

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

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January 20, 2016

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HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm.
16th Fl

B E F O R E: MATHIEU EUGENE
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Annabel Palma
Darlene Mealy
Margaret S. Chin
David G. Greenfield
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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Darryl Rattray, Associate Commissioner
Community Centers and Strategic Partnerships
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Tracy Garcia, Director
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NYC Department of Youth & Community Development

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[sound check, pause]

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay. Good afternoon to everyone. I'm Council Member Mathieu Eugene, and I chair the Committee on Youth Services in the City Council. Today's hearing on connecting youth--young people to volunteer opportunities a very, very important one. The benefit of volunteering along the volunteer whether young or old but seeped in civic engagement, and I know this because I speak from my own experience. One of the biggest advantages to volunteering is that it can serve as the pathway to employment. Youth volunteers gain important skills that enable them to compete in the global job market. Volunteering also enables young people to widen their social and professional networks, which are valuable resources to access more opportunities. Volunteering has been shown to improve academic performance, and children who volunteer have in turn to become excited about going to college, and many of them eventually go on to graduate. Studies have also show that young people who volunteer are 50% less--les likely to abuse alcohol, smoke cigarettes, become pregnant or engage in other destructive behaviors. These are some of

the important reasons why we as a city must continue to encourage our young people to volunteer in their communities. This is one of the best ways that we with the city can cultivate the generation of civic-oriented adults while more engaged, emotionally happier and compassionate about the city and world where they're living. If this city is going to be a leader on social and economic issues, then we must do all that we can to ensure that our young people have access to opportunities that will allow them to be engaged, and to be productive members of local, national, and global communities. Now, I would like to acknowledge that we have been joined by Council Member Annabel Palma. Thank you very much, Council Member, and I would like also to thank the staff, the committee staff who have helped prepare for this hearing. Our counselor Kuru Gisharu (sp?). Our Policy Analyst Michael Benjamin, and also our Financial Analyst Jessica Ackerman. And I would like also to address my thanks to my staff, my own staff Vanessa Ogle (sp?) and David Seitzer (sp?) for all they do as well. Now, we are going to start listening to the different members--the members from the panel, but before we do that, would you swear

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2 them in, please? Would you please raise your hand to
3 be sworn in?

4 LEGAL COUNSEL: All right. Do you affirm
5 to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but
6 the truth in your testimony before this committee,
7 and to respond honestly to the council members'
8 questions?

9 PANEL MEMBER: I do.

10 LEGAL COUNSEL: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: You may start,
12 please.

13 DARRYL RATTRAY: Good afternoon. Good
14 afternoon, Chairman Eugene and members of the Youth
15 Services Committee. I am Darryl Rattray, Associate
16 Commissioner for Community Centers and Strategic
17 Partnerships. I'm joined here by Tracy Garcia, who
18 is my Director for Service Learning. Thank you for
19 inviting us to testify today. We appreciate the City
20 Council's interest in how young people become
21 connected to volunteer opportunities. Research
22 supports that volunteer opportunities can positively
23 engage young people and give them experiences to
24 learn and develop skills. A report entitled
25 *Connecting Youth and Strengthening Communities: The*

Data Behind Civic Engagement and Economic Opportunity

released in September 2014 by Opportunity Nation states that volunteering is recognized as both the real far in itself and as a pathway to long-term societal engagement instilling a sense of civic responsibility that carries into adulthood. Research has also found that youth who participate in service projects and join groups are significantly more likely to become adults who vote and engage in service to their community. Perhaps most importantly, volunteering often enables the acquisition of transferrable job readiness and professional skills. Computer literacy, problem solving, communication, teamwork, project management, et cetera. And a strengthening of relationships and networks that build social capital, which in turn can lead additional positive opportunities. At DYCD, volunteer community service, youth leadership and service opportunities permeate the programs we administer and fund. We have several longstanding initiatives, and programs that cultivate a sense of service, and volunteerism among youth. These initiatives are created and driven by us and allow DYCD providers to plug into annual volunteer projects

we already coordinate. At the program site level, DYCD providers also develop their own volunteer projects with input from provider staff, and the young people they serve. In my testimony today, I will highlight examples of both DYCD and provider initiated volunteer projects. In response to President Obama's call to service in 2009, DYCD created Summer of Service, a seven-week initiative designed encourage young people to take an active role in their community. In 2015, the community service and volunteer events were held on five Thursday from July 9th, to August 7th. DYCD partnered with the Neuberger Berman Foundation to make grants of \$2,500 to \$3,500 to 12 organizations to implement meaningful service and volunteer activities in communities across the city. In total, the projects engage at least 600 elementary middle and high school youth, volunteers and other community members. Similar services projects included a mosaic art-making project in the Bronx that explored the borough's diverse communities. Participant researched the Bronx various ethnic and cultural communities, built their awareness of different groups, and strengthened bonds with one

another. Volunteers the created individual art pieces that were combined to form a larger mosaic art piece. Growing herbs and vegetables and maintaining a beautifying--a community garden that benefits residents of the Urban Horizon's Affordable Housing and Community Development Center nearby P.S.--I.S. 218 and the more Morris Senior Medi--Medicaid Center. The garden's first produce is crucial to supporting healthy eating habits since one in four Bronx residents is obese. The Youth (sic) in the gardens also use an Urban Horizon kitchen, and distribute to Morris Senior Medicaid Center's single mothers. Teen Action achieving change together in our neighborhoods is DYCD's Service Learning program offering participants a chance to engage in structured learning, service projects and reflection. Participants in grades 6 to 12 are provided an opportunity to develop life skills while making a meaningful contribution to their community. Program sites must completed two civic engagement projects per year. The young people take ownership of the projects from start to finish, which better instills a commitment to volunteerism and giving back. Teen action programs seek to cultivate an ethic of

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2 service, develop life skills, critical thinking
3 skills and leadership skills, and promote commitment
4 to academic achievement. Currently, there are 50
5 teen action programs. This year up to 100 Service
6 Learning projects will take place in the five borough
7 and cover the following things: Strengthening
8 communities, civic engagement, education, health and
9 wellbeing, social justice and the environment. Each
10 project incorporates youth voice and choice and
11 engages the local community. Examples include:
12 Volunteering at a local senior center as part of the
13 their intergenerational project, and visiting
14 patients in a local hospital as part of a Pillow
15 Buddies project where youth created handmade pillows
16 to deliver.

17 Since 2009, DYCD has worked with non-
18 profit providers to operate Cornerstone Community
19 Center in New York City Housing Authority
20 Developments. In 25 of the DYCD Cornerstone Centers,
21 we offer Mentoring programs. One of the four pillars
22 of Cornerstone Mentoring programs is to help youth
23 cultivate an ethic of service. To achieve this,
24 programs engage youth and volunteering by
25 participating in two one-day community service

projects each year. One is a large volunteer project planned by DYCD. In Fiscal Year 2015 mentors and mentees completed 390 hours of community service a large scale service events in partnership with the Million Trees in New York City. The Student Conversation Association, Friends of Van Cortlandt Park, and the Nature Conservancy's Jamaica Bay Wild Life Refuge. The second volunteer event is planned by the program's mentoring coordinators in partnership with the mentors and mentees. At the program site level, mentees have engaged in community beautification and park clean-up projects and food and toy drives. Our newest program where young people can develop leadership civic participation and community skills is Mayor's Youth Leadership Council. A two-year project that offers 20 young people the chance to research a public policy issue, and recommend proposed solutions to the mayor. The first year is spent researching the issue, and developing solutions. The second is spent implementing solutions after the mayor has gotten feedback. Youth will recruit it citywide to join the Leadership Council, and required to submit an application to undergo interviews in order to be selected. Once

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2 selected, the teams were assigned hubs to represent.

3 The hubs correspond to ten Beacon or Cornerstone

4 programs throughout the five boroughs and also

5 reflect specific regions of the boroughs. The 20

6 youth represent the interest and viewpoints of their

7 local hub by strengthening the existing connections

8 to the Beacon and Cornerstone programs in those

9 neighborhoods or learning about them for the first

10 time. Each hub also organizes and completed a

11 community benefit project that offers volunteer

12 opportunity for local youth and community members.

13 Through this integrated citywide neighborhood

14 structure, youth learn how to develop public policy

15 that is informed by local knowledge and community

16 input. DYCD funds hundreds of COMPASS after school

17 programs each year. In addition to social, academic

18 arts, and recreational activities, COMPASS programs

19 offer special leadership and community service

20 opportunities to its youth participants. This year,

21 DYCD has initiated the following service projects:

22 The Sonic Game Changers is an interactive

23 youth led leadership opportunity that will take place

24 January through May across the city and culminate in

25 the competition at DYCD's Youth Compass--Conference

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in May 2016. SONYC Middle School participants develop and implement meaningful and community relevant leadership projects in the areas of sports leadership, civic engagement, arts leadership, Service Learning and youth counselors. Winning(sic) projects will demonstrate an intentional focus on leadership skills, a program designed that supports learning by doing leadership or action, and opportunities for youth to reflect on their action or projects. Winners will present projects and compete at DYCD's Youth Conference in May 2016. From January 18th to January 31st, COMPASS is sponsoring Days of Service in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. entitled Strengthening Community and Creating Solutions. The MLK Days of Service allow young people to translate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's life and teachings into community action that help to address social problems. During these two weeks, COMPASS youth participants are encouraged to celebrate Dr. King through service projects with the themes of strengthening communities, empowering individuals, bridging barriers and creating solutions. An example of one project is a letter writing campaign to establish a green market to benefit the local

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2 community. In addition to DYCD driven COMPASS
3 Volunteer Initiative, DYCD provides also initiated
4 projects at their program site such as: The Pathways
5 Prep Center Youth Council in St. Albans, Queens held
6 a coat drive during the month of December and
7 collected over 30 coats. The coats were donated to
8 the South Hollis Branch of the Queens Library to help
9 with their citywide coat drive. Manhattan Youth's
10 Community Action Team at the Yorkville East Middle
11 School organizes--organizes weekly meetings to
12 discuss the basics of community service including
13 philanthropy, advocacy, development and community
14 organizing. These meetings inform a design of
15 service projects that positively--positively impact
16 their school and community. Highlights from the fall
17 semester include filming a public service
18 announcement on the importance of getting involved in
19 their community; volunteering at a bowling event for
20 Special Olympic athletes; and collecting books and
21 pajamas for the Pajama Program, which donates items
22 to children in the homeless shelters and the high
23 needs neighborhoods. 118 books were collected.
24 Volunteer and service opportunities are also
25 available in DYCD's Youth Employment programs. In

DYCD's federally funded Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act's in-school youth programs, there is a require program element in leadership, which allows for community service and Service Learning projects. This gives in-school youth program participants the chance to engage in structured learning service project and reflection. At least one community service project--opportunity and one Service Learning project are offered to participants each program year, and developed in partnership with the program participants. Examples of community service opportunities and projects include working in a soup kitchen; distributing turkeys at Thanksgiving; a book collection drive for West Africa, organizing the community Health Fair and environmental conservation. In DYCD's Summer Youth Employment program, jobs for younger youth ages 14 to 15 have community service and Service Learning components. When we developed the last SYP request for proposals in 2013, we considered feedback from providers and worksites who all felt hat younger youth age 14 and 15 first entering the work, the role of work need additional supports. For some, a supportive work experience with additional educational hours would suffice.

However, others would benefit much more for spending first summer job in community service or Service Learning Projects that gradually expose SYP's youngest participants to the world of work.

In 2015, younger youth SYP participants were engaged in community service and Service Learning projects covering topics such as health and wellness, college and career readiness, civic participation, social justice, nutrition, sexual and reproductive health, and environmental issues. One example of Service Learning jobs for younger youth was La Guardia Community College's SYP program where three cohorts of young people conducted projects focusing on the importance of food banks, financial planning for healthy meals, and the role of multi-media in relaying the findings of previous projects. The first cohort worked with a local food bank to distribute food to needy families. They also purchased canned goods to deliver to a local food pantry. Another cohort created a survey to determine spending habits of community members. The data was used to help families spend their dollars more wisely on healthier food. A third cohort produced a video documenting the projects of the first two cohorts.

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A culminating event showed the video and allowed all participants to share their projects, discuss what they learned, and reflect on their summer experience. Starting this year, DYCD will begin recruiting youth members for the Neighborhood Advisory Boards, which along with the Citywide Community Action Board and DYCD, governs the neighborhood development areas. Recently, the minimum age for Neighborhood Advisory Board membership was lowered to 16 from 18 so that younger members can join. All Neighborhood Advisory Board members serve in a volunteer capacity through the city's 42 NDAs. The \$15 million in Federal Community Action Community Service Block Grant Funding supports a range of programs and services for low-income residents such as housing assistance, senior programs, adult literacy, healthy families, immigrant services, educational support for high school students and a work-readiness internship program for out-of-school youth. Each NDA Neighborhood Advisory Board helps DYCD identify program priorities and make recommendations on which programs that are most effective and responsive to meeting community needs. As such, it is important to better incorporate the voices of New York City's

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2 youth on the Neighborhood Advisory Boards. NAB
3 members are expected to help conduct periodic needs
4 assessments, which include surveys and public
5 hearings, and to meet at least quarterly to discuss
6 local issues and service needs. Members also
7 participate in annual events such as DYCD's Building
8 Bridges workshop on basic fundraising for local
9 community-based organizations, meet and greet
10 community event with local service providers, and the
11 annual National Night Out Against Crime. DYCD's In-
12 Day High School Youth and Seniors program also
13 promotes youth volunteerism such as high school age
14 youth in their Reading Buddies Program to help
15 younger youth strengthen their literacy skills;
16 intergenerational programs where youth meet with
17 seniors to do recreational activities together; and
18 another program where they build and install planter
19 boxes at the homes of seniors to practice their
20 gardening skills. We have worked diligently over the
21 years to embed volunteer service and leadership
22 opportunities for young people in many of DYCD's
23 programs. For New York City youth, who are not
24 connected to our programs, but who seek to volunteer
25 opportunities, a good resource is New York City

Service, which was created to connect New Yorkers to volunteer projects. Their website lists many age-appropriate volunteer opportunities. Young people who want to volunteer can sign up by applying to the New York City Service website, which will submit their name to the organization sponsoring the volunteer activity. Thank you for the--thank you again for the chance to testify today. We look forward to continuing to partner with the City Council on the best ways to connect youth to volunteer opportunities. We are happy to answer any questions.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much, Commissioner. You have a very extended statement. I don't know where to start. [laughs] Because when we talk about youth, that means we're talking about, you know, we are talking with DYCD. So that means I know we will get more than what we expect to--to see. But let me--before I start asking some few questions, thank Mr. Anthony (sic) again for being here. Thank you very much, and thank you also for what you're doing on behalf of the young people. In your testimony, you mention that I think approximately 600 young people engaged the DYCD Youth Service. I see

that in total the project engaged at least 600 elementary, middle and high school youth volunteers, and other community members. So that means the number of the young people the DYCD serve in the--you know, in the voluntary program is 600?

DARRYL RATTRAY: Well, no that was just for summer service project that happened over the summer months.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Uh-huh.

DARRYL RATTRAY: There were 12 sites selected. At the 12 sites, there were 600 young people directly engaged in creating that volunteer experience. What happens in all of our programs is that those 600 young people when that project activates they draw in all their friends. And all of a sudden there's more people experiencing the volunteer experience, but we don't track that number. We track the direct impact, which is the 600.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Can you tell us exactly what is the exact number of young who engage in the volunteer programs?

DARRYL RATTRAY: So we don't directly track every person that volunteers direct or indirect. However, through our programs we do track

activities that are identified as civic engagement, and leadership development. And those are the activities that throughout our system that would promote and cultivate volunteerism. We have about over 62,000 young people that have been a part of those activities through Beacon, Cornerstone, COMPASS and SONYC programs.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Commissioner, with all due respect and I appreciate the work that you are doing, but if you don't track the record of how many young people are engaged in volunteerism, how are you going to evaluate the success of the program? How are you going to know how many young people succeed, and also get the benefit that we all know that young people can get from volunteerism. And how are you going to know that you reach your goal in helping young people benefit from volunteerism?

DARRYL RATTRAY: Well, we--so we do-- again, we do track which young people are involved in our civic engagement, and leadership development activities. And those are the activities that cultivate volunteerism throughout the communities. Those are the young people who go--are going out conducting assessments, coming back and formulating a

plan, and then activating that volunteer experience, and also drawing in other folks in the community to be a part of it. That number is over 62,000 young people who have been a part of that. We don't track the indirect number. So, if young people activate volun--a volunteer experience, there may be other folks coming in, their friends, family members who also volunteer. We don't have that indirect tracking, but we do track the folks who are part of our programs in the road. (sic)

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: But Commissioner, this is such a very important opportunity for the young people, and we know that all the benefits, you know, the young people can get from this opportunity, I think that tracking the number of the young people participating in this type of program, you know, should be, you know, part of the planning of DYCD. Because we all know that, you know, volunteerism is great in providing opportunities to the young people. We want to influence them, but we don't we don't know. We have to quantify the result, and I would, you know, advise and also ask the DYCD to put this, you know, as part of this strategy--planning

strategy, you know, when it's about volunteerism for the young people.

DARRYL RATTRAY: So what--what I'll do is we'll--I'll got to--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing]
Because I know that you have so many programs, I know so many, but we are talking about the volunteerism.

DARRYL RATTRAY: [interposing] Absolutely

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: This is so important.

DARRYL RATTRAY: I'll go back to the agency, and we'll take a look at if it's something that we can add to our system, and we'll also probably do a focus group with some providers to see if it's something that we can do, and what they-- what--what it will entail.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: You know, my father usually says, "My son, never say that you can't."
[laughs] We always--if we--we are the wheel, we are the--the means dedicated people like yourself, and all the wonderful people from the New York City, and we are the--the resources also.

DARRYL RATTRAY: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I don't think this is a big deal, but it makes sense that we have an idea, we try to get an idea how many young people benefit that, and are we successful? You know, are they doing--do we reach the goal that we are looking for? How much do the young people gain from making the sacrifice to volunteer their time, you know? But can you--let me mention that we have been joined by Council Member Andy King. Thank you, Council Member, and also--

MALE SPEAKER: [off mic] And Council Member Chin.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Oh, yes, we have been joined also by Council Member Chin, Margaret Chin. Yes, thank you very much. [background comments] Another thing, could you talk about the--the complement of those young people? I know that--You know, are there young people, all of them are there in school. What is the socio-economic background of those young people, the ethnicity, the gender? Could you tell us a little bit about if you can give us a certain percentage of those young people engaged in volunteerism?

DARRYL RATTRAY: So, specific demographics, we--we can get back to you. I can actually give you the breakdown of the 62,000 young people, but in--in general, I mean these are young people from across the city who are involved in our programs. So young people from public housing, young people who are in our school-based programs like our Beacons, our COMPASS programs, and young people in our Cornerstone Programs. These are--these--these are every young person in the city, young people like me. I, um, my start in this field was actually volunteering to do civic engagement in community service projects for our community in the Bronx. So this--this is all that we serve is at the core of youth development and core of what we do here.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Let me ask. Do you believe that you--you have been successful in giving to the young people the opportunity that they deserve in order to better themselves and to acquire the skill that they need to succeed in life, including the volunteerism? Do you believe that you reached your goal, or DYCD reaches the goal?

DARRYL RATTRAY: Absolutely.

2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: How do you know
3 that? You don't know the--that number.

4 DARRYL RATTRAY: [interposing] Well, we--
5 we do--

6 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: That's what you work
7 for. How do you know that?

8 DARRYL RATTRAY: I'm sorry, Council. So
9 we do know that 62,000 young people have been
10 involved in--in creating volunteer programs in civic
11 engagement and leadership development. So we know
12 that over 62,000 of those young people have been
13 involved in our programs. What we don't track is if
14 they create a beautification project at one of the
15 NYCHA developments, and other folks come in to help,
16 we don't track that indirect number, which would be a
17 lot higher. But, we do track the daily activity and
18 hours of the young people, which in this case is
19 62,000 over.

20 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: But in those in the
21 City of New York and not only the City of New York,
22 but we think that we are doing something. We--we
23 quantify. We try to quantify the results. Let's
24 define that we considered 20% of students who
25 graduate from high school. Fifty graduate from

college. We've got the number, you see, but we've got the number. This is only way we're going to--to--to figure out if we succeed or not. That's the reason I think that--why I think that given the track record of--and quantify the results, and try to get an idea of how many young people participate, and how many young people get through the program from the beginning to the end. Some of these and the young people they start the program, and they don't--they drop also for many reasons. I didn't say that-- Did you face any challenges in terms of engaging? Number one, recruiting young people would be willing to volunteer? In terms of recruiting the young people, did you face any challenges getting the young people involved in volunteerism, and what are those challenges? And was it easy for you if you need 2,000 young people today or tomorrow, going through that and get 2,000 young people engaged?

DARRYL RATTRAY: So one of the hallmarks of the work that we do is we, again, we embed and integrate the civic engagement of volunteerism into our core programming. So, for example, we have a basketball league that's over 3,000 players throughout the city. These are young people who are

in middle school, female and male. Part of playing in our league for you to make it to the playoffs, you have to do a community service project. You have to activate at your home site, and you have to bring other young people another participants into that project with you. And I think that's what our programs do across the city. They--they--they figure out ways to embed and integrate leadership and empowerment into the young people who are involved, have them identify the projects that are needed, create those projects and then cultivate.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Now, you are talking about the young people who are already engaged in your program, and we know that there are so many young people who are not engaged in any program. They are not in school. They are not working. They are not engaged in a program, and they're mostly-- they deserve to have access, you know, to those opportunities. They deserve also assistance, and some of them, and many of them they are troubled kids, you know. They are young people at risk. They are in the negative part.

DARRYL RATTRAY: Uh-huh.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: And as a matter of fact, we have the moral obligation to serve them, too, to bring them in. To bring from them from the negative part to the positive one. What DYCD have been doing not only to provide the opportunities for those young people are already engaged in their program to volunteer, but those other young people who are not part of any program. What DYCD has been doing to include them, and to have them change also their behavior?

DARRYL RATTRAY: So, of course, we work our non-profit agencies that we contract with on strategies to bring young people in, and those young people won't normally walk through the door. At a typical site it's--it's--it's not engaging them and volunteering. You kind of need to get them into the door. They get creative at programming. I've seen over the summer at Cornerstone programs where the provider created a culinary experience almost like a top chef, if you will. Hey, come in. We're having a cooking competition. Some programs do it with fashion. We're having this fashion thing, and all of a sudden you have young men--you men into fashion who ordinarily wouldn't walk through those doors, who are

interested now. We're trying to figure out, and once they come in then you--then get them into other activities under programming. It providers are working towards it. It's--it's not easy, as you know, but we are--we assist programs. We go out on site visits. We provide technical assistance as well.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: And could you tell us about the screening process of those mentors, those people who are dealing with the young people. Any type of screening, background check? What is the competency of those people who are in contact with the young people?

DARRYL RATTRAY: So every mentor must be back--have--get a background check and fingerprinting.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: But what happens if the--be--besides the background check is there any other training that they receive in order for them to be able to deal with young people, to understand, you know, the mentality of young people?

DARRYL RATTRAY: So provide a two-day training through our, um, provide a mentoring partnership, and these--this is a direct training to

the mentors who are going to be part of the program. We also train the court (sic) leaders of those programs as well through Mentoring Partnership.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Do you believe that two days are enough? Because I must certify when I was leading in my organization, you know, I went to the universities I'm Certified Mentorship Advisor, and it took more--me more than two days. So that means do you believe that two days is enough because--are enough? Because you are dealing with young people, and some of them they are trouble young people, young people who need to be with people to understand what they are going through, and how to address the issues, the problem.

TRACY GARCIA: No, we agree. Two days is not enough training. Two days is the initial training for the on-boarding of the new mentors. Once they're in the program, there's ongoing technical assistance and support, and it happens in two ways. Either it's a specific. As you said these young people have needs that need to be addressed. If there's a common thread then we work with our providers to figure out what is the best way to support our mentors, and give them that background

information. But then in terms of ongoing support, we work to see what are the common trends, and in going back to volunteerism as an example. If there is a need--if there is--since this all have youth voice and youth voice and youth choice, if there's something that the young people really want to do, then we provide the mentors, and working with our provides on this is the direction the young people want to go. Let's provide them with more training and resources in that area.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: And, um, [coughs] Excuse me. Talking about young people, you know that a lot of young people they--they come from families--immigrant families. Some of them they just came to the United States, and even they don't just come, but they don't assimilate yet the system, or they don't speak the language. What do you have in place to help, to make sure that all young people regardless of where they came from, regardless of the language they speak, they can be part of this wonderful program?

DARRYL RATTRAY: At--at--at the core is that our programs, our providers are rooted in communities that they are providing this program in.

They are bringing mentors from that community to be part of that mentoring program. It is the mentoring program we speak of, or to be part of the program if it's a larger program. There are folks from the community who are staff, who are mentors, who are volunteers--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Uh-huh.

DARRYL RATTRAY: --and--and that creates the synergy to create a welcoming environment.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay, I will get back to you, but I want to give the opportunity to my colleagues and to ask some questions. Council Member Palma, please.

COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Rattray--Rattray, I'm trying to understand. DYCD does not have its own cohort--cohort of young people as volunteers, correct?

DARRYL RATTRAY: So, young people who are part of our civic engagement, leadership development activities, conduct volunteerism and conduct projects throughout the city.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: And--and, um,
3 though the--the civic engagement that is run directly
4 by DYCD, or through the program providers?

5 DARRYL RATTRAY: That's through--that's
6 through the program providers.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: So the program
8 providers are the ones that are recruiting and
9 engaging all the--all the young people?

10 DARRYL RATTRAY: That's correct.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Do you have any
12 partnerships with schools that--that may not have a
13 program provider in them, but want to have a
14 volunteer program as part of the curriculum.

15 DARRYL RATTRAY: Yes, we do.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: [interposing] Do
17 you have--will you--

18 DARRYL RATTRAY: There are--there are
19 several programs, and I was trying to think of an
20 example. One is in the Bronx Eder Wall (sic) last
21 year partnered with P.S. 112, which is down the block
22 from it, and they create this huge summer festival
23 where the Mentoring Program actually took part of
24 that, and spearheaded the entire project.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: So, um, do you
3 know how many--in how many schools do you have--does
4 DYCD like have these partnerships within? Are there
5 elementary, middle school, high schools? OR, are they
6 just for a certain age group?

7 DARRYL RATTRAY: Right. I don't have
8 full number. I will have to get back to you.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Can--can you
10 please, um, provide the committee with--with that
11 information?

12 DARRYL RATTRAY: Yes.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: And then in--in--
14 in regards, um, to the young--to the young people or
15 the program providers, do they have a certain amount
16 of hours that each have to meet in terms of engaging
17 the young people in--in volunteering, or do they get
18 to choose their--their--their program, their issue,
19 what they want to work on?

20 DARRYL RATTRAY: They get--they get to
21 choose, but for different initiatives, they may have
22 different hourly requirements for young people to
23 attain--to achieve. Um ,for example in Beacon
24 Programs a young person should achieve 216 hours of
25 service if they're in middle school. For Cornerstone

it's two--it's 200 hours if they're in middle school, 165 hours if they're in high schools. But those are our sort of larger hourly retention goals, if you will. So that may be part volunteering. That may be part--and other activities throughout the program.

COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: The--the volunteering hours, um, with the partnerships with the--with directly with the schools that don't have providers, are those, um, part of a graduating regiment that the student needs to complete, or it's separate and apart?

DARRYL RATTRAY: It would be separate and apart, and this--and that would be sort of the local partnerships that we see happen amongst programs, and the local schools.

COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: In--in terms of the issue-based volun--volunteering, right, that the programs do, are they engaging, um, other community leaders, elected officials in that area to help out them carry out whatever solutions they're looking for?

DARRYL RATTRAY: Absolutely, and especially in our Service Learning Program.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: And I have one
3 last question because I know my colleagues have
4 questions. Um, the-the--the mentors are then hired
5 by the providers?

6 DARRYL RATTRAY: Well, they've--they're--
7 they're not hired. They're volunteers, but they're

8 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: [interposing] But
9 so--

10 DARRYL RATTRAY: --processed by the
11 providers, if you will, yes.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: And in--in
13 recruiting these mentors, um, do--has there been
14 discussions to try to increase participation from the
15 young people? Has there been any discussions to try
16 to engage like a--a more peer-to-peer mentoring
17 process because young people tend, right, to drag
18 along everyone they know to want to do something that
19 they think is fun?

20 DARRYL RATTRAY: Absolutely, and--and
21 what we've found--I--when we started the Mentoring
22 Program, we thought that there would be a period of
23 time where some mentors age--I mean mentees age out.
24 It never happened. They become--they became junior
25 mentors, if you will, and bringing in almost peer

mentoring to the younger population that were involved. So they--we have some that are still in the program from--the ones from 2009.

TRACY GARCIA: In 2009, we have noted.

COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Okay, thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much, Council Member, and let me mention that we have been joined by Council Member David Greenfield from Brooklyn who is also member of the Committee. Now, I would like to call Council Member Chin.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: [off mic] Thank you. [on mic] Thank you, Chair. [coughs] It's really great to hear all this volunteer opportunity for our youth, and the number you have, you know, give us 62,000 young people that are engaged is--it's a great number to start, and I think that we hope to build on it because it sounded like from your testimony that all these youths are connected in the Beacon Program, in the Cornerstone Program, in the Teen in Action Program. I mean those are specific programs that are run by DYCD, and so we want to be able to expand beyond those programs, right, and let's figure out a way of doing that. And, I know

that in your school especially in high school, high school students often times are required to do community service, right? Because often times we have parents calling my office, and saying, you know, can you take my kid for the summer. They have to--to do this volunteer service. So is there any effort to coordinate with DOE to really help the youth get a--a better experience in terms of, you know, doing 40 hours, and maybe they're just so interested they might want to do more than what's required for graduation. [pause]

TRACY GARCIA: Good afternoon. You're absolutely correct. We do partner. My office specifically partners with service in schools as well as NYC Service, and so we, too, are in that coordination. We are aware that prior to this administration they were tracking just high school community service hours, and we worked with them. Now, they track elementary community service hours--hours all the way to high school. Um, we do have as part of any activity that our young people volunteer in, we support in, we support them with evidence of that volunteership. We have providers that will create official letters of their hours of volunteer

service, and DYCD, too, as well has an official letter of volunteer service hours. So when we coordinate our large-scale events, and the young people are participating in those. Which has a--a greater effect on bringing in extra young people into the program who may not be necessarily, as Darryl mentioned, connected to that Beacon or Cornerstone or Teen Action Initiative. So it's on the larger scale their event. So we get to capture that audience that day, and then present them as well with a completion of service hours that they can in turn take back to their guidance counselor. And, we have been coordinating with NYC Service where there is--I believe now there may be--we're all working towards and official seal on their high school diploma that says they have a community service credit.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: That--that sounds very good. I mean is there a way--are you capturing those data, those numbers to really show how many--

DARRYL RATTRAY: [interposing] Yeah.

DARRYL RATTRAY: Yeah, currently the Service to School Initiative there's approximately 460,000 students in over 1,400 schools who participate in service each year.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: And I--it's really good to hear that you start the program elementary school because I know a lot of kids are doing like, um, Penny Hoggers (sic) or whatever. I mean they're just doing a lot of great things, and so I think it's--it's really good to promote, um, that at an--an early age. As our Chair also mentioned, there are a lot of immigrant families, um, that also want to participate especially parents want to know about these programs. How are you getting this information out to make sure that every parent has access to this information on how to encourage their kids to participate? Because you're talking about the New York City Service website. Not everybody goes to the website, and then also the whole issue of translation. But getting the information to every single school, um, in the languages that the parents are comfortable with to really get this information out. So they know how to help their kid--kids access these programs. Because often times especially in the summer, parents are scrambling around for activities for their kids, and they want to have these volunteer opportunities. So how are you, you know, working to, you know, with the parent

coordinators or the PTAs in the schools to get these information out. And also these statistics so they know that a lot of kids are involved in these service programs.

DARRYL RATTRAY: So we do have expectations that our program sites work with the local schools. Um, some of them, of course, are located within schools, but they work with the parent coordinators, that they translate documents in the languages that are needed for that neighborhood or community they're in all in the effort to get the--to get the word out widespread.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Well, I hope--you know, I hope we really push on that effort because so far when I visit the school that is not something that I hear about from parents. So we want to make sure that that is on their--their mind that they are getting this information, and they're excited about getting their kids to volunteer in the community. So I look forward. You know, there's ways that we can work together helping to connect. Okay, thank you, Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Does anyone want to
3 comment, the council members? Council Member King,
4 do you have a question? Please.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: So, it's the
6 commissioner. Good to see you, my brother. How are
7 you there? My sister, it's good to see you. Peace
8 and blessings for 2016. Looking forward to your
9 delivery and to make sure our young people have
10 option, not just this summer coming up, but
11 throughout the year. So thank you for all you have
12 been doing, and I'm looking forward to the things
13 that you're going to be doing with our help, of
14 course, and whatever new ideas out of these hearings.
15 Mr. Chair, thank you for chairing today's
16 conversation on volunteerism--

17 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing]
18 You're welcome.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: --has been something
20 that allowed me to branch out and participate in my
21 neighborhood as a teen. You know, my first Summer
22 Youth Employment job allowed me as a 14-year-old to
23 volunteer and, you know, how handle number 9 and 12-
24 year-olds. So I'm--I'm grateful for that experience
25 that led me into the role of the service. Speaking

of--speaking of service, I'm listening to your testimony. I'm reading what's on the piece of paper here, and I'd like to know how has--for--for example you Teen Action Program that I'm looking at here, how do you track the improvements? How do you track the participation? How do you track whether or not it's successful? What are the experiences that are coming back from the students who say this is something that I want to be a part of? Or, even as a question number two would be as--as I heard, after you recruit a number of students for a big event, and they come and they volunteer at a big event. How is your retention rate after the event? Do they come back again to volunteer for something else, or do we lose--lose them? I--I offer that because I'm still working in the schools myself with students everyday getting kids to volunteer, and understanding the importance of volunteering when you can't find a dollar. So, that's my second question, and one of my third and maybe my final question. I've always said for the last year and a half, how has DYCD partnered up with the Department of Education to figure out how do we use the Department of Education to get kids credits when there isn't enough money for you to get

a job? So, how do we occupy kids' times whether it's during the summer or throughout the year because we know we only have X amount of slots and monies for Summer Youth Employment, and as we're going to be fighting to make this all-year employment. But if it's not there, how do we still keep kids engaged and saying listen because you can't get a dollar, doesn't mean that you're not engaged. So how do we partner up with DOE to set a--set programs by DYCD to say listen we have a structured volunteer program just for volunteering in the school system. So regardless if you meet your service hours in high school or middle school, we have a program that will allow you to do that. Because I don't want those kids scrambling all over the place where they get their--their information from their guidance counselor. You got to go 100 hours. Not everybody goes, and where do we go from here. [laughs] You know, so there we go.

TRACY GARCIA: So, um, in terms of the Teen Action Initiative, um, part of the initiative was--came along with the evaluation component. So we were charged as an--as an agency to make sure as the--as the fiscal year wound down, that evaluated the

experiences of our young people? So, we're fortunate to have at least two reports that we are able to share with you in terms in of the outcomes our how our participants experience these opportunities especially volunteer opportunities and Service Learning opportunities. This--this cycle of Service Learning for Teen Action has a revamped model. So, we're not necessarily capturing dosage of how much time each participant is spending on a volunteer opportunity, but one of the outputs is that they do have to complete two volunteer projects. And, we're working now with our CEO partners to figure out what the evaluation will look like for this particular incarnation because this is our--this is our new model for FY16. So--but we do have data on the--on the previous years. On--uh-huh?

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Aren't you satisfied with the information that's coming back to you?

TRACY GARCIA: We have gotten great results. Um, I can--I can speak not only to the Teen Action, but to the Mentoring piece. What young people always report is that they look forward to the next event, or they remember about their experience

coming together on the, um, large-scale event we coordinated. So they--they don't talk about--we found in the reports they said-- One of the questions is what is the, um, what keeps you coming back to the program, and then they talk about the experience that they may have had on an environmental project when they went out to Marine Park and did planting all day that Saturday. Those--those are like cited specific incidents that they recall, and then we saw that because we have data that tracked it, you know, attendance rates, um, matched the experiences that they're having. In terms of Teen Action collectively in a fiscal year, all of--all of our participants exceeded the number of hours once they registered in the program, and stayed more than three months. And as part of the initiative, when you enroll, you have to commit that you would be in the project for more than four months to have a successful volunteer experience.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, okay, and thank you, and I mean I have two other questions that I--I put out there for the answer.

TRACY GARCIA: [interposing]

2 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: But I'm going to
3 come--I'm going to stay with you for the second.

4 TRACY GARCIA: Okay.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Now, you're
6 tracking or you say you still should have to track
7 kids from six years old or--

8 TRACY GARCIA: [interposing] Yes, can
9 you--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: --elementary to the
11 high--middle school to high school.

12 TRACY GARCIA: Well, our--our programs
13 in--will incorporate elementary kids all the way
14 through high school. So we can track demographic
15 data on those who are in our programs who are in our
16 programs who are experiencing civic engagement
17 activities.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Can I--can I ask
19 you all if you haven't or if you're not doing it, is
20 there a way that you can start tracking kids to see
21 how long a child is participating in your volunteer
22 programs? So if you grab them in the sixth--in the
23 sixth grade, by the 11th grade are they still
24 participating or did we lose them in the ninth grade.
25 And if we did, why did we lose children who

volunteered, understanding the importance of
volunteering in today's society?

TRACY GARCIA: No, I will have-- In terms
of Teen Action, our young people are encouraged to
enroll the next time that enrollment is open. There
is no you already participated so you can't
participate again kind of rules or regulations that
we ask our providers to have. So we do know that we
have young people who have been in the program
multiple years. I think Darryl alluded to early on
that we saw with our Mentoring component, we have
young people who technically would have aged out, but
they continue to want to be a part of it. And part
of one of the outputs of the mentoring experience is
that you have to commit to volunteerism, and that's
one of the things that--that's one of the carrots the
brings them back. So, we--we will be able to see if
we ran a report that there are young people that have
been in there multiple years.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: And, I hear you
saying that those students who have--who have
participated are excited and want to return, can't
wait. What happens to the student who says I didn't

have a good experience. I'm not coming back. How do we address that?

TRACY GARCIA: We do. We are addressing that. We do have challenges. One of the challenges has been how we make the next experience different from the last? That has been a key challenge. In some of the surveys that we've gotten back, young people have said I've already gone to do tree planting two years in a row. Is there something else we can do? So that--that information that we take back and we work internally, of course, and with our TA providers to figure out how do we get these activities, large scale to support our population, and we get a different experience. And we--we do work on that annually. So we have--we've expanded our partner base. So, what young people fail to realize is that we're trying to bring large numbers at these large-scale events. So the--the challenge we have is how do we support more than 50 kids at one volunteer opportunity to--to support? It's--it's easier when it's adults, but when you have young people under 15, there are other regulations that we have to comply with, and sometimes we don't always meet it, and we try to have multiple experiences as

many times as we can. But that has been our challenge just, you know, opening it up to more young people and then having the right support for all these young people. It's much easier to find a public space to work on with 100 kids than it is to put 100 kids in a library to work on a literacy project.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: So true. Okay.
Thank you very much.

DARRYL RATTRAY: [off mic] Hold on a second. Tracy has some comments. (sic)

TRACY GARCIA: Or--or the SYP experiences? I'm sorry.

DARRYL RATTRAY: [off mic] Service in schools.

TRACY GARCIA: So service in school we've been coordinating with that office for the last four year now--for years now. We've been supporting and saying DYCD does have after school volunteer opportunities. How can we make the experience benefit the person in school, and how do we share that data with the school? And we're still figuring out ways how to do that, and crucial in that conversation has been NYC Service. And so, there is

a way to do it. And when a young--there's never a young person who hasn't either gone to their CBO directly, and said I need this letter. I need someone to talk to my guidance counselor. Whether it's been someone directly from my office who creates that letter, and gets, you know, either this Commissioner or I have a Commissioner Officer and sometimes myself to sign it. Or, we work with NYC Service to make sure all the documents they need get to their guidance counselor. That it's happened, and that communication is improving, and it improves every year.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: And the third thing?

TRACY GARCIA: The SYP experience I think you mentioned--

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: [interposing] Uh-huh.

TRACY GARCIA: --and how not to deter or turn away a young person who needs not only the financial support, but we're not able to finance them at the time. What our programs have experienced is that the Service Learning, my team, the Service Learning Team has met with each department to develop

these program areas with young people to show them that you can do something for your community. And, if you show them through Service Learning, they experience that helping my community is--well, I understand I need a dollar, and it's very helpful to get money. But, being relevant in their community and supporting it through this volunteer way wants-- makes them want to come back and stay connected with the center. And, hopefully something positive happens after the fact, but they do stay committed even though they're just there in a volunteer way.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Well, technically right now there is--there is not a program, or would you be willing to start a program with the DOE to given credit for volunteer hours in the school system?

TRACY GARCIA: A good question.

DARRYL RATTRAY: [off mic] It's a good question

TRACY GARCIA: Um, I don't believe we had a--have an official program, but--

DARRYL RATTRAY: But that--not that I-- I'm--I'm not sure if there's a program currently, but we'll take a look into it, and get back to you.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, and my final
3 question, um, what's the pipeline from volunteering--
4 volunteerism to corporate America?

5 DARRYL RATTRAY: So through--through the
6 work that we do, youth development, community
7 development I think is direct. I think young people,
8 young adults learn all the soft skills that they need
9 through civic engagement through volunteerism,
10 through being a part of youth counselors to
11 mobilizing taking back communities, engaging
12 residents of communities and doing more. I think
13 those are the building blocks to corporate America to
14 a young person prospering and--and doing well in
15 society.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, well, thank
17 you for your answer, and maybe corporate America can
18 join us and put some more money into volunteering and
19 taking a few of our students. So we don't have to
20 try to get 200 in one space to do something, but they
21 can take a few of our young people to volunteer and
22 offering that experience. Mr. Chair, thank you again
23 for your time allowing me to ask a few questions.

24 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much,
25 Council Member King. We are talking about some of

the young people who didn't continue to stay in the program. But, when children, our youth they decide not to go to school. They decide not to go to a program. There may be many reasons. Let's define them. Well, it could be bullying. It could be, you know, a bad experience, peer pressure. Talking about that, what do you have in place to--to screen? Do you screen, interview, or do you have any system to figure out how to--to identify the good kid, the good young people and the bad ones? When I say--when I say good and bad it's quote, unquote.

DARRYL RATTRAY: [interposing] Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Because you know that there are young people who want to do good things, positive things, but they're--they're under the influence of other young people who don't have the good behavior.

DARRYL RATTRAY: [interposing] So--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So that's most of the time they can jeopardize also their future and that can put them in a position to--to drop. You understand what I'm saying?

DARRYL RATTRAY: Absolutely.

2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So what do you have
3 in place to ensure that all those young people,
4 they're troubled, you know, who create trouble
5 usually. They don't influence negatively those who
6 want to do positive things. Those who want to--to
7 gain the benefit of the Mentoring Program or the
8 volunteerism?

9 DARRYL RATTRAY: So I mean first and
10 foremost, I will say two things. One, the
11 expectation that all of our programs with quality
12 have a disciplinary structure at the program site.
13 So if a young person is acting out, the young person
14 is doing something wrong within a program, there's a
15 protocol and steps taken. Depending on the age of
16 the young person they may get warnings. They may
17 have a conference with their--with their parents if
18 they're engaged and involved. I mean a number of
19 things may happen to help correct the behavior of
20 that young person. At the same time, I--our staff
21 and our providers at our sites are really keen to
22 what goes on in the communities they're in. We get a
23 lot of reports that--I--I get a lot of reports that,
24 you know, hey, last night we had members of this crew
25 again in the center who are at the program site. You

know, we--we have staff who we hire who know them. We're working with them. So they're privy to what's going on with most of the young people. It's not formal. So we don't do formal assessments. It's not--it's not a formal sort of casework assessment versus this is part of the work that they do in community development and knowing the families, knowing the young people, knowing who's doing what. Sort of the day-to-day work.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So what is your attitude? What do you do when you identify or you--you--you see that certain young people they are creating trouble within the program, what do you do? What--what are the disciplinary measures that you take? Do you remove them from the program? Do you try to provide them with assistance to help them change their behavior?

DARRYL RATTRAY: Every--every program is different. Um, I--I don't think anyone--I mean, of course, it depends on what they did. What--what infraction happened, but I don't think any one program would just kick a young person out immediately unless they did something that they felt warranted it. What we do is we engage them. We have

1 sit down. We have a conversation. I think most
2 young people especially when they act out they're
3 looking for a connection. They're looking for, um,
4 someone to help steer them in the right path, that
5 positive path. So most programs, you know, and we
6 hear it a lot when we go out to sites, um, they
7 engage the young people differently. They have that
8 conversation, and also they follow through with
9 discipline and feed it. And--and if a young person
10 needs to be suspended for a few days because they
11 acted out or needs to be suspended from the program,
12 they follow through with it. But even then, they--
13 they still try to provide supports. They still try
14 to engage that young person knowing that this is the
15 young person that needs the same services as everyone
16 else.

18 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay. So, we have
19 been talking about young people. Young people, you
20 know, they--they been engaged in the program of DYCD,
21 but it seems that we don't provide to the young
22 people who are not in school the same opportunity.
23 As I mentioned, prior, you know a university that
24 there are many young people they are not in school.
25 They are not working. They are not in the program.

What DYCD is doing to reach out to those young people and to give them the same opportunities that you--you had, and the same opportunities that Council Member King had before. Because there are many young people that are really in big trouble.

DARRYL RATTRAY: Right.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: And those young people we have the moral obligation to go to them and try to reach out to them and to offer them also the opportunity to change, the opportunity to succeed. What does DYCD have in place? What is it for the DYCD is making, it's doing to make sure that our young people in New York City can have the same opportunities regardless of the behavior or, you know, the group that they belong to? You know, this is a very serious situation, a very serious situation because the--the young people are creating trouble really and those young people are not in school. They're not in the program.

DARRYL RATTRAY: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: And we got to do everything that we can do together to ensure that them also they be part or they can enjoy the

wonderful program offered by DYCD. What are you guys doing to reach out to those young people?

DARRYL RATTRAY: Well, I--I think it's-- it's--it's twofold. One, and part of our Commissioner's vision is that our programs now will connect and partner and work together very differently than what they have done in the past. In the past, it's been a competition with providers believing that we have to stay isolated and do what we do to gain experience so we could be more competitive for funding in the future. And our new approach in getting a new partner creates the foundation for folks to deal with young people who not only are going to walk in the program. It--it may not--I may be a provider running the community center, but I may need the assistance of some of the other local groups that come in and provide services as well, and help out. In addition, they create-- they get inundated with the program activities that go on and strategies. In some cases, directly engaging some of those young people. So we have programs in East Harlem that over the summer they directly engaged young people who they know are in crews and gangs. And they--and--and certain nights

they bring them in for discussion. They bring them in to try to connect them to something more positive. So it--it varies.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay, so, we have been joined by Council Member Laurie Cumbo. Laurie, do you have any questions?

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Not at this time.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Very good. Not at this. Okay, so you're lucky. [laughter] Because Laurie usually has some tough questions, and I would like to thank Commissioner Lynch also thank you very much for being here. Thank you very much, and one of the things that I would like also to ask you, you say that you do, you conduct a background check for the mentors, the people from the staff. Well, how often do you do the background--the background of those people? How often do you go back and verify and--and try to see if the situation of this person or the staff member doesn't change?

DARRYL RATTRAY: But once they're fingerprinted that's running. If--if someone fingerprinted in our programs, and then subsequently unfortunately arrested, we will get the--they would--the program provider will find out and get it.

[coughing] [background comments, pause] So--so right now we do the initial background check with an SCR clearance. We don't do subsequent because they have the fingerprints on file. So they--if they had gotten arrested we would find out.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay, but you know that in New York City there is always an issue of liability, but that is who you are. You are seven people helping people. You are liable for-- I do have just liability issues. If something happened, you know, the young people in the program, something I've been in and they get in the situation that you're being sued, or you're being liable. How do you prevent, you know, a liability issue, or how do you address that?

DARRYL RATTRAY: So every program that we have they, of course, have--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Oh, do you have in your policy also, in your requirement something to, you know, to address this liability situation in case?

DARRYL RATTRAY: We have certain policies in place. So we have a social media policy. That's effective in helping programs design--design the

interactions between mentors and mentees, between program staff and participants to ensure that some of those barriers aren't crossed. Of course, we find the--they unfortunately crossed doing social media chats. We have other rules and regulations that--and policies that we put in place to ensure that again those barriers aren't crossed. And especially in mentoring where the mentor probably more than likely lives in the same community that the mentee lives. And you may--they may see each other late at night, early in the morning. But again, between--through the training, through the policies, through the staff updates, through the staff observations, we try to ensure that nothing happens.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Well, very good, very good. Council Member King mentioned that you have to make some more effort to--to inform the parents and also the youth about the wonderful program offered by DYCD. I want to be informed of that because I'm telling you as you know, I had the opportunity to create a not-for-profit organization also, and to serve young people. But in our communities many parents they don't have a clue about the programs offered by DYCD. They're good programs.

Good programs, and the children they don't have it. They don't know about it. Many of them they don't know about it. Their parents they don't know about it, and you can see it in the summertime. This is a big issue for the parents, a big challenge for the parents. The parents they go to work. They are looking for a place in order to put their children, and they don't have the money to pay for programs, and I would appreciate, you know, any effort that you from DYCD you did to make sure you spread the news. Let the parents know. Especially, in the--in minority communities. All right.

DARRYL RATTRAY: So what--two things. One thing that we do is, of course, we advise, if you will, through our providers that are inside. So we have the expectation that they advertise the programs that we have throughout the communities that they're located in. Another thing that we're doing at the agency is we've created a website called Discover DYCD. We're still in the testing phase right now, but it should be a full launch relatively soon. But this is a website where anyone can go onto the website, located--search and locate any of our programs that we have. There's an interactive map

that they can use, and they can find some of the resources and services that we have. The next iteration of that will go from a website to a mobile app.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Uh-huh. Do you have any way also to reach the NYCHA residents?

DARRYL RATTRAY: So we--so in operating 94 community centers in the NYCHA Cornerstone programs--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Okay.

DARRYL RATTRAY: --we've--we've done a number of things in trying to reach all the residents. We work with the NYCHA management offices to put--post flyers at times. In some locations, they work with the resident counsel to post flyers to the residents. In the very beginning NYCHA had included a flyer in one of the mailings that they sent out. We've had ads in the NYCHA journal. So yes, it's our programs. They work to try to inform all the residents of what's happening at the centers that we're at.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Well, that technology is wonderful. We all benefit from the technology, and, you know, the technology is the

future of the society. You know that, but you mentioned that you have a work that pays where people can go and, you know, find out and get the information that they need. But we still have a number of people that, you know, a group of people in the community who don't use the Internet, who are not knowledgeable or educated, you know, and informed about how to use the Internet. Their parents integrate, a bunch of people. How do you reach out to those people to make sure that they are informed also?

DARRYL RATTRAY: [interposing] So we--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Well, I'm telling you in my district the young people they use Internet. You know, they're Internet savvy and we are educated people. We get Internet, but there are a lot of hardworking people, mothers and fathers believe it or not they don't have a clue about the Internet is about, or they don't use computers. So, that means what do you have in place to help those people gather the information that they need for their children to participate, you know, in the good programs offered DYCD?

2 DARRYL RATTRAY: So, Discover DYCD, the
3 website is new, but what we've always had is Youth
4 Connect Hotline. So it's a toll free number. We
5 advertise it on the majority of our mailings, and
6 information that goes out at our program sites, and
7 they can actually call our toll free number and--

8 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] But
9 I'm talking about the money. The mothers and the
10 fathers work hard. You know, they don't have the
11 opportunities to go to hotline or to go to the
12 computer to find out about that information.

13 DARRYL RATTRAY: Oh, it then is going to
14 be again, honest charging our providers with
15 advertising within that neighborhood.

16 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: In the neighborhood.
17 That could be a better for me.

18 DARRYL RATTRAY: And--and they will find
19 a flyer.

20 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Yeah.

21 DARRYL RATTRAY: There will be a flyer up
22 in the hallway on the bulletin board.

23 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay. So, we all
24 agree that, you know, volunteerism is a wonderful
25 opportunity for the young people even for adults also

and for everybody, for a human being. But what is your advice? What do you believe we can do, DYCD and, you know, and this Committee, the Youth Committee, and also the Council Members to increase the number of participation and engagement of the young people to volunteerism? What do you believe that we could do or should do? [pause] I know you're going to say funding, but decide.

DARRYL RATTRAY: No, no, no, not funding.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [laughs]

DARRYL RATTRAY: I--I don't think--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [laughs] No, I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding.

DARRYL RATTRAY: I don't know if I can officially ask you for that.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: No, I'm just kidding.

DARRYL RATTRAY: I would say--I would ask that your offices work with the non-profits to make that volunteer experience something that's--I can't-- I need a better word than sexy.

TRACY GARCIA: [laughs] I know.

DARRYL RATTRAY: I mean I can't think of a better word.

2 TRACY GARCIA: Memorable?

3 DARRYL RATTRAY: [pause] All right for
4 lack of a better word to make it sexy. To make
5 volunteering something that's important.
6 Volunteering is something that--that folks know
7 about, that it's a big deal in that community that--
8 that this happened. But I think a lot of times our
9 non-profits are looking for the method and the
10 resources to do something. It doesn't always take
11 funding. Sometimes it's knowing that the Council
12 person is coming out, and--and he's just come out and
13 waved, which many of you do. That means a lot to
14 that provider. That means a lot to some of the
15 program participants. That means a lot to their
16 families.

17 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: There's another
18 offer I'm going to make also. Our offices we council
19 members can be very, very helpful news according to
20 DYCD because we have newsletters. We produce flyers.
21 We reach out to our people in our communities. When
22 we have an important thing like DYCD opportunities,
23 wouldn't it be good if you can send us a notice, you
24 know, or letter something to inform us about the
25

2 opportunities. Because there are so many we don't
3 have time really to go to the--

4 DARRYL RATTRAY: [interposing] Uh-huh,
5 uh-huh.

6 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --to the DYCD web
7 page. We got so much to do. If you can send them to
8 our offices and say Council Member we've got a--we
9 got a great opportunity for our young people this
10 month, for next month. Could you please promote it,
11 advertise it in your community and in your district?
12 That would be very important also, and now we are
13 all--we are willing to do that.

14 LEGAL COUNSEL: [off mic] Council Member
15 King has something to say. Council Member King.

16 Council Member King, please.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: I would like to
18 just--maybe we can offer in trying to under volunteer
19 help, but maybe DYCD can partner with the Council,
20 the Youth Committee, and start a campaign
21 Volunteerism is the Key, and that just--

22 DARRYL RATTRAY: [interposing] Great.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: --and that just be
24 the message with posters and us as council members
25 unveiling to get people to understand the importance

of volunteerism. I know people are understanding and when it takes them from, you know, the house, their house or the White House wherever it's going to lead the, but with little messaging. Maybe we can just do that. Spend a couple of--I know--I know you got about a couple of dollars in the bank on the side. We can create some posters and some pictures with a message on it. And Mr. Chairman, is there something you guys you want to get on--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Yes, this is a good idea and, you know, I think that we as a committee we're going to sit down together--

TRACY GARCIA: [interposing] Right.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --and shape it and study that--how we can work together with DYCD to do it.

DARRYL RATTRAY: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: We're going to meet as a committee. This is a good idea.

DARRYL RATTRAY: Well, let's meet later on. (sic)

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you. A good idea. Because the idea and, you know, the reality we should work together. We are all in this together.

The City Council, DYCD and all the providers. You know, the best way and I say that all the time, and you know that the best we're going to succeed and we're going to achieve our goal to offer the best opportunity to the young people to become part of it, and throughout city then is by working together. We are all in this together, and working together there is nothing we cannot do, and believe it or not, we will not only provide those young opportunities to those young people, the opportunities that they deserve. But also we will secure the future of the good City of New York. So, is there any other question? I didn't see none. I thank the Commissioner. I thank you very much for your testimony and for your presence, and thank you also. Thank you very much. Thank you. [pause] Uh-huh, uh-huh, as they could start right? Citizens for Justice. [coughs] Now, we're going to call the next speaker. It is Isaac Scott, Mr. [pause, background comments, pause]. Thank you very Mr. Scott. Would you please raise your hand to be sworn in? [pause]

LEGAL COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in

your testimony before this committee, and to respond honestly to council member questions?

ISAAC SCOTT: Yes, I do.

LEGAL COUNSEL: All right.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much. State your name and you will--you can start.

[background noise, pause]

ISAAC SCOTT: My name is Isaac Scott, and I first want to thank the committee for taking time out to hear me today. I do want to apologize for-- So, what--what you will hear from me will be more detail than what you have before you. And as an--as an artist, I'm always conscious about being sensitive to the eyes. So I didn't want to come with four, five or six pages or reading for your guys--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Okay.

ISAAC SCOTT: --so I--I--I-I compressed it to a page and a half, but I will go into detail because I have my computer in front of me, and I will do my best to answer any and all questions that you have. Do I need to hold this to speak? [pause] Okay, great. Okay. So, first, I'm the Arts and Communication Specialist at the Center for Justice at Columbia University. Some of my work that includes

providing research, writing and advisory services related to the experience of incarceration. I'm formerly incarcerated. In 2013 I was released after serving seven years and eight months out of a nine-year sentence. Some of the other work I do there is I administer a programming--I co-administer, excuse me, the programming at Rikers for the Justice and Education Initiative. So we have about five programs where we--we have one that's--that's already gone, and this is the pilot year of the rest of the programs. So what we have currently a Graphic Intervention Course. We have Next Road over an hour, creative writing, then we're going to a poetry workshop. After that we have a Drama 1, and I think that one will be on Shakespeare and the fifth will be a humanities course anthropology of violence. So that's some of the work I do at the Center for Justice.

I'm here today for Opportunities and Change. So in addition to the work I do at the Center for Justice, I am the co-founder of Opportunities and Change, which is a newly founded solution driven non-profit organization, and when I say newly founded, I mean we're currently transitioning between the first and second stages of

the non-profit life cycle. Our mission is to create and facilitate coinciding programs that were used by us to address issues. So, yes to addresses issues of --related to--excuse me--related to re-entry all the way to the social-emotional development of women and children. So some of the issues that we want to deal with as an organization is reducing prison and jail populations. We want to establish entrepreneur opportunities for other artists coming home from prison and not just those coming from prison but for new artists. Period young artists, our youth. We want to support social emotional development. We want to support healthy, mental well and that's through the encouragement of self-love, which we-- which we found is very important. A lot of our organization--organizational work is geared towards really getting to knowing who you are and what you want to do. Who you are, identifying that and knowing what you want to do with our life, and kind of trying to find the ways to get those things done, and that's what we're--we're here. So some of the other issues we want to be able to create a comfortable space for discussions, encouragement, edification, and we want to stimulate creative

expression because we are art-centered. We have three programs already that we've created. One is the first one, which is the most popular one. It's the Confined Arts, and that a platform for currently informing incarcerated artists to show their work. We are in our third edition of the exhibition, which we actually made a conference and it took place in December of 2015 at Columbia University, which is where I met Mr. Koo at. So, how that--how that started off was it actually started as a--just a random exhibition with myself and another friend. We had art. He had some art from some gentlemen in prison. I'm an artist. So we kind of--we were just like, you know, let's just have an art show. And as a result of the first show, the--the turnout was--was amazing. It was very impactful. We had some people call in from prison and do their poetry, and we--we saw the power that it had. A few months later, we did our second exhibition in Bushwick in March of last year, and it was--it was even better than the first one. SO, as--as we're developing the Confined Arts, we--we decided that it should no longer just random exhibitions. It should develop into a program, and it should be one that is informative.

So what we've done--excuse me--is we've made the third--we've made the third edition, and moving forward, we--we have them as conferences. So it will consist--a conference consists of art, visual arts, poetry, panel discussions and speakers, and some hands-on workshops for some of the artists. Now, the--the--the artists are not all in prison or out of prison. Some of the artists are, um, social justice activists who work in and around a prison system, but may not have been arrested, but are dedicated to the end of mass incarceration in this country. Some of the other and very important artists that we--we accommodate are those artists who are family member artists who were directly impacted by mass incarceration whereby a family member was incarcerated. We--so the exhibition is still up. It-it--I'm planning to take it down next week. We've been up for about two months now. Moving forward we have a solitary confinement edition of the Confined Arts, which will be a one-day conference at St. Francis College on Saturday, March 13th. We're also going to be at Hunter School of Social Work in East Harlem for the entire summer of this year. So that's what we're doing with the Confined Arts. Love

Thyself First started as a--that is a--that a program that's geared around self-love and mental health advocacy. It started as a--as a--as an encouragement event. It was a Mother's Day event to just encourage women into self-love and appreciating themselves and--and learn how to love themselves first. So that was the theme of the event from there. Myself and my partner we have developed it into a program that will consist of focus groups, encouraging events, and more.

But the program, the third program, and that's the program that I'm here to speak about is Team Arts. Team Arts is a program that aims to serve children and youth categorized as at-risk in East Harlem and surrounding communities by using the arts to provide alternatives to destructive behavior by introducing children and youth to different forms of creative expression through the arts. But to go a little more in detail about this program Team Art. The different types of arts that we plan to utilize throughout the existence of this program are fine art, graphic design, photography, music, dance, theater, creative writing, poetry and sculpting. We anticipate a 2016 launch of this program. Our

mission is to utilize these different forms of artistic expression to provide a space where children can learn empathy. Children and young adults can learn empathy and critical life skills necessary in order to develop sufficiency throughout childhood into adulthood. By way of strengthening critical thinking, emotional intelligence, leadership skills, and community building, Team Arts will work towards the healthy development of children from ages four to early adulthood, which is up to 19 that we have. So, we carefully design art and discussion workshops. We will be creating an environment where children and young adults can both develop and explore feelings freely in relationship to their world. And when I say their world, I mean the world they live in.

Their--their--their micro system. Workshops will begin small, consisting of 10 to 15 individuals run by age category. The age categories are as follows:

Childhood will be ages 5 to 8 years old. Pre-adolescent will be ages 9 to 12 years old, and adolescent will be young--excuse me--adolescent and young adult will be from ages 13 to 19. We plan to run on cycle for each age group simultaneously. The idea of teaching empathy is an extension of self-

conception, and requires children to look outside themselves. We believe this will induce child development skills, and create within each child a positive image of the kind of person they would like to become. And I just want to--just make it known to--to those of us who are not--who don't know this, and I've just recently learned this as a part of being--taking the Children at Risk Course at Columbia under Professor Downey that your--your brain is not even fully developed until you are in your early 20s. So--so--so this is one of the main reasons why I'm really against like things like capital punishment or giving young people life because they haven't even developed to the point where you want them to understand everything that you understand as a--as a--as a full--fully developed adult. Not to take away from accountability in any way, but we do need to--to--to deal with things in context the understanding that your brain is not even fully developed until you are in your early 20s.

A child's experience shapes the way they make sense of the world. With a huge amount of different feelings, a child or young adult may have throughout the course of one day. They need

teachable moments to learn how to appropriately troubleshoot their feelings, and express themselves in a non-destructive edifying way. And I'm sure--and I'm--I'm a father of 14-year-old, and I'm sure if any--anyone else in here has children, they understand how emotional young people are.

Incidents of violence increase frequently during adolescent and early adulthood for a subset of individuals. In addition, strong feelings like anger can often be confusing to a pre-schooler. Boys in particular are subject to more physical ways of expressing their feelings where girls tend to internalize their frustrations more. These forms of expression and the lack thereof, are not safe to the child nor is it safe for those who are around them. By the end of each cycle, each participant will have learned a significant degree of assertiveness, flexibility, empathy, self-awareness, self-confidence, self-reliance, optimism, relationship building, self-love, respect and appreciation. Lessons will target particular risk factors for each individual age group. So obviously some of the risk factors for--for--for children 5 to 8 are not going to be the same for the--for the young adults 13 to 19

as they are at two different stages of life. We understand our alternatives to violence, bullying and sex education is significant for teens and young adults. In this way, Team Arts will prevent the incarceration of our youth by providing strategic preventative measures for those children and young people who are most likely to suffer mental health illness and end up in prison.

We will help to build our young people from the ground up, which is why we start at young age and we're willing to work with children from a young age all the way through. We're now planning to pilot a one-day, four-hour workshop at the Church of Living Hope in East Harlem with--for support from Pastor Chris Lawrence. We anticipate running the first workshop in march of 2016, and we'll be beginning six-week workshops starting immediately after. Because of the sensitivity of the scope of work with under-aged children or educators and teachers, teaching artists are required to participate in a screening. Well, going forward that's just talking about payment. Okay, so--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you.

ISAAC SCOTT: Oh, I'm sorry.

2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: You finished?

3 ISAAC SCOTT: No, not yet. Sorry.

4 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: All right.

5 ISAAC SCOTT: Okay, so going into--going
6 into volunteer services, so in addition--in addition
7 the program will provide volunteer opportunities for
8 youth to become more involved in the program by
9 mentoring to their younger peers in the program, and
10 becoming more involved in community development
11 especially in the areas they actually reside. We
12 were able to identify some of the strengths of
13 connecting young people to volunteer opportunities.
14 And some of them include volunteers having enormous
15 impact on the health and wellbeing of communities.
16 And speaking--speaking from someone who I--I still
17 live in--in NYCHA. So, I--I--I still live in these
18 struggles. So, for--for a community to see young
19 people volunteering their services in the community,
20 it--it--it does a lot to change the narrative that's
21 associated with young people today. They have a very
22 negative narrative associated with them, and a lot of
23 people have really just done away with the young
24 people, and not--or they're not willing to work with
25 them or to--to actually engage them, and out what is-

1 -what is--what is going in their minds in their
2 developing minds because they're still very young.
3 So, community seeing people volunteering in the
4 community it--it--it can be contagious to the, you
5 know, and it--it--it can--it can incite in people an
6 attitude of, you know, if they can put in--if they
7 can volunteer their time to put in working to our
8 community we can volunteer our own time to put in
9 working to our own community. So, we believe that
10 in volunteering it can--it can actually both the--the
11 volunteer and the people that are being helped.
12 Also, volunteers discover hidden talents that may
13 change the way they view their self-worth. This is
14 very important with young people especially growing
15 up in households where they're talked down to a lot.
16 They're talked at instead of asked questions, and
17 they're not, they're not allowed to freely choose
18 their own path in life and they're actually--it's
19 actually dictated to them. So, these opportunities,
20 volunteer opportunities in the community can actually
21 show them, you know, a different path. You know,
22 where I--I--I did this work. I really like this. I
23 think I want to continue along this path. Oh, I did
24 this work. I helped out a lot of people. I feel a

lot better about myself. So these--these are a lot, you know, it's--it's very easy to talk about the dynamics and the operations and all of the other stuff. But it's--it's--it's--and no one is really talking about what the young people are going through inside and how they feel about things, the situations, and how you can help them process things, move forward and be productive young adults. Through working with local non-profit agencies and small business, volunteers learn about the functions, the operations of our government as well as small business management. This is key to, you know, our next generation. We do need a next generation of leaders. As well, we-we are--we want to be able to cultivate our next generation of entrepreneurs.

In addition, volunteering provides physical and mental rewards, and this is what I found on doing some extensive research. Experts report that when you focus on someone other than yourself it interrupts usual retention producing patterns. It also makes you healthier. Moods and emotions like optimism, joy and control over one's fate strengthens the immune system. These things are very good. Again, not to be redundant or repetitive, but this is

very important to a developing mind. And one of things we really want to stress equally important is the accessibility to these opportunities. I heard the Chair speak on this earlier, and I'm glad he did mention it. You know, these opportunities hold little value if the young people who need them cannot access them, or if they cannot locate them.

Flexibility within the eligibility process is very important as is the location of these services to young people are stagnated by travel costs and commute. One of the things I know from experience is that, you know, there are a world of--of opportunities out there for you, but no one is letting you know about it. You know, there's no way. Unless you're in a certain space you won't know about it. So, you know, my question about those--those--those young people who are out on the street and don't know about these opportunities, and one of the things we want to do is actually engage the community directly going out there and actually because we deal with the arts, we deal with a--with a universal median. And, um, you're--you--you know that we have a lot of young people who get on the train and dance. You have a lot of young people who--who do music, and

if we can get out there and--and engage them, and get them to come into a safe space, we believe that it will be very helpful and productive to develop it. Also, just going back to what I said in the beginning, this is a--this is a program that we've developed. We haven't ran it yet. So we are still in the--this--this is still a learning process for us as well, and I'll do my best to answer any questions you have, and we're--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Yes.

ISAAC SCOTT: --very open to things, you know, that we--that you believe will help.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much. You have a very detailed, you know, statement and presentation. That's wonderful and--but you mentioned something that I'm going to ask you to elaborate on--

ISAAC SCOTT: [interposing] Yes, sir.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --but not to go to the detail.

ISAAC SCOTT: Yes, sir.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: But I just want to understand the experience that you acquired from that

2 situation, and are you changed from where you are--
3 you were into becoming who are right now.

4 ISAAC SCOTT: Okay, sir.

5 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: And I want to
6 commend you for that also because you say you were--
7 you are a former incarcerated, right.

8 ISAAC SCOTT: Yes, sir.

9 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So I've got to
10 commend you for that, and this is exactly the--the
11 type of example that we want to use on our young
12 people. Yes, they can do it.

13 ISAAC SCOTT: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: If they want to
15 take--if they are willing to make the effort, they're
16 willing to change, they can be, you know, successful
17 in life also.

18 ISAAC SCOTT: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Could you explain
20 also, you know, what--what type of advice that you
21 can provide to the young people who are watching
22 this, and, um, and in terms, you know, those who are
23 in the negative parts. Those who are in trouble.
24 What can you tell them based on your experience?
25 Because I can see now you are a successful young

2 person, adult and you are part of the Columbia
3 University--

4 ISAAC SCOTT: Yes, sir.

5 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --at this point?

6 ISAAC SCOTT: Yes, sir.

7 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay, what advice
8 you can provide to the young people? And them, you
9 know, what they have to do, the effort that they
10 cannot make to change from the negative part to the
11 part that's different to become a better person?

12 ISAAC SCOTT: In the--so one thing I
13 would--I would--I would always stress is patience.
14 That's one thing I didn't have as a young person,
15 which led to my incarceration because prior to me
16 going to prison--

17 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] You
18 don't have to go into detail, but tell that.

19 ISAAC SCOTT: No, that's fine, that's
20 fine, that's fine. No problem. Prior to my
21 incarceration I did go to school and obtain an
22 associate's degree. So that alone anyone would well,
23 what--how did you go to prison? Because I wasn't
24 patient enough after I go the job. I mean after I,
25 um, I finished school to wait long enough to get a

job, to actually grind out and go to these interviews, and--and--and- to accept my nos or my yeses. I didn't have the patients to do that, and what I did was I went back to what I was doing as a-- as a younger man because it was easier and it right there. So one of the things I learned in prison was patience, you know, and that you--you--you--you--you can't live by--you can't live under the conditions that peer pressure puts you under. You know, and it's--and it's very hard, and that's not something to just say like it's easy. It's very hard for young people who want to be accepted to step away from their peers, and actually be independent. Now, if your peers are going in the right direction, this is very easy for you. But, if you are in the--in a situation where you come out of your building, or you see the drugs in your lobby. You go ahead and you see crack heads on the corner. You go across the street, they're selling, and--and this is all you see every day. It's very hard for you to separate yourself from that when you have to go home here everyday. So, I--I--I don't for one second want to, you know, act like this something easy for them to do, but it takes a good--it takes a good amount of

self-determination, and--and will power. And if--but if you want to do it, then you can do it. Nothing is impossible. I'm a living example of that, and you have to--you have to grind. [coughing] You have to grind. When I came home from prison, I worked--no lie--after doing CEO, which is subsidized employment, the Center for Employment Opportunities, which is subsidized employment where you get about \$40 a day to work at their worksites. For me, I got a job at Magnolia Bakery where I worked overnight for 15 months, and volunteered my time during the daytime at places like Columbia, at Nyrene (sp?) and different places to just get myself out there to provide a better opportunity for myself. Losing sleep, going to sleep for two hours a day so tired I'm falling asleep in meetings. And I had to do what I had to do to get to where I'm at today. So I'm not--I'm not for one second going to tell a young person that it's going to be easy for them. I will let them know exactly how rough it is, and I will do my best to prepare them mentally for what's ahead of them. I won't sugar coat anything for them, and I will not encourage them to be naive in any--in any form or fashion. So, going back to your question, I would

encourage them. One thing I will say to them is you have to be patient, and you're going to have to work hard.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much. Thank you. You know, that's--getting out of--out of trouble is great, but, um, if you have to say something that would be beneficial to the young people to prevent them to get there, what would it--would it be? Because one of the things that I think that we as a city who are prevention subsidy (sic) based is to prevent young people to get there first of all. So what could you say about that?

ISAAC SCOTT: Prevention. It's--it's-- I'm sorry, I'm very--I'm very big on prevention and, um, I--I have the slogan I always say an ounce of prevention beats a pound of cure, and I try to live by this if possible.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Well, let me put it in another way Can volunteerism--

ISAAC SCOTT: [interposing] Yes.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --help young people, and prevent young people to go to the--to jail and to go to the bad situations, to the bad part?

ISAAC SCOTT: Absolutely. I believe so because a lot of--a lot of--a lot of--a lot of trouble can--a lot of trouble takes place when children are idle, when young people are idle when they have nothing to do. When they have, um, they have so much energy, and when there's no--when there's no place for them to actually exert all of this energy, they--they turn to what's closest to them, and what seems to be the most phone. So if we can be there and be present right there in their face when they--when they have this burst energy, and they're ready to exert it somewhere, we're here, here. Listen, you can take this energy and let's get on stage and let's start to dance, or let's get on stage and let's do some of that music that you're so good at. And, yes, so to answer your question, yes, service is being there and being present knowing when to step in. I think that it can be very preventative.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: And what do you believe that we can do as a city and as committee in the City Council? What do you believe as a city--what do you believe that we can do to increase the

level of engagement of participation of young people in volunteerism?

ISAAC SCOTT: I guess we can--we can--for one we can stop criminalizing them as if all young people are criminals.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [coughs] Excuse me.

ISAAC SCOTT: That--that--that would be one good thing. I think also to be very present in these--in--in like these project housing, and--and actually have something for them that is more interesting than what they--what they live around. And having programs, and having opportunities for them, and actually being there to let them know. Like I--like I stated earlier accessibility and just the knowledge of--of--of these programs. A lot of--a lot of children--a lot of people don't leave a five-block radius. They go to school, come right home. Go to school, come right home for years. So they--they--they have no idea about these programs and these opportunities that may be on that sixth block, if they were able to go that far. But if we can actually step into their space and be present and be there where they are at their school during the day to let know this is a--here's an opportunity, a fun

opportunity that's not just about you, you know, just about homework, homework, homework. And as--as I cannot--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [coughs] Excuse me.

ISAAC SCOTT: --stress the influence of education more, but there also needs to be an equal balance of other resources for them. So being there and letting them know these are some of the opportunities. These are some options you have, this is very fun. I know that you're into this already. How would you like to volunteer and do some of this stuff? I'm--I'm very confident that can be very helpful.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Very good.

ISAAC SCOTT: But if they don't know about it--it's--

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Very good.

ISAAC SCOTT: --then no one knows.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: How many youth do you serve through your organization?

ISAAC SCOTT: Excuse me?

2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: How many young
3 people do you serve through your organization? You
4 help through your organization?

5 ISAAC SCOTT: We haven't. This is--we
6 haven't ran the program yet.

7 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Oh, okay.

8 ISAAC SCOTT: I spoke to--

9 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Okay.

10 ISAAC SCOTT: Yes, I--I was--

11 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Okay.

12 ISAAC SCOTT: --I was speaking about it.

13 What we anticipate to actually run the first cycle in
14 March.

15 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Okay, sorry about
16 that.

17 ISAAC SCOTT: Yes, no problem.

18 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So, is it in
19 conjunction with Columbia University or you just use
20 this space?

21 ISAAC SCOTT: Okay, so, so--

22 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] Okay.

23 ISAAC SCOTT: --because Columbia heavily
24 and the Center for Justice heavily supports
25 Opportunity and Change as a--as a partner

organization. We work closely with them with the Confined Arts. Hence we have our exhibition up at the University. Um, so yes, they would be--they would--they--they do work closely with us, and they would help us with, you know, obtaining funding. So they have been counseling us on how to go about prospect research and--and--and getting money for our organization. This is very new to me. I've never had a non-profit before. So they are counseling us through this. Also space very--very much needed. You know as much as they can--as much help as they can provide they do provide.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: How long has the-- just how long has your organization been in existence?

ISAAC SCOTT: I want to say we--we actually decided that we wanted to go non-profit this summer--last summer.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Last summer?

ISAAC SCOTT: Last summer. So prior to that decision, we already had to exhibitions from the Confined Arts, and we already have the--the--the, um, Mother's Day, which was the woman's celebration, which I told you was the event about, um, encouraging

women to, you know step out in faith, and--and love themselves. But, so what we did was we said, you know, we have these events. These can actually develop into program. So that's where we're at today. We're like, you know, you, we should--they should--this is a non-profit service we need to provide to people. And it shouldn't just be something random. It should be something that can--that is consistent, that is ongoing, and that is there and relevant.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Well, good. So that means you have the permanent institute--you are a non-profit now? (sic)

ISAAC SCOTT: No, we are--that's we're doing now.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I got that.

ISAAC SCOTT: Yes, we're applying now.
Yes.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: But do you have any funding yet? No?

ISAAC SCOTT: Not yet. We can't--we can't officially go for funding until we have a Tax ID number.

2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Uh-huh. Okay.

3 [coughs] Pardon me.

4 ISAAC SCOTT: We've been seeking
5 counseling from the Legal Aid Society and other legal
6 associations.

7 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: All right. So thank
8 you so very much. Again, and one more time I want to
9 applaud you or commend you for your effort, and I
10 think that you have enough to say to the young
11 people. You've got to go and spreading the news, and
12 letting the young people know that they can do it.

13 ISAAC SCOTT: Yes, sir.

14 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: You know, they can
15 become positive and a better person if their
16 attention as you said--

17 ISAAC SCOTT: [interposing] Yes, sir.

18 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: --if they are
19 willing to make the effort, okay?

20 ISAAC SCOTT: Yes, yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So, you can contact
22 my office if anything that I can do. So I would be
23 more than happy to--to--to meet with you, okay?

24 ISAAC SCOTT: Thank you very much.

1 COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

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2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: All right, thank
3 you, and thank you very much for your testimony.
4 Thank you. [gavel] The meeting is adjourned.

5 ISAAC SCOTT:

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date January 27, 2016