 there?  
12

13 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, what I can tell  
14 you, Chairman Levin, is that school-based placement  
15 as well community-based placements into shelters are  
16 goal, it's always our goal so that we can keep  
17 families in the communities from which they've come.  
18 We know that if we do that that they have a better  
19 chance of exiting shelter faster. What we have seen  
20 happen as the census has increased is clearly there  
21 have been challenges associated with having the  
22 shelter capacity to place children into the  
23 neighborhoods from which they've come so that they  
24 can maintain their school in continuity as much as we  
25 would want to. We're working on that. We are

1  
2 actually at a place where by way of our educational  
3 plan we are working closely with DOE in order to  
4 ensure that any of our children who are in one of our  
5 shelters can have access at a school from which they  
6 were originally enrolled and also doing work  
7 internally with our providers just to make sure that  
8 we have resources in place to maintain school  
9 continuity and to get that number back up as much as  
10 possible, but it has been a challenge. It correlated  
11 with the increase in shelter entries as well as the  
12 challenges associated with capacity in our system.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah, because it's  
14 odd that the--it doesn't necessarily track the  
15 average school attendance rate which continues to  
16 remain around where it was in 15, but the number, I  
17 mean, from 83 percent to 52 percent is a significant  
18 drop, so I'm a little bit unclear as to how one could  
19 drop so precipitously and the other one stay the way  
20 it is. I mean, it just seems like if somebody's--if a  
21 family is, you know, not near their school of origin  
22 it would be harder to get there.

23 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, one correlates  
24 with where they're placed in terms of being able to  
25 enroll in their school of origin. The other is

1  
2 actually a testament to the work that we've done with  
3 our providers to ensure that when a child is enrolled  
4 in school that they are attending, and so we have  
5 data feeds with DOE in order to discern who's going  
6 to school. We also have, you know, staff in place.  
7 I mentioned the social workers that we had hired as  
8 well as our providers who are very attendant to  
9 educational attendance, making sure that children are  
10 going to school everyday--

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] I think--  
12 -

13 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: in the school which  
14 they were enrolled.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah, I mean, I would--  
16 -that's something I would like to continue to look at  
17 and explore with you guys moving forward. And then  
18 lastly, the performance indicators on the length of  
19 stay in the shelter system obviously continued to  
20 increase on every--for every category across every  
21 year. For single adults it's gone up from 250 to 329  
22 from FY11 to 15, adult families 349 to 534. This is  
23 the number of days, so you know, obviously that's,  
24 you know, close to a year and a half. Length of stay  
25 for families with children, 254 to now 430. Is that

1 something that you anticipate--do you anticipate that  
2 that will be going down over the next six months, and  
3 do you think that the programs that are in place are  
4 going to--when do you think that's going to start to--  
5 --when do you think that the programs in place will  
6 start to have an impact on that performance measure?

8 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: So, the programs  
9 that we've structured that we've testified to you  
10 today have been population specific, but most of all  
11 it's the clients who have been in shelter for the  
12 longest period of time, right? And so as we continue  
13 to drive forward in terms of placing those clients  
14 from our shelter system what you should see is a  
15 correlation with the decrease in the length of stay  
16 because the overall number of those who have been in  
17 shelter the longest should come down. You know, this  
18 is--it goes back to what we had originally began  
19 discussing during this hearing in terms of really  
20 thinking about what we came into as an  
21 administration, and considering, you know, how  
22 quickly can we actually change the system as we had  
23 inherited it, right? And so I think the foundation is  
24 definitely in place. I feel very strongly that the  
25 investments that we've made across the full continuum

1 from prevention as well as those for clients in  
2 shelter as well as outreach in our housing permanency  
3 programs will lend itself to a very different  
4 discussion very soon, but to answer your question  
5 very specifically, our programs are targeted for long  
6 stayers, and to the extent that they're able to exit  
7 our shelter system, that number should come down for  
8 all populations.  
9

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, do you expect in  
11 FY16 that we'll see that those performance measures  
12 start to turn that corner?

13 COMMISSIONER TAYLOR: I'm very optimistic  
14 that it will.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you both very  
16 much for your testimony. I appreciate you answering  
17 our questions in a forthright manner and thoroughly.  
18 So, we greatly appreciate, and we--just once more  
19 that we look forward to meeting with budget staff  
20 prior to next Wednesday, which is when we have to  
21 vote on the November plan, to get a thorough  
22 breakdown of exactly what the additional funding in  
23 FY16 is going to--how that's going to be allocated.  
24 Is that fair?  
25

1  
2                   COMMISSIONER BANKS: Thank you very much.  
3 We appreciate your partnership.

4                   CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. Okay, we're  
5 going to call up members of the public. We're going  
6 to ask folks to keep their testimony to two minutes.  
7 We apologize. There is another hearing here at 1:00  
8 p.m. So, first panel, Judith Goldiner, Legal Aid  
9 Society, Clayton Brooks, Covenant House, Michael  
10 Polenberg, Safe Horizon, Wendy O'Shields, Safety Net  
11 Activist, and Donna Morgan, Picture the Homeless.  
12 Actually, I know Donna can go first, because I know  
13 she has to leave at one. Okay, Donna can go first.  
14 You have to push the button.

15                   DONNA MORGAN: Good afternoon. My name is  
16 Donna Morgan. I am residing at Franklin Shelter which  
17 is located in the Bronx. I also work fulltime, 56  
18 hours a week. I am a part of SEIU 1199, as well as a  
19 member of the homeless, the Picture of the Homeless  
20 Shelter. It's in need of a lot of update. My  
21 counselor is a wonderful person, but she is new at  
22 her job and doesn't know what to do to help me to get  
23 out the shelter system. She had to ask questions  
24 that I put to her. Franklin Shelter is supposed to  
25 have a 21-day assessment, but there are people there

1 for months and months. I cannot stay in this shelter  
2 that long. Some people fight every night and the  
3 policy is there all the time. People leave in  
4 handcuffs and return the next day to the same bed. I  
5 came to Franklin Shelter November the 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015. No  
6 phone system in this shelter. Today is December the  
7 2<sup>nd</sup> and still no phone system working in the shelter.  
8 I came from a family shelter in 316 Rockaway. Me and  
9 my son been there into the system for 14 months. We  
10 left--he decided not to come back with me to this new  
11 shelter. It house 300 people and three microwaves. I  
12 have never been sick before, but now enter into the  
13 system, I'm always sick. I need help. I had my LINC  
14 voucher. I need help of getting it back, because in  
15 the other family shelter they did not renew my LINC  
16 voucher. I need my own apartment for me and my son.  
17 They pay thousands of dollars for me each month  
18 instead of giving me apartment, which would be  
19 cheaper. I see the vacant buildings, but nothing's  
20 being done to renovate them for us. The new program,  
21 the LINC, I have been trying for 15 months to find an  
22 apartment with it.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much  
25 for your testimony, and certainly you can count on us

1  
2 to help coordinate with HRA and DHS to make sure that  
3 the process is rectified there. So, if you could  
4 make sure to touch base with one of our staff so that  
5 we're able to--

6 DONNA MORGAN: [interposing] Okay, thank  
7 you.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: keep in contact with  
9 you that'd be great. Thank you.

10 WENDY O'SHIELDS: My name is Wendy  
11 O'Shields and I'm a member of the Safety Net  
12 Activists, a group supported by the Safety Net  
13 Project at Urban Justice. Our members are New Yorkers  
14 who have lived the frustrations and trauma of  
15 poverty, public assistance and homelessness. We urge  
16 the City of New York to take measures to redirect the  
17 money that is currently spent on shelters to  
18 solutions that will provide permanently affordable  
19 housing for low income New Yorkers. We therefore  
20 urge the City of New York to pursue the following  
21 recommendations. First, develop an existing city-  
22 owned vacant property as housing for homeless and  
23 extremely low income households. The research by  
24 Picture the Homeless showed that in 2011 the city  
25 owned roughly 28,000 vacant residential units, enough

1 housing to house over the half of the current shelter  
2 population. We urge the city to immediately begin  
3 working with Picture the Homeless to utilize the  
4 existing vacant property owned by the city to place  
5 homeless households into permanent housing. Two,  
6 pursue the formation of HDFC Co-ops for the homeless.  
7 HDFC's provide permanent affordable housing and home  
8 ownership to low income tenants. Efforts have been  
9 made to prioritize homeless New Yorkers for certain  
10 types of affordable housing including NYCHA. The  
11 city should expand these efforts by prioritizing  
12 homeless New Yorkers for co-op ownership in the  
13 creation of new HDFC properties. Thank you.

14  
15 CLAYTON BROOKS: Good afternoon. Thank  
16 you, Chairman Levin and distinguished Council  
17 Members. My name's Clayton Brooks. I'm the Director  
18 of Advocacy at Covenant House New York. We've heard  
19 a lot today about the broader issue of homelessness  
20 in the city, but I want to speak briefly about a  
21 particular population, homeless and unaccompanied  
22 youth, which are both a population unique in its  
23 needs, but also which offer the city the opportunity  
24 with some strategic and targeted investments to help  
25 save the city and state over the long term with

1 investing and intervening in these youth before they  
2 become chronically homeless adults and seniors. So,  
3 the National Alliance in Homelessness estimates  
4 350,000 unaccompanied youth as homeless throughout  
5 the country. Several years ago a local study found  
6 that 3,800 youth are homeless in New York City. The  
7 city and state obviously partner to help alleviate a  
8 lot of that need through the network of providers  
9 including Covenant House, and we're incredibly  
10 appreciative for that, but there's still a great need  
11 that remains. We view a consistent continuum serving  
12 the needs of homeless youth as comprising four main  
13 parts. The first being Drop-in Centers of which our  
14 partner Safe Horizon operates one that help identify  
15 the short term needs of youth, and then Crisis  
16 Shelters which offer a short term stay for homeless  
17 youth, transitional programs which offer a bit of an  
18 intermediary stay, and then trans-permanent  
19 supportive housing that can offer something in a  
20 little bit of a longer term basis. I just wanted to  
21 highlight a few sort of key issues that I think there  
22 are really solvable fixes for if we can partner with  
23 the City Council. One is just in addressing the  
24 bottle-necking of crisis shelters and transitional  
25

1  
2 programs in this city. that's something we can talk  
3 with your offices about a little bit further over  
4 time, but do want to applaud the city for its  
5 addition of 100 beds both last year and this year to  
6 the system at Covenant House. We received 76 of  
7 those beds and it has decreased our wait list--excuse  
8 me, our turn-away numbers by over 60 percent. So,  
9 this is the ability with a few critical investments  
10 in this population that we can really move the needle  
11 on this issue with youth.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much  
13 for your testimony. Thank you for the good work that  
14 you do.

15 CLAYTON BROOKS: Thank you.

16 MICHAEL POLENBERG: Hi, my name is  
17 Michael Polenberg. I'm VP of Government Affairs at  
18 Safe Horizon, the nation's leading victim assistance  
19 organization. We're delighted that the city  
20 implemented housing subsidies, created and funded  
21 housing subsidies. Safe Horizon has moved about over  
22 160 families out through LINC III and FEPS and the  
23 other subsidies, but more needs to be done, and we've  
24 issued some recommendations to the city, but waiting  
25 to hear back, allowing residents in domestic violence

1  
2 emergency shelters to be eligible for subsidies after  
3 45 days of shelter rather than 60 days, and to  
4 increase the bonus that's paid to landlords who rent  
5 the smaller, cheaper apartments at 1,200, about 1,200  
6 dollars a month to better incentivize landlords to  
7 rent those apartments to our tenants. Regarding  
8 homeless youth, I'd like to echo what Clayton said.  
9 It's absolutely a crisis that there's homeless youth  
10 who are sleeping each night on our streets. We'd  
11 love to know which of the housing subsidies that the  
12 Commissioner spoke about today are accessible for  
13 homeless youth in overnight shelters. You know,  
14 sleeping in Drop-in Centers, they're sleeping on the  
15 streets. We've not had any luck in that aspect.  
16 We'd love for you guys to take a closer look at that.  
17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,  
19 Michael, and thank you for the good work that you  
20 Safe Horizon do.

21 JOSELLE RUTH: Thank you to the Council.  
22 My name is Joselle Ruth [sp?] here. I'm the Policy  
23 Director at the Coalition for the Homeless. We've  
24 submitted joint testimony with Legal Aid Society, so  
25 I'm just going to touch on a couple key points. The

1  
2 Mayor's recent announcement of the plan to create  
3 15,000 units of supportive housing in New York City  
4 over the next 15 years is the largest commitment to  
5 supportive housing made by any Mayor, and its  
6 importance cannot be overstated. We want to  
7 reiterate that. Supporting housing works to end the  
8 trauma of homelessness for our most vulnerable New  
9 Yorkers, but it's only half of the solution and we  
10 really need the Governor to step off of state funds  
11 to match that and create 30,000 units of supportive  
12 housing in New York City. we want to highlight one  
13 of the most important policy reversals Mayor de  
14 Blasio has made from the previous Administration is  
15 the reinstatement of priority access to federally  
16 funded permanent housing resources for homeless  
17 families including public housing and Section 8. We  
18 commend the Administration for making over 2,500  
19 placements into those critical programs, and it's  
20 hard to overstate the importance of that given that  
21 in the last full Fiscal Year of the Bloomberg  
22 Administration just 170 placements were made into  
23 those programs. That's a huge, huge difference. In  
24 addition to making critical placements into federally  
25 funded permanent housing programs, the Administration

1 has also instituted an array of locally funded rental  
2 subsidies which have made thousands more placements  
3 as well. But there's still work to be done,  
4 particularly with regard to shelter capacity. The  
5 single adult shelter system capacity remains very  
6 tight, which creates the risk of exacerbating  
7 conditions that deter individuals from accessing  
8 lifesaving shelter, including long wait times for  
9 beds and frequent transfers. DHS has made some  
10 progress recently in adding capacity and will  
11 continue to monitor this progress. Homeless families  
12 also continue to face challenges with Path and being  
13 placed in shelters that are far from schools, work  
14 and medical appointments, and I'm going to turn it  
15 over to Josh [sic] to talk about a couple issues, but  
16 before I do that I just want to say that while the  
17 city has made significant progress, they must  
18 continue to make sure that progress is made moving  
19 forward and that housing placements continue to be  
20 made at a level that matches that unprecedented need.  
21 They must continue to make at least 2,500 placements  
22 into NYCHA and Section 8 units, set aside at least 10  
23 percent of the affordable housing plan units for  
24 homeless individuals and families and set up  
25

1 enforcement of landlord discrimination and work to  
2 reduce cluster site units to affordable permanent  
3 housing. Thank you.

4  
5 JOSHUA GOLDFINE: I'm Joshua Goldfine, a  
6 Staff Attorney at the Homeless Rights Project of the  
7 Legal Aid Society. We are Counsel for Coalition for  
8 the Homeless, and we have submitted joint written  
9 testimony. I just want to make a couple of quick  
10 points. Joselle mentioned that the capacity issues,  
11 those are particularly affecting the families in that  
12 families with children are unable to be placed in  
13 appropriate placements, both because of the school  
14 and work issues that Joselle mentioned, but also  
15 people with disabilities are unable to be placed in  
16 units at this point that meet their needs, and that's  
17 a problem for those families. It's also creating  
18 liability for the city, I think. In regard to the  
19 LINC programs that we heard earlier some testimony  
20 that it's not possible for people to use those  
21 vouchers. The Legal Aid Society has brought the only  
22 case against a landlord for refusing LINC, and the  
23 city should be using its resources as well. We  
24 brought a case against Spring Creek Towers in  
25 Brooklyn which said that it was not going to take

1  
2 LINC vouchers. That's the buildings formerly known  
3 as Starlet [sic] City. It's the largest affordable  
4 housing, private affordable housing development in  
5 the country, but they are refusing--they were  
6 refusing to take the LINC vouchers. Other landlords,  
7 as the testimony--you heard earlier from the  
8 testimony, have made the same kinds of statements.  
9 The city should be bringing cases against these  
10 landlords as well through the Human Rights Commission  
11 and the Office of Corporation Council. We heard a  
12 little bit about the runaway and homeless youth. The  
13 beds that were added at Covenant House were in part  
14 due to a lawsuit that we brought trying to force the  
15 city to acknowledge that there is a right to shelter  
16 services for homeless youth. The city has to this  
17 point refused to settle that case, and we would very  
18 much like to find a way out of it other than  
19 litigating it, but at this point we're still waiting  
20 for a proposal from the city for the runaway and  
21 homeless youth. And finally, as Joselle also  
22 mentioned, there's a huge resource available to the  
23 city. They're holding 3,000 cluster apartments.  
24 These are apartments that are most rent regulated  
25 apartments. They could be rented with LINC vouchers

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and other of the new subsidies. The city could put those back in the market and enable the shelter residents to live in them as private housing. It'd be much cheaper for the city and better for the families. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much to this entire panel again for all the good work that you do and for continuing to shine a light on areas where while we're very happy with a lot of the things that the city is doing, there still needs to be a lot of work done. So, thank you very much for your testimony. Thank you. Next panel--sorry. Next panel I want to call up is Jeff Foreman [sp?] from Care for the Homeless, Christy Parque, Homeless Services United, Richard Jimenez, NYLAG, Kevin Kennedy, NYLAG, and Jeremiah Murphy, Picture the Homeless, and folks, I want to apologize, I actually have to leave before the end of the hearing. So, I'll be leaving in about five minutes and I'll turn it over to my able Committee Member, the newest Committee Member Barry Grodenchik to finish out the last panel, but this panel, Christie, you could go start ahead, start right away.

1  
2 CHRISTY PARQUE: Hi, Christy Parque,  
3 Executive Director of Homeless Services United, the  
4 coalition of New York City's nonprofit homeless  
5 service programs the shelters, Drop-In, outreach and  
6 prevention programs including aftercare, and my  
7 colleague Jeff Foreman had to leave. I've submitted  
8 his testimony. You have my full testimony. I want to  
9 make four points. We need to continue to increase  
10 investment in the shelters. That includes the  
11 capital investment to up to the services and to the  
12 physical plan, but we also need to continue the  
13 investment for human service workers in New York  
14 City. We're grateful for our two and a half percent  
15 COLA. It has not yet hit our budgets. People are  
16 going into Christmas with a COLA that they have not  
17 yet received that was adopted as part of this budget.  
18 We hope that in the next budget we will see an  
19 additional increase to our budgets for our staff who  
20 are very hard working. We also want to see increases  
21 to our budgets for training. I wanted to do quickly  
22 just a perspective on one of the reasons we could be  
23 seeing around street homeless is that in the past  
24 under the previous Administration we had about twice  
25 as many Drop-in Centers and a lot more, hundreds

1 more, of faith beds, and the previous Administration  
2 made the decision to eliminate those programs. So I  
3 encourage the city to investigate that as an  
4 opportunity to expand those programs, and I have  
5 heard they've updated the hours of the Drop-in  
6 Centers, but we might want to look at creating more  
7 Drop-In Centers through other locations throughout  
8 the city particularly in the winter months. And I--  
9 the last thing is I want to ask the Council Members  
10 here to talk to your colleagues and talk to your  
11 communities and join with us in asking your  
12 communities to welcome in homeless families, homeless  
13 individuals, homeless couples, homeless youth,  
14 domestic violence survivors. We need your help. We  
15 have people in our shelters with vouchers in hand and  
16 they have no place to go, and the only way we're  
17 going to do that is if the people in your communities  
18 and you're the facilitator for that communication for  
19 your community to help them understand that this is a  
20 solid program. It's not like Advantage, and we will  
21 work with you to create the education for your  
22 communities. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,  
25 Christy, and thank you very much for the good work

1  
2 that you do in representing your members, your  
3 membership organizations who work day in and day out  
4 under very, very difficult circumstances to make sure  
5 that we're providing compassionate shelter here in  
6 New York City every single day. So, thank you very  
7 much.

8 CHRISTY PARQUE: Thank you.

9 KEVIN KENNEALLY: Chris [sic], Mr.  
10 Chairman and Council Members, I'm Kevin Kenneally,  
11 Supervising Attorney at NYLAG. With me today Richard  
12 Jimenez who's a paralegal who works in our Housing  
13 Unit, and just wanted to commend the City Council for  
14 all the work that they've done for continuing to  
15 resolve the problem of homelessness in the city.  
16 NYLAG was fortunate to receive increased funding from  
17 HRA to represent tenants in Housing Court. So, we see  
18 on a daily basis how our work prevents evictions for  
19 low income tenants, and you know, many of our clients  
20 do live in that diminishing stock of rent regulated  
21 apartments, and our goal is to of course prevent that  
22 homelessness and also families and to ensure that  
23 those rent regulated apartments stay under the  
24 regulation. There are two issues I just wanted to  
25 bring to your attention. While funding Legal

1  
2 Services is important, we certainly need better  
3 protection for all tenants, not just those who live  
4 in the rent regulated apartments. For example, we do  
5 have clinics at the Bronx and Manhattan VA's where we  
6 represent veterans who have HUD VASH vouchers, which  
7 you know, unfortunately are pretty much one of the  
8 few areas of Section 8 that are still open to people,  
9 and this way--these subsidies have gone a long way  
10 towards helping and the homelessness certainly  
11 amongst veterans, but that itself is a program that  
12 really works. And Richard's just going to briefly  
13 talk about another issue.

14 RICHARD JIMENEZ: The additional issue we  
15 wanted to touch upon is the plight of the medically  
16 homeless, individuals that aren't sick enough to  
17 require in-patient treatment at a hospital, but not  
18 well enough to stay in a general shelter. Currently,  
19 there are only two programs in New York City that  
20 could be considered medical respite centers equipped  
21 to deal with those who are severely ill and homeless,  
22 many individuals who are medically unsuitable for  
23 shelter placement and remaining in-patient at their  
24 treating hospital. Without a way to house and  
25 stabilize sick people, resources are spent keeping

1  
2 individuals in hospitals when a hospital stay is no  
3 longer medically necessary. New Yorkers with acute  
4 and chronic illnesses require supportive housing and  
5 access to medical respite and to help stabilize their  
6 housing, improve their health, and allow them to  
7 transition out of homelessness.

8 KEVIN KENNEALLY: Thank you very much.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,  
10 and again, I apologize that I have to step out, but  
11 Council Member Grodenchik is going to finish out the  
12 hearing, but my sincere apologies. Thank you. Go  
13 ahead.

14 JEREMIAH MURPHY: Good afternoon. My  
15 name is Jeremiah Murphy. I'm a member of Picture the  
16 Homeless. I've been homeless for three and a half  
17 years, and I feel the city needs to do more to  
18 address this problem. During my present state of  
19 homeless I've been recycling cans and bottles at the  
20 124<sup>th</sup> Street machines prior to them closing. Now,  
21 while I do our job I'm constantly harassed by 25<sup>th</sup>  
22 precinct officers telling me that I'm not allowed to  
23 sit on subway grates to wait my turn to use the  
24 machines. I understand they have a job to do. They  
25 only sit on a grate that's in front of the machines,

1 not the rest of them that lie the block between 124<sup>th</sup>  
2 and 125<sup>th</sup>. The NYPD needs to stop arresting people  
3 who are not breaking the law, because all that  
4 happens is that these people are thrown in prison.  
5 These people end up missing appointments and are  
6 thrown to the bottom of the housing list. The NYPD  
7 also needs to be more sensitive to the mental health  
8 community. A lot of these cops do not know how to  
9 relate to these people. They just put them in the  
10 hospital and move on to the next person. Maybe if  
11 they had some kind of training to deal with these  
12 people things would be a lot better and people  
13 wouldn't be so defensive when they're confronted by  
14 the cops. While I was in the shelter system my wife  
15 had severe medical issues, which the shelter was  
16 fully aware of. They asked to provide documents  
17 around my wife's medical conditions which we did, but  
18 instead of accommodate my wife's issues, they tried  
19 to send us to a different shelter that didn't  
20 accommodate her at all. We refused this transfer,  
21 which we have the right to do, and instead of trying  
22 to send me and my wife some place to help us they  
23 called the police and had us escorted out to the  
24 shelter--out of the shelter. After that we went to  
25

1 the street. The Path mark [sic] I used to can and  
2 bottle at was just bought and is now closed. The  
3 same company who bought this building is building 11  
4 units of supportive housing, only 11 units. What is  
5 supposed to happen to the tens of thousands of other  
6 people that are homeless who don't need services?  
7 You have people in shelters who have apartment  
8 vouchers but no landlord in the city will accept  
9 them. So people are stuck holding these vouchers for  
10 months, sometimes years before they can find a  
11 landlord that will accept them. You also have people  
12 living in cluster site shelters where the conditions  
13 are unbearable, but instead of the city shutting them  
14 down and turning them back into permanent housing,  
15 they continue to pay these landlords even though  
16 things are never fixed. How are people supposed to  
17 live in these places when they're worse than living  
18 on the street? Our Mayor and Governor are fighting  
19 over who is doing a better job at addressing this  
20 issue when they need to talk and listen to the people  
21 who are living these experiences. Instead of vouchers  
22 and warehousing people in shelters, the city needs to  
23 spend money on the only solution that makes sense,  
24 extremely low income permanently afforded housing.  
25

1  
2 We need to move some of this money into the shelter  
3 system toward permanently affordable housing  
4 targeting people's income. Thank you for hearing my  
5 testimony. I look forward to answering any questions  
6 you may have.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you all  
8 for your testimony. Thank you for your patience in  
9 waiting today.

10 JEREMIAH MURPHY: Thank you.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I think this  
12 is--I'm going to add her also. Okay, this is, I  
13 believe, the last panel, Floyd Parks, Picture the  
14 Homeless, Ryan Hickey [sp?], Picture the Homeless,  
15 Nicole Bramstedt, Urban Pathways, Christina, and I  
16 think it's Gordon, and if it's not I apologize,  
17 representing New York City residents and herself,  
18 Kevin McGinn from the Garment District Bid [sic], and  
19 Catherine Russell from the Brooklyn Defender  
20 Services.

21 NICOLE BRAMSTEDT: I'll go ahead. My name  
22 is Nicole Bramstedt. I'm Policy Director for Urban  
23 Pathways.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you.  
25

1  
2 NICOLE BRAMSTEDT: Urban Pathways has  
3 operated since 1975 serving single homeless adults.  
4 My full testimony has been submitted. I will make a  
5 few findings and recommendations briefly. One, as a  
6 provider of homeless services for single homeless  
7 adults for the past 40 years, one of the issues we  
8 see is a one-size-fits-all extremely costly response  
9 approach to this population, namely in the form of  
10 shelters, and this is a one-size-fits-all approach.  
11 The LINC voucher, Mr. Banks and Commissioner Taylor  
12 also testified, it has a diverse portfolio. We'd  
13 like to see that in terms of shelters. Politico New  
14 York recently reported that about 250 people are on  
15 the streets right now waiting for a Safe Haven bed.  
16 They could get a bed in the shelter, but they're  
17 waiting on the streets for a Safe Haven bed, so we  
18 think that even though the city has put money into  
19 that, the Safe Haven option, they should put more  
20 money in. Also, it's extremely costly--there was in  
21 October 2015 report from the IBO that showed that  
22 cost that the city paid for single adult homeless  
23 shelters has increased 75 percent from 2007 to 2014.  
24 It's a costly approach, and we really think the city  
25 needs to look and reassess the single homeless adult

1 response and system in the form of shelters. The  
2 other issue that we continually encounter is a lack  
3 of really successful exit options in the form of  
4 housing. At Urban Pathways we operate six, seven  
5 now, supportive housing. We greatly applaud the  
6 Mayor's announcement of 15,000 units over the next 15  
7 years. We are pushing hard for the Governor to match  
8 that proposal. It's needed. Corporation Supportive  
9 Housing announced the need of 36,000 units across the  
10 state. One of the issues we do encounter is  
11 supportive housing it does have its challenges. Too  
12 often citing the supportive housing in the  
13 communities is a problem. We really need more  
14 education on what supportive housing actually is, and  
15 because we end up spending a lot of time on this.  
16 Thank you very much for holding this hearing.

17  
18 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you for  
19 your testimony. Gentlemen?

20 RYAN HICKEY: Good afternoon. My name is  
21 Ryan Hickey, and I will be testifying on behalf of  
22 Christopher Parker who is a homeless member of  
23 Picture the Homeless, and I'm going to just take bits  
24 out of it. So, first he was street homeless. He was  
25 sleeping on trains, roofs and wherever he could find,

1 and then when he entered the shelter system, he had  
2 the work Advantage program. He had the work  
3 Advantage program for about six months before that  
4 program ended, and then he went back into the shelter  
5 system, and from there he was alternating between  
6 street homeless and shelter homeless. He then got  
7 the LINC voucher connected to his job, but  
8 unfortunately people who he set up housing  
9 appointments with never showed up. So, landlords and  
10 brokers set up appointments with him. They never  
11 showed up to those appointments, and so he had it all  
12 summer, and he recently lost it because his case  
13 manager wasn't renewing it Wards [sic] Island. He  
14 also lost his job because of it. So, he was taking  
15 off work to go to housing appointments, but because  
16 the shelter wasn't working with him to make sure that  
17 he was getting housing or getting appropriate  
18 services he lost both his job and the LINC vouchers.  
19 So now he has nothing. I just want to draw attention  
20 to some of the things that have been said today. So,  
21 in terms of framing this crisis as a homelessness  
22 crisis, I think we need to be careful where we kind  
23 of direct resources. So, the more resources that DHS  
24 has, the more people who are going to be relying on  
25

1 shelters rather than housing. So, DHS's budget is now  
2 over a billion dollars and while HPD's budget is only  
3 about 750 million or something like that. So why are  
4 we spending more on shelters and on housing for  
5 extremely poor people. It's been shown time and time  
6 again that temporary vouchers don't work, that  
7 recidivism is going to happen. People once the  
8 voucher ends, people are going to end up back in the  
9 shelter system or back on the street if they do not  
10 have wage increases, if they do not have housing  
11 stability, and none of those are the case. So, we  
12 know that this is not going to work just like HSP  
13 happened, just like Advantage happened, you know, no  
14 temporary vouchers are going to actually keep people  
15 in their housing. The numbers that HRA and DHS told  
16 us, 22,000 people exited the system this year alone  
17 using subsidies, that means 22,000 more people  
18 entered the shelter system. Is that what that means?  
19 Because the numbers have not changed from 60,000 to  
20 58,000 from the beginning of this year till now. SO  
21 does that mean 22,000 more people entered the shelter  
22 system? And really, what we need to do, and this is  
23 in Mayor de Blasio's housing plan, reallocating  
24 shelter funding towards a permanently affordable  
25

1 housing models, like community land trust and mutual  
2 housing associations. This is in Mayor de Blasio's  
3 executive summary in his housing plan. No moves have  
4 been made to actually reallocate this funding, and we  
5 look forward to working with the City Council  
6 Members, different city agencies to make sure this  
7 happens, to renovate vacancies, shut down cluster  
8 site shelters and turning them back into rent  
9 stabilized housing. Thanks.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you for  
12 your testimony both of you. Thank you for being  
13 here. Sir?

14 FLOYD PARKS: How you doing? My name is  
15 Floyd Parks. I'm a member of Picture the Homeless.  
16 I'm a 61-year-old male. I've been on the streets for  
17 the last two years homeless. I've been sleeping. I  
18 used to stay on Park Avenue, 125<sup>th</sup> Street. I've been  
19 making that place my place of residence for the last  
20 six months. I've been totally, how do you say--the  
21 house has been put out on us. We have been totally  
22 harassed by cops. We have totally like have been  
23 totally disrespected because of our situation of  
24 being homeless. We have been told to move thousands  
25 of times a day. You can't stay here. You can't stay

1 over there. You know what I'm saying? It has become  
2 a really--alright. The problem is being homeless  
3 enough as it is on the streets. It's hard sleeping  
4 on the streets and then you got to be harassed by  
5 cops. Constantly told where you can't stand, where  
6 you can't sit, where you can't go. We definitely  
7 need to have more communications with the officers  
8 and people who are in charge. What I'd really like  
9 to see is a little more communication. We are  
10 homeless people. We are not dowlets [sic]. We are  
11 not people--I mean, some of us have problems,  
12 addictions and mental states of minds, but some of us  
13 have seriously employment problems with working, and  
14 you know, we need a--how do you say, be talked to  
15 more? We need to be listened to more instead of how  
16 do you say, judged? You know, seems like we been  
17 stereotyped because we are homeless. We are sleeping  
18 in the streets and all of a sudden we're nothing.  
19 You know? And I have been in a LINC program for six  
20 months inside the shelter. I've been on three  
21 interviews and because of the stereotypeness [sic]  
22 coming out of shelter they look at us and they know  
23 they're not taking us. That has happened to me three  
24 times the last six months. So, I left the shelter  
25

1 because of that reason, because I'm trying to find  
2 housing. So, I was told if I was seen CUSC [sic]  
3 people from street to shelter, and they has gave me a  
4 place to get off the street, a Safe Haven. I've been  
5 doing very good there, because I'm 61-years-old and I  
6 have some physical problems. That's what brought me  
7 into the shelter. I was severely beaten. I came out  
8 the hospital and I had to go to the shelter because  
9 there was nowhere to live. And that was the worstest  
10 [sic] thing that could happen to me and my medical  
11 condition because shelter's are very not clean. I  
12 mean, people go defecate anywhere they want to. I  
13 mean, it's disgusting. They try to keep it clean, I  
14 guarantee that, but they just--very difficult. And  
15 people need to have a little more understanding of  
16 how people are living in these shelters, what people  
17 are doing. People need to have more communication.  
18 More and more staff need to talk to more people who  
19 are trying to help each other out. And all I wanted  
20 to say is we need to have more communication and  
21 understanding of what the people, the homeless people  
22 and the people of the community. We need to, how do  
23 you say, have more of a bond together, because we are  
24 all out here together. We need to help each other,  
25

1  
2 not hurt each other, not look down at each other.  
3 That's all I'm going to say.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I want to  
5 thank you for your testimony. I think you were the  
6 perfect person to end this hearing with, and you're  
7 making a difference by being here today. Don't ever  
8 think that you're not. I grew up in public housing  
9 myself. I understand and I think all the members of  
10 this committee and this council understand the  
11 desperate need for more affordable housing in this  
12 city and to get people out of the shelters and into  
13 permanent housing. So, I thank you. I thank you for  
14 your perseverance, and I thank you for overcoming  
15 your struggles and being with us today. With that,  
16 I'm going to end this hearing and turn this room over  
17 to Chairman Manchaca of the Immigration Committee.  
18 Thank you all for being here today.

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COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date December 15, 2015