

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS JOINTLY WITH  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

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March 8, 2017  
Start: 10:19 a.m.  
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: JAMES G. VAN BRAMER  
Chairperson

ANDY L. KING  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Elizabeth S. Crowley  
Julissa Ferreras-Copeland  
Peter A. Koo  
Stephen T. Levin  
Costa G. Constantinides  
Laurie A. Cumbo  
Helen K. Rosenthal

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

Tony Marx, President & CEO  
New York Public Library

Linda Johnson, President & CEO  
Brooklyn Public Library

Dennis Walcott, President & CEO  
Queens Public Library

Najat (Nancy) Matari, Customer Service Specialist  
Langston Hughes Community Library & Cultural Center

Adrianna, Library Worker

Nina Marris, Parkchester Branch  
New York Public Library

Janelle Welch, Neighborhood Library Supervisor, NLS  
Crown Heights Branch, Brooklyn Public Library

Adrianna Mitchell, Neighborhood Library Supervisor  
Brighton Beach Branch, Brooklyn Public Library

Tom Finkelpearl, Commissioner  
NYC Department of Cultural Affairs

Marissa Richardson, Member of Leadership  
Urban Librarians Unite

Carl Goodman, Executive Director  
Museum of the Moving Image  
Chair, Cultural Institutions Group

Andrea Louie  
Asian-American Arts Alliance  
Co-Chair, New Yorkers for Culture and Arts

Samuel Manning, Appearing for:  
Katherine Green  
Arts East New York

Lisa Levy, Director  
Advocacy and Engagement  
Center for Arts Education

Jenny Lolitas  
Art New York

Kat Parker  
League of Independent Theater

Mart Morena Vega

Fran Garber Cohen, President  
Board of Directors Chairman  
Regina Opera Company located  
Sunset Park, Brooklyn

Amy Fiore, Director of Development  
TADA Youth Theater

Heather Woodfield  
New Yorkers for Culture and Arts

David Johnson, Executive Director  
Exploring the Metropolis

Claudia DiSalvo, President  
Community United to Protect Theodore Roosevelt Park

Faith Steinberg

Judith Kalamandre

Regina Carp

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[sound check, pause][background comments]

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Alright, for the  
record, I'll good morning again. Good morning,  
everyone.

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COUNCIL MEMBERS/AUDIENCE: [in unison]  
Good morning.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And welcome to  
the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and  
International Intergroup Relations, and our  
Preliminary Budget oversight hearings for Fiscal Year  
2018. My name is Jimmy Van Bramer, and I'm very  
proud to be the Chair of the Cultural Affairs,  
Libraries and International Intergroup Relations  
Committee and this committee is now [gavel] in  
session. I am thrilled to be joined by Council  
Member Andy King, who is the chair of the Select  
Committee on Libraries as well as members of the  
committee Peter Koo from Queens and Elizabeth Crowley  
also from Queens, and more members will be joining  
throughout the day, and we are first going to hear  
from the Public Library Systems, but before we hear  
from them, I'll say a few words, and also, I know the  
sergeant-at-arms has already said that if you want to  
cheer or you hear something that you agree with, we

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don't allow raucous applause in the City Council, but  
you can lift your hands and fingers and do that. So  
why don't we practice. Do you all believe in  
libraries? Do we--do we think that libraries make a  
difference in the lives of everyday New Yorkers? And  
have libraries always been there for immigrant  
communities in the city of New York? And do you  
think that libraries could do even more for those  
most vulnerable in our society if they were open  
seven days a week? So I think that ends this hearing  
on libraries. [laughter] So, thank you all for being  
here. I want to say that we've had some great  
successes for libraries, and I want to just mention  
that a little bit because that wouldn't have happened  
if we didn't have hearings like this one where so  
many of you came to show your support for libraries.  
So let's just take a brief stock. The budget for  
libraries right now, includes \$366.1 million, which  
is funding our six-day service, and having a--a  
baseline is a tremendous victory for you all, for us  
all and--and really for all New York, which is what  
this campaign is about, investing in all New Yorkers.

In addition in the Four-Year Capital  
Plan, there's nearly \$900 million for our libraries,

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which is a substantial increase. Is it all that we  
need? No. Do we need more capital funding for our  
libraries to make sure they're all in a state of good  
rapport—good repair. Absolutely, and that's part of  
what this hearing is about, looking at where we are  
at in terms of those two numbers, the expense and  
capital numbers, and where we really need to be, and—  
and what can be accomplished if we were to achieve  
the level of funding that we need, and what libraries  
would be able to do. We know that libraries make a  
difference every hour, every day, every minute that  
they're open, and the more that we can expand those  
hours and days of service, the more people who will  
be helped. Now, this goes for all five boroughs, but  
I'm very proud to represent a district in Queens, and  
we certainly in Queens know and appreciate the value  
of having a diverse community, the incredible  
richness that immigrants bring to our city, and there  
are far too many people who are afraid, who are  
fearful, who are uncertain at the very least in the  
current national political climate. And it's so  
important to have real sanctuaries in our city,  
places of refuge where everyone regardless of their  
status can go as an equal person as someone who can

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and will be received with open arms, and who will  
receive all of the support that they need. Libraries  
have always done that for our city. Libraries have  
always been that place. In fact, libraries our  
public libraries in all five boroughs are for many in  
our immigrant communities the first place they turn  
to because we are trusted. We are the sanctuaries in  
our sanctuary city, and in order to do that work most  
effectively, libraries can and should I believe be  
open seven days a week because those emergencies,  
those very real fears for people's lives and  
wellbeing and—and the lives of their children, they  
don't take a day off on Sunday. Those—those fears  
exist everyday, and some of those crises will exist  
unfortunately everyday. Having the libraries open  
every day is incredibly important, and so I look  
forward to working with my colleagues, with our three  
systems and really all New Yorkers to make sure that  
all New Yorkers get the library services they so  
desperately need and deserve and particularly in this  
moment where few serve our immigrant communities so  
comprehensively in the way that libraries can. This  
is a particularly critical juncture for libraries and  
really for our city, and by investing in libraries

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and investing in the lives of all New Yorkers, we're really speaking to our values, our New York values. Some might say our Queens values, our Brooklyn values, our Staten Island values, Manhattan values and Bronx values. So we will hear from our three systems shortly, but I want to invite my colleague, although I know he's a bit under the weather. So we—we thank for his participation and—and his ability to say a few words Council Member and my fellow chair Andy King.

CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Excuse me. I left my voice in the Bronx so forgive me. Good morning and welcome again. I'm Council Member Andy King, and I gratefully each and every one of for showing up today. As the Chair of the Select Committee on Libraries, this morning we'll be reviewing to project the budget of the library for Fiscal Year 2018. Fiscal Year 2016 was a big year for our libraries. The Council and the Administration provided an historic increase in funding for all our city libraries. This increase meant that for the first time in a decade every single public library across the five boroughs were able to open for six days a week. In Fiscal Years



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2017, the Administration baselined the funding  
ensuring six-day service for every public library  
across the city and increase in headcount and hours  
of operation and to encourage growth and program  
attendance. As a vital system in our city, public  
libraries provide a broad range of services to all  
New Yorkers. This goes beyond access to books. New  
York City's libraries are more access for patrons and  
they need some of the most working parents who bring  
their children to the libraries on weekends, and for  
busy professionals and students who are unable to  
access—who are able to access resources in the  
evening. Recognizing their importance to New York, I  
was glad that the Council was able to negotiate with  
Administration on an increase allowing us to focus  
our efforts on how we can maximize our abilities to  
server those most in need. Our library system  
provides a range of programs through the communities  
and participate in a variety-various initiative such  
as Adult Basic Education, Early Childhood Literacy  
initiatives and Broadband Technology Opportunities  
Program. It is therefore essential that the library  
systems are fully funded. In a few minutes we will  
hear more from the three systems on this specifically

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and so on the budget. I hope to hear specifically on  
the updates on new programs launched, updated  
performances, measures and target on how the  
libraries have implemented the City Council's Video  
Visitation Initiative. I'd also like to hear the  
libraries' update to the Council on major capital  
projects highlighted in the Capital Plan. In  
closing, I would like to thank my staff, the  
committee staff, everyone who is wearing an orange  
pin today, everyone who has an orange T-shirt on,  
everybody who is just here who supports libraries,  
and now I look further—I look forward to hearing  
testimony from Presidents Row. Thank you. Good  
bless and thank you Mr. Chair. [coughing]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much, Council Member for bravely fighting your way  
through that statement. I want to recognize the  
staff from the committee who are here: Aminta  
Kilawan, our counsel, Chloe Rivera, our Analyst and  
Aliya Allia who is Finance Analyst and my staff Matt  
Wallace, my Chief of Staff and Andrea Speja (sp?), my  
Deputy Chief of Staff, all who have a hand in making  
these hearings possible. So with that, we will hear  
from our three library systems, and I will allow them

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to choose which order they go in, but here today are  
Linda Johnson from the Brooklyn Public Library,  
Dennis Walcott from the Queens Public Library and  
Tony Marx from the New York Public Library, and I  
believe enough hands went up for all three of them,  
right or is that Brooklyn situation going like that.  
[laughter, background comments]

MALE SPEAKER: It's that kind of guess  
again.

TONY MARX: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  
Thank you for your support, for the City Council's  
support for the Mayor's support. We're honored to be  
here to testify. You have my written testimony to  
respond to the Mayor's Preliminary Budget. The City  
Council working with the Mayor, I recognize the  
unique role of libraries where you've made eloquent  
statements already this morning, and we thank you for  
that and for the amazing support. But we all know  
there is more that can be done. We need to offer  
everyone free access to opportunity, to knowledge, to  
reliable information and to education, and there are  
no institutions in this city that do that more  
regularly for more of our citizens than the our  
library systems, and given what is happening in this

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country, and in this world today, that could not be more important than it is today. We serve and respect all New Yorkers. We are the place where all New Yorkers come together in a moment when the country seems be fracturing rather than coming together. And we provide what every neighborhood and citizen needs, books, of course, but English Language instruction. At the New York Public Library we've increased those 500% in the last few years as well as citizenship classes, WiFi hotspots. Job search. We're working in homeless shelters, we're working in Rikers Island, we're doing early literacy, after school, homework help, technology training, all in a variety a of languages, and all for free thanks to the amazing support of the leaders of New York and its citizens and taxpayers. Let's remember who those people are. Forty percent of New Yorkers are immigrants, or let me rephrase: We are all immigrants or the children or grandchildren of immigrants. In this moment in history I do not need to belabor in this cham—in this Chamber how essential it is that that community feel not only respected, but welcomed, served and protected. We can't do that if the buildings are in bad shape. We can't do that

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with more of our amazing staff, so many of whom are  
here today, and we can't do that if the doors are  
closed. So, let me not pull my punches. I'm not know  
known for pulling my punches. In New York City in  
2017 given what is happening in this country and this  
city, the idea that we are closed in most of our  
libraries on one of the two days that most people are  
free to come and avail themselves of our essential  
services is in my view—and I believe would have been  
in Andrew Carnegie's view. Outrageous. So let's get  
to it. It comes down to individuals. So think—let  
me introduce you to Asmar Raman (sp?) whose family  
moved to the Bronx from Bangladesh ten years ago.  
There she is. She and her husband, her elder  
daughter and younger daughter, who is almost two  
visit Moshulu Library close to where I grew up  
regularly for books and literary services, and the—  
the family, all of the family feels served by the  
library, and protected and respected by the library.  
Or Chantelle Hodge, a high school senior from  
Washington Heights, even closer to where I grew up,  
who came from the Caribbean after her father passed  
away, and it was in the Washington Heights Library  
that she found sanctuary—sanctuary. She became a

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mentor and part of our Literacy Leaders Program, and  
she is now the first person in her family to go to  
college at SUNY Buffalo, and we couldn't be prouder  
of that pipeline. We are working the Department of  
Homeless Services for instance at our Morrisania  
branch. We' going into the homeless shelters, and  
we're hearing from those folks who need more of our  
help and again great leadership from the city that as  
one mother said, their-her daughter cannot fall  
behind just because I am going through hard times.  
Or the family from Yemen where the Mus-where a Muslim  
teenager come to the Bronx Library because it's the  
place where he can avoid being harassed by other  
students in his school and community. So, from so  
many New Yorkers libraries are the essential service.  
They are not just safe spaces to learn and grow and  
have open doors, and our doors need to be open. They  
are the spaces for opportunity. They are unique and  
irrepressed and irreplaceable, and we have been proud  
to partner with the city and with the City Council in  
particular, the New York Public Library. The  
libraries are the biggest source of IDNYC and we  
believe all New Yorkers should have those IDs in  
order to rally around those communities who feel

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threatened. We want all New Yorkers to come to the  
libraries, which they already do in record numbers.  
This is so much more we can do whether it's working  
in homeless shelters or Rikers Island or working in  
the NYCHA complexes, working with Your First Readers  
for Early Literacy Program. We are so grateful to be  
at this place where we got an historic increase. It  
wasn't a full restoration of where we had originally  
been, but it was an historic increase and an  
historically baselined, and we couldn't be more  
grateful to the Mayor for the baselining because we  
know that that demonstrated his understanding of  
exactly how we are moving the values of the Mayor and  
the City Council forward, and we've already seen more  
results from that, more hours, more days of service,  
more scheduled renovations. Thanks to you all, 217  
branches of public libraries of the city of New York  
are now open six days a week, nearly 40 million  
physical visits, high circulation, increased English  
language instruction and tech training and after  
school programs. But again, in this moment in  
history when so many of our fellow citizens are  
feeling under threat, it is the moment when the city  
needs to double down as the leader in this country

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1 and saying we will invest in all of our citizens. We  
2 will protect them, we respect them, and we will help  
3 them to advance. We won't be distracted and we won't  
4 allow them to be distracted by leaking roofs. We  
5 will not allow them to come to the libraries and find  
6 the doors closed. The city has more libraries than  
7 it has ever before, and thank you all for your  
8 leadership in making that possible. But the city's  
9 needs, its citizens needs are greater than more-than  
10 ever. We are in every neighborhood. We serve every  
11 New York. We are meeting so many of those needs, and  
12 with your continued leadership and the leadership of  
13 the Mayor, we hope to continue to move forward  
14 because we are ready to address the challenges of the  
15 day. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 DENNIS WALCOTT: Tony, you missed your  
18 standing ovation. [laughter] So good morning, Mr.  
19 Chair and good members of the Council. My name is  
20 Dennis Walcott. It's a pleasure to be here as usual,  
21 and to share with you our story, and you have our  
22 testimony and my testimony before you. I will only  
23 read a slight bit of the testimony and just talk  
24 about a couple of points, but before I do, I want to  
25 thank all of you for your leadership and your



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participation and your feedback, your dialogue in the  
last week and a half two weeks in the borough of  
Queens we have met with Council Member Koo, Council  
Member Crowley, Council Member Van Bramer and others  
sharing stories about libraries in their district,  
and responding to questions and concerns and the  
positives of what's going on in your respective  
districts, and we're always there for you. I want to  
pick up on a word that is both in our slides and Tony  
mentioned as well, and Linda will talk about as well,  
and that's the invest and investment because we're  
not just here asking. We're saying to you we want  
that investment in New Yorkers and investment in our  
libraries and what it represents. And Fiscal Year  
2016 was a busy year for us in Queens. We welcomed  
over \$11.2 million customers at our 65 libraries and  
facilities. We conducted over 68,000 program  
sessions that attracted over \$1.1 million  
participants, the highest amount ever recorded. Now  
we circulated over 13 million materials and hosted  
more than three million public access computer  
sessions, connected over 477,000 people to the  
Internet. We served 5,500 adult learners including  
1,700 students who participated in our structured 12-

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week ESL program across 38 of our community  
libraries. 865 customers completed job skills  
training. Moreover, because of the significant  
investment, again investment made by the New York  
City Council and Mayor de Blasio to provide six-day  
service to all New Yorkers. The average operating  
hours per week at our community libraries increase to  
46 with over 1.3 million people visiting Queens  
Library on Saturdays along. Through January 31st of  
this current fiscal year, we've circulated over  
902,000 materials on Saturdays up 16% compared to the  
same time last year and have welcome just under  
711,000 customers through our doors, up 19% compared  
to the same time last year. It is clear that  
Saturday service is extremely popular with our  
customers, and just two weeks ago at our Elmhurst  
Library we had a Lunar New Year celebration where in  
day we had 4,000 people who came through our door at  
our Elmhurst Library to participate and celebrate the  
Lunar New Year. Amazing numbers that would not have  
been possible without the investment of the City  
Council last year. So when we ask you to consider  
deeply in New York City's Investment in its  
libraries, we are asking you to support not just the

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services and programs that benefit our customers and  
our patrons but those that benefit all New Yorkers  
and strengthen the city as a whole. When the city  
needed space for Universal Pre-K, who was there? Our  
libraries. Our libraries were there and provided it.  
When the city needed space for the wildly successful  
IDNYC program, again who was there? Our libraries  
and our libraries were able to provide excellent  
opportunities for people to get their IDs. When the  
city needed safe inviting spaces for the Department  
of Corrections Video Visitation, which allows  
children and relatives to read with their loved ones  
who are incarcerated at Rikers through a live video  
feed who was there but our libraries. Our libraries  
are there to provide those services. When the city  
wanted us to provide services and assistance to  
homeless families, parent and children, they came to  
the libraries and we were there for all of our people  
to make sure that we were there for the homeless  
population. And when the City Council wanted a  
partner for its excellent City's First Readers  
Program, which makes sure kids are able to read and  
be ready by the time they enter school, who was there  
but our libraries. Our libraries are there all

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people all hours of the day. But unfortunately for a majority of our libraries not on Sunday, and I raise these examples to illustrate how intertwined our goals are for all New Yorkers. We want the same thing, which is to provide excellent services and resources to make lives better. We're here before you today to ask you to continue that investment, to build on the investment the city has already made in our three great library systems. As Tony said, our customers need us now more than ever before especially in this climate. The fear is palpable out there as far as people everyday wondering what life holds for them. What is the future? What does it mean, and that is why we're seeing \$34 million in additional operating funds to support our three library systems next year to allow for more of our libraries to be open seven days a week. We've shown it with our Saturday programs and our Saturday services that we can produce and the same thing can be said when we have the ability to produce on Sundays as well. Right, only 14 libraries in the city of New York are open 7 days a week. The additional funding we're requesting will allow a least one library in each of the City Council's

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districts to be have openings seven days a week for a  
total of 53 city libraries out of the city's 217  
libraries. That's only a quarter of all the  
libraries, but this would be a very good start, but  
more importantly a great investment. Think about the  
impact those additional hours could have on New  
Yorkers in terms of programing and services that we  
offer, and we offer in conjunction with your  
leadership and the leadership of the executive side  
of government as well. With these additional hours,  
we could offer more story time for babies and  
children. Workshops that help parents get  
assimilated in this country, health programs,  
computer classes that teach customers how to use the  
Internet, Excel and Word, ESL classes, literacy  
classes, job skills, workshops and technology as  
well, and just to have our doors open for open for  
people who just need a place to go. As the Majority  
Leader said, that sanctuary that safety net, the  
comfort of coming into our libraries, and all of us  
can share stories about customers who come in and  
just looking for that safe haven to be in, and that's  
what we represent to all New Yorkers. We could also  
have time for more entrepreneurship classes for

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immigrants as well. The photo in this slide was  
taking the day this cohort of immigrant New Yorkers  
graduated for our Ready for Business Program in which  
students learned about all aspects of starting a small  
business and eventually create their own business  
plans. In Queens we're about to start our Jamaica  
Feast Program in another couple of months where we'll  
be teaching people how to both start their own  
restaurants as well as if they have a desire to have  
a food truck business as well, and then training them  
and then providing them the opportunity to open up a  
site in the borough of Queens as well. That would  
not be possible without a great investment by all of  
you. But to make these programs truly great, we need  
to be able to provide them in spaces that are  
conducive to learning and inspiration and Linda will  
talk about that and all the great work that the  
libraries do and the spaces required to do them. So  
thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify.  
[laughter]

LINDA JOHNSON: Good morning. Thank you  
to Speaker Mark-Viverito for, Majority Leader and  
Cultural Affairs and wonderful advocate for our  
libraries, Jimmy Van Bramer and Subcommittee Chari

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Andy King and, of course to our Brooklyn Delegation and the entire City Council for supporting New York City's libraries, and to actually enabling us to open six days a week, which has been a real boost to the work that we're doing throughout the borough. We are grateful for your leadership, which resulted in baselining our expense funding and preserving that citywide six-day service. We thank you on behalf of all of our patrons particularly the thousands of working families who are now able to visit their local libraries on weekends. And while baselining was important this year, we must go a step further because no city can truly be great without world class libraries. The budget request we submit today will not reverse decades of neglect nor instantly restore the city's 217 public libraries to a state of good repair. But meeting our requests, we'll continue the progress we set in motion two years ago when you increased our budgets for the first time in a decade. With Brooklyn's share of the three systems' \$34 million expense funding request, we will be able to expand seven-day service to approximately one-third of our branches. Nearly every community in Brooklyn would have access to a library every day of

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the week, but the real benefit of seven-day service is what happens inside our branches on the weekend. We will be able to open our doors wider than ever to children, families, job seekers, immigrants, seniors, teens and all of other patrons who turn to us because the library contributes something of value to their lives. If you visit our branches on a Saturday or a Sunday, as I know many of you do, you see what a difference our expanded hours have made in the lives of our patrons. Our services have never been more in demand. Despite the fact that children are increasingly playing and learning with electronic devices our Story Time Programs are standing room only. Even as news outlets report the continued growth of America's economy, our job search and resume writing work-workshops are full. And I am sorry to say that our immigrant attorneys are nearly overwhelmed as frightened people turn to us for trustworthy reliable information. Libraries have always been a place where New Yorkers can feel safe and welcome. Never have we felt a stronger need to be there for people who are fearful of what the future may bring. More people are coming to the library than ever before, and they need us more than



ever. Unfortunately, our ability to serve the public is greatly compromised by the physical state of our buildings. Most are plagued by maintenance issues, equipment failure and drab uninspiring interiors. Our Capital Funding request is comprised of two separate asks. Each is essential the future of library service in New York City. First, the three library systems are requesting a total of \$120 million in funding this year, \$40 million for each of the three systems, funds that would be devoted to state of good repair work in branches throughout the city. For Brooklyn Public Library \$40 million is more than twice what we typically receive. We will use the funds to address some of our most critical capital needs including failing infrastructure and equipment that has long exceeded its useful life. Sadly, these needs persist throughout the borough. At Brownsville Library, for example, the HVAC system has failed. We enforced to employ ugly, noisy chillers just to make the building comfortable for patrons and staff. We have chose Brownville as one of the five Brooklyn libraries that will receive a full overhaul thanks to our inclusion in the most recent ten-year plan. The bad news is that we do not

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have sufficient resources to address similar problems  
at dozens of other locations throughout the borough  
including libraries like McKinley Park Branch in  
Southwestern Brooklyn. This small library is one of  
our busiest. Its children's programs are full of  
young families, many of them recently immigrants.  
Its ESL classes are in high demand drawing 40 to 80  
attendees per session. McKinley Park should be a  
centerpiece of our system, an example of what  
libraries can do for their community, but the  
building's condition is frankly an embarrassment. It  
requires a new roof, HVAC system and boiler, and it  
would benefit from the new lighting, from new  
lighting, shelving, furniture and flooring. But at—  
but at our present level of funding we cannot perform  
necessary preventative maintenance because other  
systems are in even more dire condition. We know  
that the only way the roof will be repaired at  
McKinley Park or the HVAC system replaced at Saratoga  
or the boiler at Carol Gardens is if we are forced to  
respond to an emergency. The branches I have  
mentioned comprise only a portion of Brooklyn Public  
Library's \$280 million in unfunded capital needs  
including \$80 million in emergency repairs, which

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brings me to the second piece of--the--the three  
systems' capital ask. A total ten-year Capital Plan  
allocation of an additional \$1.2 billion for all  
three systems. The Administration's inclusions of  
libraries in the most Ten-Year Plan, was a very  
encouraging development. It allowed us to prepare  
and plan for the future. Yet the investment amounted  
less than one-quarter of the system's total capital  
need and does not address the critical maintenance  
issues we are confronted with throughout the city. We  
would be grateful for your support of our collective  
ten-year capital request of which Brooklyn Public  
Library's portion is \$325 million. Of that \$325  
million, \$200 million will be applied to critical  
infrastructure needs, HVAC systems, roof replacement  
and ADA accessibility. \$100 million will fund  
improvements at Central Library, which at 350,000  
square feet is the largest and busiest public library  
in Brooklyn with more than 1.3 million annual visits  
and \$25 million will purchase new technology for the  
branches, computers, self-checkout machines and other  
equipment that our patrons and staff depend on. We  
are not asking for luxuries, but for the tools we  
need to provide the residents of this great city the

library service they deserve. Your support of our  
two capital asks: \$120 million for the three systems  
this year, and \$1.2 billion additional dollars in the  
Ten-Year Capital Plan is essential to the future of  
New York City's most democratic institutions. There  
has never been a better time for this city to stand  
up for its values by supporting public libraries.  
Thank goodness libraries are place where intellectual  
curiosity is celebrated, where wisdom is a virtue and  
civility prevails. The values define public  
libraries and have for centuries. They will endure  
here regardless of what happens elsewhere because we  
and our librarians believe in these values, and will  
fight for them. I'm proud of the way librarians have  
served Brooklyn Public Library's patrons over the  
past several months. To cite only one example, the  
staff at Bay Ridge Library spoke for all of us when  
they posted a sign outside the branch that read: You  
are welcome here. You are loved. New York City's  
libraries are and will always be a safe haven for the  
undocumented, a provider of hope for the unemployed,  
and a source of endless wonder for children just  
beginning to explore the world around them. In  
Brooklyn a little girl can see at the library people

1 who look, speak and dress differently than she, yet  
2 come here for the same reason she does: To read  
3 books, to make friends, to learn and to have fun.  
4 Libraries teach not only literacy but empathy. Every  
5 day we welcome people to our branches who arrive in  
6 this country hungry for opportunity. We also welcome  
7 those who simply arrive hungry. We serve immigrants  
8 who have little knowledge of English and no prospects  
9 for employment. They do not understand their rights  
10 and, therefore, cannot assert them. In many cases,  
11 libraries are the only civic institution they trust.  
12 We can reach them and we want to do more for them.  
13 In a city's budget—if a city's budget is an  
14 expression of its values, I hope this year we will  
15 express ourselves forcefully by supporting libraries  
16 and the people who need them most. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So informally,  
19 let me just say I think you all got roughly equal  
20 amount of applause from the crowd although Brooklyn  
21 may be a little bit more. I'm just saying a little  
22 bit more. Brooklyn is fired up this morning for  
23 libraries. Nice. So, let me start the questioning  
24 and—and I know some members are needing to check into  
25 Education, which is going on right behind that door,

and will be back and forth. Some others are—are still approaching. So let me just ask all three of you, and some of you alluded to it in your testimony with respect to immigration attorneys being quite busy. What—what kind of need or increases can you speak to that you've seen over the last three or four months or so where New Yorkers are—are needing libraries are more than ever where maybe you—you've seen stories—I don't know if you have—where folks are frightened and they're coming to the libraries. Your—your frontline staff at the circulation desk and—and throughout the library are—are maybe interfacing with more people with more serious concerns than they have in the past, and I wonder if the three of you can all—all speak to that.

TONY MARX: Mr. Chairman, I'm happy to. So about 1.4 million adult New Yorkers lack English language skills at the level that they seek to have them. Half of the immigrant population over the age of 24 feels that they do not have the English proficiency that they want, and as we've all said, they look to the library as the place that they feel safe and respected and served and Sunday service is part of how we can expand that because so many of

1       them are working during the week when—when we are  
2       open and might have time to come on—on Sundays.  
3       Partly, this is building on what we've already done.  
4       At NYPL a 500% increase in English language  
5       instruction over the last few years. We've expanded  
6       150% our tech training. Again, so many of the  
7       immigrants who are coming into New York need those  
8       skills. We're working with the Mayor's Office of  
9       Immigrant Affairs. We have—in just seven months  
10      we've set up 366 one-on-one appointments for people  
11      looking for services and advice in the libraries  
12      because they feel safe coming to those libraries for  
13      those services. We're currently in conversation with  
14      the NYU Law School about how we can get more people  
15      in the libraries and trained in the libraries to  
16      provide people with those kinds of legal services,  
17      and we hear from all of our friends in this community  
18      and we work with so many partners in this area  
19      increasingly now under these circumstances that  
20      Sunday is a crucial day for those folks to be able to  
21      come, and that they feel safest coming to the library  
22      for those services because they are—they're  
23      surrounded by all New Yorkers who are welcoming them  
24      as—as part of this community. Whether it's more  
25

1  
2 legal services, whether it's more English language  
3 classes, citizenship classes, which we'd like to have  
4 at 30 locations. Our Ambassador Pilot Program and  
5 moving into other languages, all of that is what seed  
6 to do, but if we're not open, we can't do it. If we  
7 are open, then we are committed to doing it.

8 LINDA JOHNSON: As-as you heard in my  
9 testimony, we have—we have 40 to 80 people attending  
10 English languages classes. That is an extraordinary  
11 people in a single class. We need more sources to be  
12 able to offer more classes. We are seeing year over  
13 year almost a doubling of citizens, people signing up  
14 for citizenship classes, conversation classes and  
15 immigrant services and, of course, as we mentioned,  
16 legal services. There is something palpable that is  
17 going on right now, and our frontline staff is—can  
18 sense it and, therefore, is working under extreme  
19 stress. The—the sense in the community and the  
20 people who are frequenting the libraries is  
21 definitely heightened and it is—it's have a ripple  
22 effect on the people who are serving them. And I  
23 think that it's incumbent upon all of us to be sure  
24 that we provide the resources that we can so that the  
25



services that we offer can be delivered everybody who  
is demanding them.

DENNIS WALCOTT: So I would like to  
approach the question a little differently in that I  
think it's around four Fridays ago we hosted an event  
where we basically had a number of our community  
based partners at the library to provide services and  
address questions that people may have around their  
fear of what's going on right now, and we had close  
to 2 to 300 in attendance looking to get guidance  
from the New York Civil Liberties Union, the  
Immigration Coalition, the Borough President's office  
and others finding out what's going on, and what's  
the reality? How do we address these particular  
questions? I think the demand is tremendous as far  
as people looking for information and looking for  
services, and I think it positioned us in Queens as  
well as our sister and brother libraries to be that  
resource for the individuals who want the  
information. If anything we do consistently is  
provide information whether it's information through  
books, information through people, information  
through resources and material, and we've seen it, we  
feel it. People have questions. People come to us

with fear in their eyes. I'm never seen uptick it the traffic coming through our doors [coughs] as far as people asking information, and I hear it from our managers as well. We've had training sessions dealing with what one can do or what one can or cannot do. If someone comes and asks questions around someone's status and we need to continue that, and I think again as both Linda and Tony indicated, if we expand our hours and our days that allows us to provide all those services and address the concerns. Two Fridays ago we hosted something very unusual for us in that we had to tell of our libraries, if not every library at 10 o'clock go outside and staff welcomed people in. We put signs and started welcoming folks to our library so that way people know we have an open door for all individuals. So both from the concrete numbers that I talked about earlier but just for the examples that I just talked about and others have talked about, the demand is there. I think fear is there, and I think people view us as the resource to address the questions and to respond to that fear that's out there in immigrant communities.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So there's no doubt that there's the demand, and that the situation

that—that we all find ourselves in is suddenly much more dire and—and urgent, but particularly for—for many in our immigrant communities both undocumented and—and documented I know even of some friends who have not with citizens but Green cards holders or—and—and suddenly they feel frightened enough that now they're—they're undertaking that process, which, of course is a difficult process and an expensive process, and that's—even if you don't have an immigration attorney, which most people can't afford, just the fee alone to—to become a citizen is quite burdensome for some. So—so the \$34 million ask and to the moment how would you hire, assuming you would hire additional people who—with—with some specialties and some expertise in these areas. Talk to me a little bit each system event how you would—you would allocate this \$34 million and—and how would you bulk up the immigration related services that you already provide? Would you hire more immigration attorneys? Would you have folks guiding people through the citizenship process, and—and obviously your English language and business classes as well, but that's going to take more staff, and I assume that you all have thought that through.

TONY MARX: So, yes. The--the--the lion's share, of course, of this request is for staff and we've been in conversation with our--our great colleagues at DC37 about how to do that. We have a sense that from the investment at NYPL it increased Sunday branches, a small number, four last year. We had 60,000 additional visits. If we can do what we're talking about here we--we think we can achieve 600,000 additional visits, and again we know that the--the most pressing need of folks who are eager to take that up are the immigrant community and lots of poor New Yorkers who need more space, more time, more services. So a lot of that--a lot of that is going to go to staff to open up our--our branches, but increasingly those staff have been trained to also do program. We have more education program staff, which is why ESL and other programs have exploded in terms of our availability in the neighborhoods. Yes, more legal services is something that--that we've talked about. Partly that will be on us, but partly it will--we will be able to turn to the various partners that are private NGOs that the City supports who are eager to increase their services to these communities, but don't necessarily have a place to do

it especially on the weekends or a place where everyone feels welcome and unthreatened to come in and get those services. So there may-not only will we be able to-to do more, but by having our doors open, we'll be able to help other organizations do more and that's a-a set of partnerships that we've been investing heavily and we'd like to invest in considerably more, but we have to be open to do that.

LINDA JOHNSON: Yes, I would echo what Tony has just said about the ability to collaborate on the weekends and to have other organizations that are specializing in particular areas that are helpful to-helpful to our-our patrons and be there for our patrons on the weekends. We want to hire additional staff as well. A New Americans Library and Immigrant Outreach librarians who speak multiple languages. As a borough's diversity dictates, over half the people in Brooklyn speak a language other than English at home, and we would like to be able to expand services to-to new Americans with more English conversation groups and citizenship preparation classes, Know Your Rights session, translation services and multi-lingual materials in all of our branches. We would seek Board of Immigration Appeal Accreditation, which

his a new thing that libraries are doing so that we would be able to give advice to patrons seeking our support and to free up some of the work that's being done by the lawyers on this topic. We now have waits for up to a month for--for patrons to actually get time with the lawyers who are working in the branches. So, yes, this is, of course, about doors open and lights on, but more importantly about the staff that we can hired to support the work that we've been for generations.

DENNIS WALCOTT: So we project in Queens that we'll be hiring approximately 100 new people creating new jobs, and in those areas of folks, seven-day service, but expanding a variety of our programs as well including as both Tony and Linda have indicated, translation services. Also, we feel it's important to attract people to the libraries, and in addition to the services that have been articulated already taking a look at how we can expand the number of hot spots, mobile hot spots to attract people, the materials budget will increase as well. The NAP Service, the New American Services. We're looking to expand on Sunday the Job Business Academy that we have also providing services.

Translation services are extremely important and making sure we have the available people for translation services, and as Linda indicated and Tony had indicated looking to expand our partnerships with our fellow CBOs as far as making sure they know the doors are open and, therefore, they are welcome to provide the type of advocacy services that we may not be able to provide, but others may be able to provide so that we will be a repository for people to come in and then get those expert services similar to what we have now where the immigration lawyers who were there at the Queens Library on Thursday at the various community libraries, and other locations as well.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So you briefly touched on this in your testimony I believe one of you, but obviously the-the-the homeless crisis in our city is-is one that affects-affects our city in-in so many different ways, but obviously I know with my experience in libraries that libraries are incredibly use, and-and are-a real valuable tool in both lifting up those who are currently homeless. And so I'm wondering if-if-if you could speak to that. Obviously, with the-the-with the crisis that we see

in our city that may have some—some impact on  
libraries.

DENNIS WALCOTT: Uh-huh.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Maybe you've  
increased your services as you—as you work with the  
homeless, whether those who come through the doors  
or—or the services you're providing to shelters or—or  
young people who—who may find themselves homeless.  
I'm wondering if you can speak to that and—and  
whether or not you'd be able to help the city more as  
it seeks to help those who are homeless if you were  
to be open seven days a week.

DENNIS WALCOTT: So let me start with  
that, if I may, because one of the things that we  
have been able to do is really work very closely with  
the people who are homeless and by doing that having  
our doors open as often as possible so that they do  
not just get the support but information as well, and  
I have a couple of examples I wanted to share because  
I—I promised Linda and Tony I would never talk about  
this again. So I won't talk about it but the—no, no,  
I'm not going to talk about my office on the main  
floor. [laughter] I'm not going to—I promised you I  
would not talk about that again. But being on the



1 floor on a regular basis, I see a lot of our regular  
2 customers who have a variety of needs who are  
3 homeless, who may have mental health challenges, may  
4 have other emotional issues, and how we interact with  
5 them with the expertise of our librarians and other  
6 staff to address their particular needs, and they  
7 feel safe in our libraries. They feel safe in coming  
8 in and asking for support. They feel in getting the  
9 material to sit and read. They feel safe in trying  
10 to share their story and what's going on. So by  
11 expanding the day to Sunday, I think we offer more  
12 people the opportunity to both get that safety net in  
13 coming into our libraries to receive those services,  
14 but more importantly to move them along the continuum  
15 of being self-sufficient as well whether it's a job  
16 referral or other type of supports. Personally, I  
17 know there are a number of people that I know who are  
18 regular customers who have specific needs, and we're  
19 able to tie in a librarian or someone else on staff  
20 who has that expertise to help those individuals. Or  
21 I'll give you a real example. One time a gentleman  
22 came up to me and he had taken something out of the  
23 media section of our library, and it had his homeless  
24 shelter listed on, and so then Nick and I, our chief  
25

1 librarian talked about that because the gentleman  
2 said, you know, you shouldn't be identifying that I'm  
3 living in a shelter and I said, you know, you're  
4 right , and he had the ability to share that  
5 information that safety was there on his part in  
6 thinking he could share the, and then he got the  
7 accountability that he needed because then the next  
8 time he took something out that wasn't identified. I  
9 think that's what we offer our customers who are  
10 homeless, and they're our customers. They're our  
11 regular patrons who are there, and they have that  
12 ability to escape, but also to get information.  
13 That's what we represent. We represent that civil  
14 aspect of society of providing both information and a  
15 safe haven for individuals to take that next step  
16 forward, and I think that's what a Sunday service  
17 will do as well. And giving people more of an  
18 opportunity to come in and get that type of feedback  
19 and information and then moving them along to address  
20 their particular need.

22 LINDA JOHNSON: Well, in addition to  
23 seven-day service, the library in-in Brooklyn have  
24 recently created what we call deposit collections  
25 that we're actually putting in shelters for the

shelters that are in our—in our borough. We also have been working with social workers to help ameliorate some of the problems that serving the homeless create not only for staff, but also for other library patrons. We're working with Breaking Ground in partnership with them training staff, and then also—training staff also to refer homeless people to the social service agencies that are actually in the business of—of—of supporting that group of people. But we do know first hand that there are many homeless people who spend their days in the library and we welcome them, and hope that they will derive many of the same benefits that all of our patrons do at the library and, of course, Sunday is no different from any other day of the week in terms of needing a place to go, staying warm in the winter and comfortable in the summer.

TONY MARX: If you're homeless, you're homeless on Sundays as well, and if you're homeless, the only place where you could come and find shelter and respect and be able to read and think and write to have access to free computers you can't otherwise afford, the educational programs that we've been massively expanding including college prep programs,

college advisory programs for your kids so that they have a better chance of finding their place in the world. All of that depends on the doors being open, but it's also when we ware open. Our staff are being increasingly proactive on the homeless front whether it's helping the city in counting homeless children in particular, right. You got to know what your-- what--what the issues, what scale of it is. Since--in the last two years our branch staff have been going and doing programs in ten homeless shelters. In 2016, we expanded to seven additional shelters. So people coming in, staff going, and in--interestingly also looking at how books can go out. So the My Libraries NYC program, which doubled last year in its provision from the three of us into the public schools of our circulating collection. We're also looking at whether we can do that in homeless shelters as well. Why shouldn't there be libraries right there. We want you to come in. We're ready to go out, and we want you reading wherever you are.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [coughs] Thank you for that. I think the work that libraries do with respect to the homeless population in the City of New York is--is underappreciated, and--and not fully

known by very many people. I want to ask a capital question, and then we're going to go to Chair King and--and the members of the committee, but speak to me a little bit about the increase you received, and I'm proud that we fought with you all, and--and--and the Administration put some funding into the Ten-Year Capital Budget. What you've been able to do with that and--and how quickly you're able to spend that funding, and--and actually start to improve the branches that so desperately need improvement like the one you showed before, Linda, and--and if you were to get the--the two capital requests, how quickly these neighborhoods could see improvements in those neighborhood libraries?

LINDA JOHNSON: [pause] Since I seem to be the queen of capital for good reason, I'll begin. So we deeply appreciate being included in the Ten-Year Plan if for no other reason that it allows us to actually plan for our future in stead of, you know, sort of being up in the air from one year to the next about what kind of funding we would get and how we could use that money. So Brooklyn Public Library identified five libraries that it would tack--tackle with the--with the--the ten-year money. Brownsville

will benefit from that. I'm forgetting the--the five different neighborhoods, but we're excited and we're working on these projects today. The way the money was allocated, however, in the first year of the Ten-Year plan we got--actually ended up with less money than we ordinarily would have because of the way it was structured. And so in the first year of the plan we actually were at deficit and we're in that untenable situation of just handling emergencies as they arose. Of course, we always have a plan for each year. It's just how quickly we have to abandon the plan in order to take care of--of the pressing issues. So a part of our ask is for our central library, which is, as I said, 350,000 square feet, and attracts 1.3 million visits a year. It is, you know, a very large piece of our system, and the building is 75 years old and magnificent, but in bad need of repair. It would be great if we had elevators we could count on, if we had bathrooms that were sufficient and, you know, so I--I know sometimes these projects seem like vanity projects, but in this case I will tell you that while we do need to restore the building, we really need to make it functional as well. Over half that space in that

1 building is not accessible to the public, and that's  
2 a sin. And what we've done is we've moved many of the  
3 more labor intensive work that you used to be done at  
4 the Central Library out of the building so that we  
5 can free up space for our patrons, which is, you  
6 know, really--really critical. We will--with a  
7 reliable recurring source--source of funding be able  
8 to tackle the buildings and bring them into a state  
9 of good repair and then really, you know, pie in the  
10 sky would be able dot preventative work. So that  
11 instead of dealing with problems when they were the  
12 most expensive, we were actually able to--to hit them  
13 earlier and do them more efficiently and--and actually  
14 have them cost less to fix. I will say that it's a  
15 challenge sometimes getting these projects completed  
16 on time and on budget, but I will thank my team for  
17 their tireless work in trying to push these projects  
18 forward.  
19

20 TONY MARX: Mr. Chairman, so we're very  
21 delighted to have an opening this spring on projects  
22 with thanks to the support of the City Council, the  
23 Mayor and individual members of the City Council. In  
24 Woodstock major renovate--renovation of Schaumburg and  
25 in Washington Heights are coming up in terms of our

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work ongoing in Charleston, Roosevelt Island,  
Woodlawn, Westchester Square, Macomb's Bridge and Van  
Courtlandt. Thanks to the initial investment and the  
Ten-Year Capital Plan we will be spending \$20 million  
each on a complete renovation of 5 Carnegie branches  
on the 25th Street, Fort Washington, Hunts Point,  
Fort Washington and Melrose. We're going to do those  
as pass-throughs, which means we're also going to  
invest private money and that means at least from  
our—from our records we'll be able to do those in  
roughly twice the—twice as fast and at roughly half  
the cost. That is good for the libraries. It's good  
for the citizens and it's good for the elected  
officials who have been investing in these. Coming  
up in terms of our ask, not only are we asking for an  
increased—a recurring fund for basic maintenance  
because if our librarians are running around putting  
pales under leaky roofs ,they can't be serving the  
public in all the ways that we've been discussion.  
So we—we want to like get that done, and then in  
terms of the next major capital investments, we are  
going to be focusing on Edenwald, Hamilton Fish, West  
New Brighton, West Farms, Francis Martin, Spuyten  
Duyvil, County Culhane, and Muhlenberg. So there's



great work ahead. I think it is fair to say, you know, too much need has been pent up in terms of physical renovations. The City Council and the Mayor have made great investments in helping to building momentum so that we can be more efficient, more planful, more effective, more-cost-effective and it is time to continue on that so that we can ahead of the curve that we let get ahead of us over too many decades.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So—

LINDA JOHNSON: [off mic]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Uh-huh, yep.

Linda, did you want to add something?

LINDA JOHNSON: I do want to add something because as jealous as I am of all those projects, I want to say the thing that really is disheartening about libraries that are not in good states of repair the ones that have gotten ahead of us, we had a 400—we had 400 hours of lost service last year because libraries were closed unexpected, and that's—that's really what this gets at. Thirty-eight projects that are underway are currently at risk of stalling because of funding issues. Shortfalls that occur because of the lag of time that

occurs between planning for a project and actually beginning that project. And 41 out of 59 buildings had unplanned closures. So, you know, while it's important to talk about inspiring buildings and heat and all of those things. Really, if we get money on the expense side, which allows us to be open seven days a week, which are desperate for, as you've heard this morning, it also needs to be complemented by capital money that allows our buildings to be opened as scheduled.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Absolutely. I want to recognize we've been joined by Council Member Brad Lander from Brooklyn. Were folks waving just at the mention of that name? Wow, look at that, Brad. [laughter] That's I think a Brooklyn situation here today. So, Tony, you said when you—you're doing these five projects as pass-throughs, and that when you do them as pass-throughs it's twice as fast and half the cost.

TONY MARX: So---

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So why don't you do all of your projects as pass-throughs. [laughter]

TONY MARX: I don't—I don't we could manage that, sir, but I do think we could—we are

prepared and we would like to work with you to manage to do more or of our projects. Again, the bang for the buck for the citizens of New York. The—the track record is clear. In the projects we are not managing, the average time is over six years, and the average cost per square foot is \$770. When we manage those projects it's a little over two years. So less than half the time and about \$411 and, of course, we know the faster you get construction done, also the cheaper it can be because you're not letting costs escalate over time. We can give you lots of examples of that. We—we know this is a complicated public policy issue. We know that the City Council and the Mayor are focused on it, and we all want to do better. We all recognize that if we can do for instance the Washington Heights renovation as we did in half the time of the project in Woodstock—in the Woodstock branch, again Woodstock deserves better than that. Similarly, the Roosevelt Island branch, which has taken long, Westchester Square, which has take way too long. When the citizens of New York invest their capital funds and the elected officials their budget for those capital funds, and you do not get a project done in time and on budget, everyone

suffers from that. And we need to make sure that we  
can find a way to ensure that that does not happen.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So it is fair to  
say that all three systems would like to pursue more  
pass-through projects?

TONY MARX: We actually cannot be clear.  
What we would like to discuss with the City Council  
and the Mayor and I think it started to discuss is  
treat us in terms of the capital allocation as if we  
were part of the city agencies. So enable us to  
manage those projects we can manage to get you better  
results faster and cheaper, right? We'll still rely  
on DDC where we need to rely on them. Pass-throughs  
have their own complications, as you know, in terms  
of money upfront that not all of us are going to have  
to do everything that we seek to do.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Dennis—

DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] So the  
answer is yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [laughs] And,  
Dennis, did you want to address the questions that  
the other two did in terms of--?

DENNIS WALCOTT: Sure. So when I first  
started last year, one of the first things I heard

about was the issue of capital, and our colleagues who are here from the borough of Queens as well as our customers are constantly asking us questions about what's the status of all the capital project? Where a things at? They've been long delayed, and so we put a capital tracker program in place that's on our website that lists basically the approximate time frame and status of our capital projects, and right now in the borough of Queens we have approximately 100 to 110 capital projects going on both big and small, and I think a fairly decent job in managing them and moving some projects that have been long delayed out of that long delayed column into hopefully closing very soon. So, in a number of our districts and the members who are here from Queens, we meet with you individually, and we present you our capital books that give an update on the status of the projects as well as future needs as well. So similar to my colleagues, and you know, a lot of the money that's been allocated already has been allocated for HVAC systems, roof condensers, furniture, new buildings and we have a number of projects that are coming to closure. Hopefully, in another several months we'll be opening up our Kew

Gardens Hills branch. In another several months we'll be opening up our brand new library in your district in Hunter's Point. We'll be closing out some renovations. We've just reopened East Elmhurst. So we've allocated the money to get the job done, but we still have some serious needs. So we're looking at needs in Fresh Meadows of heating and ventilation, the air conditioning control and the Maspeth heating, ventilation and air conditioning control and roof replacement. In Astoria, one of the big challenges is our accessibility renovation and working on that. The age-old problem, and this is one of the things that I definitely want to work on to solve is the expansion of the Corona Library as well because that's a big challenge, and we have some creative ideas. Also addressing the needs in Rego Park, another serious over-demand library that we need to expand as well. Seaside HVAC, Langston Hughes façade restoration. Astoria, as I indicated accessibility renovation. So we have a number of ideas and plans for the use of the capital dollars, and as my colleagues indicated, we do the work a lot faster if we pass-throughs, but as you know, we need a match if we have state dollars to do that, and that's part of

the challenge as well. SO we look forward to any  
type of discussion around flexibility alone in that  
line.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and  
right on cue, he must have anticipated that you were  
going to talk about the Astoria Library accessibility  
projects--

DENNIS WALCOTT: That's why I said it  
twice [laughter] because I saw him walk in.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Council Member  
Costa Constantinides has joined us. So I'm going to  
pass it off to--to my colleagues. We're going to in  
order have Council Member King, Koo, Crowley, Lander,  
and I know that Council Member Constantinides has a  
few other commitments as well, but if we can work  
that out. Let me just say in closing one thing these  
are not vanity projects. I know that, we know that  
these are basic operating and capital needs that we  
need to have all of the se libraries functioning at  
maximum capacity, and--and at a bare minimum not  
leaking or not freezing. So, the need is absolutely  
demonstrable and absolutely worth the investment on  
behalf of the people of the city of New York, and--and  
we need to do this. The other thing I want t say I

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think Dennis mentioned this in brief, but every time the city of New York has needed you as libraries, you have been there whether it's for Pre-K or IDNYC, the way you serve those who are homeless in the city of New York in ways that few do, the way you work with jails and prisons and those who are criminal justice involved, the way that you absolutely make the difference for so many immigrants in the city of New York, those who are documented, those who are undocumented. Libraries are there for the city of New York whenever the city of New York calls, right? The library workers are there for the people of the city of New York every single time the city of New York comes calling, and—and so I just want to say while some of these numbers seem big to some people, given the overall city budget, and—and the scale of that and then given what you all do for the people of the city of New York these are not exorbitant numbers at all, right? These are numbers that reflect your value and our investing in libraries and all New Yorkers is a statement about our values, and—and what the city of New York stands today more than ever, and what we should always stand for. So I just want to



say that in closing, and pass it off to Chair King  
before we move onto other council members.

CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, Chair, and  
I appreciate it. Excuse me again for the raspiness.  
I'm going to keep it about three questions, and then  
I'm going to defer. My topics are the video-video-  
video visitation. I'd like to know how successful  
has the video visitation been. I'd like know have  
you been able for those families who have  
participated in a video visitation have you been able  
to encourage them to use other services within the  
library system because they may not have ever come  
into a library but they did come in for this  
particular video visitation. So how, are we allowed  
to-to participate whether it's library cards or any  
other thing that they could utilize there? Secondly,  
I'd like to know do you track the ethnic breakdown of  
those who come in to use the video visitation to find  
who's actually coming in to use-to use it? Those  
are-those are pretty much my program-programming  
questions. And my capital question is as I hear that  
one of the biggest challenges that you have with  
construction comes to design and construction. The-  
the slowdown of being able to compete projects that

have been fully funded usually goes back to design and construction because of the many projects they take on for the whole city. So my question is if it's not mandated by law that you use design and construction, do you have a plan or can create a plan that allows you to complete your projects in a timely manner that design and construction might hinder?

Thank you.

DENNIS WALCOTT: So with video visitation since December, and I want to thank the Speaker and all the Council Members because I think this has been an outstanding program. In Queens we've already had 41 visits. We've served 49 children in 36 families in four of our locations so the Central Office in Far Rockaway, Long Island City and Ridgewood and to answer your other question, I do not and we do not keep track of the demographics of the population being served. But I can tell you it's been really worthwhile in the water. The person who is coordinating that initiative for us I Queens is here, and we talk on a regular basis and it's just extremely satisfying and you can just feel the emotion in the room when people are there, and even though we're not in the room directly you know, it's

being an emotional connection and all types of  
families are being connected as a result of that.

And to answer the other part of your question around  
the other library services, we encourage people once  
they're in the door to take full advantage of all the  
services that are available, and especially at our  
community libraries. It's a lot smaller than  
central, and so there's the opportunity for them to  
participate in the various programs, and learn about  
it, and we have a lot of literature out there for  
people to take full advantage of. So we encourage  
the full participation of those who come through  
video visitation and the overall library itself.

Connected to the construction question, as indicated  
in your prior testimony that we can do it a lot  
faster and cheaper, as Tony indicated and I think we  
need to have--this is a very comprehensive  
conversation solely on that issues because I think  
based on law and other issues, there are ways to  
possibly do it better, but we also work within the  
system as well. Just yesterday our team as part of  
its monthly meeting, the meeting DDC and our  
understanding of the projects and then they report up  
to me as far as which projects are outliers, where we

are in making sure we meet our goals and timelines.

So we've very specific as far as making sure we're

both accountable within Queens Public Library., but

also with DDC and the Commissioner and I talk on a

regular basis. So we think we can do it a lot

faster. As Tony indicate also in his testimony, we

don't want it all either because are realists, and so

we want to put a realistic system in place. And

finally, I'm spoiled (sic). I was at DOE. We had

the School Construction Authority and we we're able

to build very complex schools in a three-year period

of time, but a lot of that also went to the funding

cycles as well in that you have a budget set up, and

you know you have, for example, in the Bronx when we

did it with a three-school complex up in the Bronx

and we built it an athletic field as well, and we

were able to do that in a three-year period of time,

and also remediate the land that these schools were

going to be located on, and we did that roughly for

\$250 million, but was done in a three-year period of

time. And I'm not blaming anyone, but I think it's

shameful that it takes us up to nine years, ten years

to build a library. I shouldn't be that way, and we

have to do better, and I think we're very open to

looking at ways to do it better or to even fix  
projects that are not necessarily new construction as  
well.

TONY MARX: As he said, the—we are for  
video visitations this has, you know, it's been so  
inspiring to watch families coming back together in  
this way. It's not a perfect way, but in this way,  
the way in which people who have been incarcerated  
feel respected, feel a connection and feel a set of  
alternative lives and opportunities opening for them.  
We—we started with six locations. We're—we're about  
to add two additional locations. We've added a  
couple staff and, of course, we encourage people as  
is always the case to use all of our library  
services. You know, whether it's a—a mother bringing  
in her child for an after school program or to be  
part of a visitation program that says oh, let me  
take some books out, or let me use the computer or  
let me get English language instruction while I'm  
here. Those are great synergies, and we look for  
those.

CHAIRPERSON KING: Excuse me, Mr. Sprint  
(sic) out of those six, what boroughs are they in?

TONY MARX: So our current six locations  
Mariner's Harbor at 125th Street, Hunts Point, Grand  
Concourse, Hamilton Grange and Tompkins Square, and  
the two that we're looking at to add are Parkchester  
and either Upper Manhattan or the South Bronx. So we  
should talk, Mr. Chairman. The—in terms of the—the  
sort of DVC and construction questions, again I've—  
I've made clear what our track record is. I think we  
probably have done more of this as pass-throughs and  
independently than the other systems for a while now.  
There are projects that we need to continue to work  
with DDC. If we didn't continue to work with DDC,  
we'd need to explore opportunities to do that with  
others, but where we can, we are happy to do these  
projects self-managed, and I think our track record  
there has been extraordinary, but also our capacity  
is extraordinary. So the Mid Manhattan gut  
renovation, which will provide all New Yorkers  
because people from all five boroughs come to Midtown  
to use the Mid Manhattan, which has been in bad  
condition for decades. That's \$150 million of city  
investment. We're putting in more than \$50 million  
of private investment. We're doing it as a pass-  
through, and we will get that construction done in

two years, which is astonishing. You have a net—  
we're talking about roughly \$200,000 square feet.

CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay. Did you want to  
answer?

LINDA JOHNSON: Yes, thank you. On the—  
on the tele-visits we call it tele-story the Brooklyn  
Public Library has been doing this work for many  
years. We are at 12 locations, and while we're  
tracking who is using the services, we're not  
tracking it by-by ethnicity. We are, of course,  
encouraging everybody who comes in to do those visits  
to use other library services, and—and I just want to  
point out that at the core of that—of the video  
visit, of course is a book. It's an opportunity for  
a child of an incarcerated parent to read with that  
parent, to make the book and literacy the central—  
the—the focus of the visit which, of course, is so  
important because we're in everything we do trying to  
encourage students to be reading at—at the younger  
stages. So it's a—it's a powerful—it's a powerful  
program on many levels. With respect to capital or  
I—I should also mention that we have these deposit  
collections that I talked about in the context of the  
homeless question. We also have pop-up libraries on

1 Rikers Island. So we're not only doing—we're not  
2 only bringing families together, we're also actually  
3 leaving collections at Rikers for—for the prisoners.  
4 On the capital side, you know, we have horror  
5 stories, the kind of stories that when you read you  
6 can't believe are true. Like when I told that a  
7 project is being delayed for the fifth time or that  
8 it's going to cost three times what we were initially  
9 quoted, you know, you—you really think you're in some  
10 alternative universe, but these are real stories.  
11 The Rugby Branch in particular, which is just  
12 beginning construction now, that project started in  
13 2005, and it was supposed to take a year and a half,  
14 and now we're being told it will take three. So, for  
15 that—every story like that we also have the great  
16 story that we can tell about a project that we  
17 handled ourselves even though we're relatively new to  
18 that world. And the information commons in the  
19 Central Library in particular was—was built on time  
20 and on budget in a very short period of time with  
21 \$3.2 million of capital money. So our plan in a  
22 perfect world would be to choose the projects that we  
23 wanted to handle as pass-throughs, the—the, you know,  
24 whit the full renovations, the new construction, and  
25



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then to continue to partner with city agencies, you  
know, such as DDC to do the roofs and the HVAC  
systems and the boilers.

CHAIRPERSON KING: So let me just quickly  
follow-follow up. So in 2016, as I understand it,  
out of the \$28.7 million that you allocated which  
comes out at 7-7.1% in the Capital Plan. Excuse me.  
I'm-I'm trying to figure out, you-you committed that  
7.1% to try to get this work done. Is there a way to  
allocate more as opposed to just committing 7.1 of  
the Annual Capital Plan out of the \$407 million?  
Does it make sense what I'm asking?

LINDA JOHNSON: I'm not sure. Are you  
talking about the commitment rate at DDC?

CHAIRPERSON KING: Yeah.

LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah. Boy, we would love  
that rate to be higher. We feel a little powerless  
in that-in that context.

CHAIRPERSON KING: So, I [coughs] got it.  
I guess is there a way in the future not that you  
have to answer it now, that we can maybe come up with  
if there is an alternative to design and construction  
to move projects through? Maybe you ought to see if-  
-whether there are smaller projects that you guys can

take on, or again, if it's not by law you're required to have all your projects to through, maybe you can find an alternative option. I'm not saying there's one out here, but maybe we could find it because again, we 19 years to have a library built is-is ridiculous especially since we fund them in its entirety.

LINDA JOHNSON: So-so we're eager to follow a model that is closer to what New York Public Library is doing, which is to-to handle the-the larger projects as pass-throughs meaning that we would contribute the-the required amount of non-city money to the project that would allow us to do the design and to do the construction, and in the process with the hope of reducing the time of the project by as much as 50% and the cost by a similar amount.

CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, I know we're committed and I aim to do all we can to direct our bills and get these things done in a timely manner. So I want to thank Presidents Row for testifying today, and the Bible says the number 7 is the number is the number of completion. So library services want be complete until we get seven days of every week. So God bless and thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, Chair King and now we're going to go to the members. We are going to go on a five-minute clock starting now. I see some of the Cultural folks have started to join us in the crowd. So it's an opportunity for some cross-pollination and-and libraries and culture go so well together. So welcome to all of you. Obviously, your hearing will commence when-when this one is over, and we're going a little bit longer, but that's okay because this is very important, and we will spend as much time on-on the cultural piece as well. So, we're going to start with Council Member Crowley, Council Member Lander and I want to-what's that'? Oh, I'm sorry. Council Member Koo, you are right. Council Member Koo is here, then Council Member Crowley, then Council Member Lander, and I want to recognize Council Member Rosenthal who was here, but is now taking part in some very important events on the steps as well, and we acknowledged Council Member Constantinides. So once again, it's Koo, Crowley and Lander in that order.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you Chair Van Bramer for your leadership and your strong advocacy for Cultural Affairs and the Libraries. We all know

libraries are very important. You know, we must—we  
can name a thousand reasons why libraries are  
important. Libraries are the cornerstones of a  
healthy and stable community. Especially in New York  
city. New York City is such a diverse city. We have  
people from all over the world who want to come here.  
Their dream is to come to New York City or to come to  
New York—come to America. Being such a diverse city,  
when immigrants use libraries as a gateway to a  
community, they can go there to learn English, find  
jobs do all kinds of programs or even get DVDs to—to  
go home to—to watch on TV. Those are important  
programs, and also the libraries are—as I said the  
champion for the—our youth providing a lot programs,  
summer programs, and weekend programs, and this will  
help fix the economic divide between all of us  
because knowledge is power, and when you have  
knowledge, you know, the sky is the limit. So, you  
come to the conclusion that libraries are so  
important and it's so important for immigrants  
especially during this time when we have so much  
political turmoil from Washington, DC and between DC  
and our city. So it's important for your—your  
leadership to keep up all these programs, especially

for what it delivers. I live in City of Flushing,  
which is Council District 20, which is 60% Asian-  
Americans, and among the 60% Asian-Americans, 60% are  
Chinese-Americans. That shows you in all different  
districts there are different demographics and each  
Council District is different. So my question is  
because of different demographics what is the policy  
of hiring librarians and staff in each different  
areas where eastern-maybe Flushing is different than  
Sunset Park or in Bayside. So every area has  
different demographics and my-so the first question  
is I want to know do you have a policy of hiring  
multi-lingual personnel? The second question is what  
is the policy of collecting books other than in  
languages-you know, books in languages other than  
English because I'm very happy that in Flushing  
Library we have so many books written in Chinese.  
And so our people, the old people, especially senior  
citizens, their-because of their language deficiency  
they cannot read books in English, but they-they do  
read a lot of books Chinese. So they-you-you will  
keep them happy. When they go home they can read  
books. That just something for them to do. So those

are the two questions, the person's role and then the books policy.

DENNIS WALCOTT: Sure. So I'll take the first attempt to respond. One, we have a non-discriminatory policy. So we just hire based on qualification and I mean the beauty of Queens and all of our systems is that we have a great diverse staff that often you see people here in the audience who will represent that and those who are back in our libraries who couldn't make it down here. And so, the beauty is that the staff is diverse, they're mixed all over our libraries, and especially in the borough of Queens. I have the unique pleasure of being really a fly watching our staff work in outfitting Elmhurst when Elmhurst was about to open at the end of December, and watching the staging of the books and materials at Elmhurst, and looking at the diversity of the materials in the languages that are spoken in the community and throughout that particular catchment area, and so all of our libraries reflect that diversity as well not just in the material or books not just in the online information but in the newspapers as well. When I go to visit Flushing, and I take great pride in watching the

customers in Flushing who are there reading  
newspapers in their local language, and what it means  
to them to have that connection to home. I take  
great pride in the partnerships in Queens that we've  
been able to develop with the various consul-generals  
of the various countries in partnering with them, and  
having linkages to the home countries as well. So we  
really applaud the diversity, but we expand that  
diversity by making sure we have a variety of  
vehicles to share information and having staff that  
are reflective of the great city of New York that  
speak all languages, and that look like the city of  
New York.

TONY MARX: Exactly the same in the New  
York Public Library. We don't discriminate, but we--  
we're delighted to have very multi-lingual staff. We  
need to, and we are proud of the diversity not only  
of our staff, but of our users and of our  
collections, and every neighborhood that keeps  
shifting as New Yorkers move around and different  
waves of immigrants move to different places, and  
it's part of what keeps up so vibrant. So absolutely  
central to our efforts.

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LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah, I would echo that.

So we are always looking for librarians who speak more than one language, but it's not a requirement. We're actually looking for the very best librarians that are in the field and are quite proud of the staff that we've recruited in the last couple of years thanks in-to such a big degree to the increase in the budget that the City Council was so instrumental in getting us. But we have in-in recent years increased the number of story times that we do in multiple languages and, of course, we're all investing in collections that are in-in our case over 30 languages to make sure that while we are in some ways helping our patrons become acclimated and-and assimilated into the world that New York provides, we're also giving them that connection to home that-that quality that a book in a-in a first language provides to somebody who's otherwise feeling isolated. So it is a matter of-of a balance, and I think that we're doing it on both sides.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you and thank you for your leadership, and thank you Chair Van Bramer for your leadership, too.



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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much, Council Member Koo, who I might add has been an incredible advocate for libraries. We met long before we were both elected officials with his incredible support for the Flushing Library. Now we are going to go to Council Member Crowley.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Thank you to both of our Chairs, and to the library systems for what they do for our city. I am going to race through my questions. I don't want to be rude, but I may cut you off just because I'm on a clock, and I know we need to get the Department of Cultural Affairs in for questions. So, first, I'm a little disappointed that we don't have the information that I'm looking for in your testimony nor in our committee report. We just don't get the information about staffing and your budget, be it either your capital budget or your entire expense budget included in the information that we have. So, it's, you know, I do understand that we as a city give you \$366 million. We did, anyway, in the past fiscal year, but I don't know exactly how much of that goes towards employees, how many employees you have or what other funding you get from other sources. So

the quick answer to a long question would be just how much of your total budget for expense is the city giving you. So if the city is giving 90% of your total budget that would be answer. So you could just let me know what that answer is, and it's just expense.

DENNIS WALCOTT: So I think it varies by system and we're roughly 94%, the city.

LINDA JOHNSON: And Brooklyn is 85%.

TONY MARX: The New York Public Library is about 50% because we're privately funding a majority of the research libraries for all five boroughs.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Great good to know. So certainly when it comes to Queens Library and the Brooklyn Library since we're more than half, and I even thing--and just to clarify with Manhattan and New York Library, if you took out the research institutions the city is funding closer to 80 or 90% of you expense the entirety. Good. So I--I believe since we're giving so much more it's almost like a city agency. We need more information. You know, when I look at the capital expense, and I hear back and forth, you know, from earlier questions how the

library system wants to self-manage, and I'm  
supportive of this, but then at the same time I heard  
Brooklyn Library say 49 out of 51 buildings were  
closed and service stopped because of I guess the  
building not having heat or it just--it's certainly  
not--not like earlier Council Member Van Bramer said  
your Capital Budget is not for a vanity project, but  
how could it be that if we're giving much in capital  
that a library could close down because it doesn't  
have the basis?

LINDA JOHNSON: I'll--I'll start since you  
used the example of Brooklyn. With the--the 85% of  
the budget that's coming from the city to support the  
library is on the expense side.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: No. Yeah, I  
realize that but that's--

LINDA JOHNSON: The capital side--

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Yes.

LINDA JOHNSON: We have over a million  
square feet of real estate and we have been getting  
approximately \$15 to \$17 million to take care of  
that. It is a ratio that cannot sustain the  
infrastructure of the buildings that we are required  
to care for and--

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COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing]

Understood and agreed. It is not enough money. You need more in your capital. I, you know, wholeheartedly support expanding your capital budget. Now how much of the \$15 to \$17 million or/and each library system can answer this—how much of your capital budget is for new construction, new projects versus supporting the needs of the existing libraries?

LINDA JOHNSON: The first time at least in my tenure that we've received money for new projects was last year's budget where we received in the Ten-Year Capital Plan. It was an enormous step forward in the sense that it gave us money for specific projects that we could actually plan for, but the money that we've been getting prior to that, the 7—\$15 to \$17 million has really been predominantly for state of repair work.

DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] And the Department of--

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing]

And then, yeah, if Queens could answer this because I reached out to Queens Library over two weeks ago to try to get this information, and we only got it to my

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office yesterday, and I had staff working until 9  
o'clock at night trying to figure out your Capital  
Budget.

DENNIS WALCOTT: So let me respond to two  
things. One you asked for data going back six years  
or so give or take.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Yes.

DENNIS WALCOTT: And so in about a week  
and a half we turned that around to you and gave you  
the information, but to answer the first part of your  
question, it's—a different way to answer it is that  
obviously more money is expended when you're building  
a new building. So we project a new building costs  
roughly \$32 million. So the super majority of our  
projects, though are for HVAC and maintenance and so,  
a lot of the items that I listed in my testimony for  
masonry work. You had a situation in your district  
where a boiler stopped working in the--

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing]

Right

DENNIS WALCOTT: --Damascus Library--

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing]

Right.

DENNIS WALCOTT: --and that's going to  
cost money and that was an emergency repair at the  
time.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Right and then  
it's--that boiler was 45 years old--

DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Right and--

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: --and--and my  
point in being frustrated with that library closing  
down for two weeks, and my constituents were unable  
to get library services at that location was because  
of poor planning because when you're given--and that's  
not your fault. You're new, but when your system was  
given millions and millions of dollars over certainly  
my time as a Council Member and prior to me, and that  
projects are getting more vanity dollars than the  
maintenance and the systems within libraries to keep  
them running frustrates me.

DENNIS WALCOTT: So, can I--if can--I can  
respond. I'm not sure that's vanity dollars, and the  
reality is as you know, we've done this with each or  
our individual Council Members. We lay out the  
actual needs and the money that's been raised to meet  
those needs and also projected as well and as you  
know--

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COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing]

But there--there's certainly vanity projects in  
Queens Library. It's not your doing, but that has  
happened just so--I'm--I'm using the word that was  
used earlier--

DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] I

understand. My point--

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: So I'm trying to  
just--

DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Oh, no, I'm  
with you.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: --get to the  
heart of how much is spent on new construction versus  
existing needs.

DENNIS WALCOTT: I-I don't know if it's  
a-I hear you and I'll leave the vanity world alone,  
but I think in comparison the new versus the  
existing, new costs more. I mean the average library  
size now is a lot larger than the Lindsay boxes,  
which were roughly 7,500 square feet. Now, we're  
going to do a new library in the borough of Queens.  
It's roughly going to be around 18,000 square feet.  
You know, 18,000 will translate into significantly a  
lot more money. But with something like a boiler or

1 something or something like a roof, we try to do the  
2 actual projection based on the life of that boiler or  
3 the roof or the HVAC, and when we sit down and meet  
4 with each of you individually, we give you a very  
5 detailed chart laying out the expense of what that  
6 will cost and trying to raise the money to match it  
7 up and that's why we come to you and talk about the  
8 capital needs, and then if we have that capital  
9 money, then we could respond to that a lot faster so  
10 we're not dealing with a 45-year-old boiler, we're  
11 dealing with a roof that's reached its warranty after  
12 ten years, and that's what we've been working on very  
13 hard in the borough of Queens and I imagine  
14 throughout the systems in addressing those needs.  
15 And in fairness, and I hear you, we had a very  
16 collaborative meeting with each other in addressing  
17 the needs of your particular district and the request  
18 that was given to us and our staff both in  
19 preparation for this hearing as well as respond to  
20 that request. Got you very detailed information on  
21 the allocation of the capital money.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing] It  
24 really was not organized then. What I put together  
25 and what my office did will help you in-in keeping



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track of how much has been spent at various different  
locations because--

DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Yes, and we  
look forward to that relationship.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Yes, yes.

DENNIS WALCOTT: I mean one of the things  
we've had with all of you is a very collaborative  
relationship in responding to any requests. So we  
always look forward to that help and the guidance in  
making sure that we're responding to your particular  
need so that way it fits both what you're asking for,  
but also the reality of what we're addressing as far  
as the type of monies that we're utilizing to benefit  
our customers especially in the borough of Queens.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Council Member  
Crowley, I--I know how passionate you are about this.  
So we've allowed this to go on longer. Obviously I  
know that the Council Member has met with the library  
recently. We support your request for additional  
information, and I've spoken to Dennis about that--

DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Uh-huh.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --and I'm sure  
that there will be follow-up meetings--

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DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Look  
forward to it.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --and  
discussions about that request from the Council  
Member. I want to move onto Council Member Lander  
and I see that Commissioner Finkelpearl is waiting  
the wings, but we have a little bit longer to go  
because we have some other library workers who are  
going to testify after this group. So I just want to  
give you a heads up on that, although I'm happy  
you're here learning about libraries. Obviously also  
a passion for Commissioner Finkelpearl. Council  
Member Lander.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you, Mr.  
Chair. Good to see you here as always and as always,  
good to see our library staff and patrons and  
supporters out here. Thank you for coming and for  
all the work you do. I'll just relay a couple of  
things from my recent time in the libraries. You  
know on Election Night we had a--in the Windsor  
Terrace branch, we had an Election Night kind of pre-  
watch party. Almost all Bangladeshi Muslim kids from  
Windsor Terrace and Kensington we were doing a lot of  
work together on trying to understand the election,

and I asked, you know, what—what is democracy? Like how do you understand that? And like an 11-year-old like middle-school kid raised his hand and said, we take care of each other. So I was crying later that night as I was thinking about that, but we've got a lot of great work going on. We just launched in the Kensington branch a new partnership with South Asian Youth Action that is providing college and career readiness work and a really innovative partnership funded by the Weston Foundation. I can't wait until we can cut the ribbon this spring on the new Park Slope Children's Library Garden, and get started on the Carol Gardens Teen Center. You know, the passion my constituents have, the—the Friends groups. It's really quite extraordinary, and we feel very lucky to be partners with you. So here's my question. In the—in the Preliminary Budget Mayor de Blasio added a lot of capital funding to the budget, \$495 million for schools, a couple of hundred million for repaved roads, \$400 million for Vision Zero, \$122 million for the Staten Island Ferry, all great projects. How much did he add to the capital budgets of the public library systems?

TONY MARX: [off mic] Zero.

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COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I'm sorry. I  
didn't hear you.

LINDA JOHNSON: [off mic] Zero

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And Queens?

DENNIS WALCOTT: Zero.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Alright, so it is  
a great time as the Mayor rightly recognized to  
invest. You know, we—we have some anxiety on the  
expense side about what's going to be happening, but  
it is the time to make long-term investments in the  
system. So I thought it was very smart of him to add  
capital dollars. Am I to take it from the fact that—  
that zero was added to the Capital Budget that no  
money is needed in your three systems in the Capital  
Budget because otherwise it would seem like a good  
time to add them.

LINDA JOHNSON: We agree. It would a  
great time add them not only because—because it would  
be great for all of our patrons, but also because the  
need is so dire and the longer it goes unanswered the  
more expensive it will get. Every year that we kick  
this can down the road makes what we require just to  
bring the systems into good repair that much more  
expensive. It's really time to do this.

DENNIS WALCOTT: Deferred maintenance is  
very corrosive to the system. Plain and simple.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And we've all  
seen it in so many branches. I know you each in your  
testimony articulate what your capital needs are. So  
in the interest of time I won't go through it again,  
but Mr. Chair, I just posit that in addition to the  
critical work for seven-day service that the  
discrepancy between what we are adding in capital  
budgeting in capital budgeting and other places and  
the zero that we've added to our library systems is  
something I know you feel strongly about and I think  
it's important for the Council to—to push strongly.  
Just one—one more thing. I—I was actually very  
pleased, President Walcott, to see your Queens  
Capital Projects Tracker, which I've been looking at  
online. We have something like that in my Office as  
well for the projects we fund with discretionary  
funding or participatory budget funding. We have a  
tracker that we put up. That's partly because of my  
dissatisfaction with the fact that the city of New  
York does not have a Capital Projects Tracker for  
projects under \$25 million and so people who want to  
know about what projects we're doing, where they are,

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how long they're taking, how much they cost, what's  
their status is, can't get any of that information.

So I think it's a great step you've taken, and I just  
am going to ask Brooklyn and NYPL as you are rightly  
pushing to be able to take more responsibility for  
projects so that we can get them done. Will you take  
a look at what Queens has done because I--

DENNIS WALCOTT: [interposing] Yes, sir.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: --do think if  
we're going to spread that responsibility, around we  
have to take accountability for it. I'm sure this is  
the first you've heard about it as well, but I--

LINDA JOHNSON: A great--that's a great  
suggestion. Absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Super. Thank you  
very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much Council Member Lander for your advocacy and I  
think you've been in the room when I've ask Mayor de  
Blasio himself as he briefed us on the Preliminary  
Budget over the years about this question, and I will  
continue to forcefully advocate. Clearly, our  
libraries need a lot more support when it comes to  
capital, and I fully support the seven days of

service requests as well. So I want to thank our  
three presidents and CEOs for their appearance here  
today and--

DENNIS WALCOTT: Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --for the work  
that they do. More importantly, I want to thank all  
of the library staff members who are here. We are  
going to hear from several librarians I believe. So  
if you're in the audience and you love libraries, we  
want to hear from some of your colleagues, and we're  
going to do that, and we're going to go to a three-  
minute clock. So we're going to ask everyone to be  
as succinct as possible because Commissioner  
Finkelpearl is waiting in the wings, and so we're  
going to hear from--in this order and I think we're  
going to do five chairs at a time, and go as quickly  
as possible. Adrianna [background comments, pause]  
Blincourt-Hayword, Adrianna I think she spoke earlier  
and she was wonderful. There's Adrianna, Nina  
Marris, I think. Nina Marris from Parkchester. I  
think it's Adrianna Mitchell from Brighton Beach,  
Janelle Welch from Brooklyn Public Library, and  
Janelle Peterson from the Brooklyn Public Library and  
then after this panel, we have two remaining

speakers, Najat Matari (sp?) from the Queens Library  
and Marissa Richardson from Urban Librarians Unite.  
Those will be the final two speakers after this panel  
unless—are all those speakers here? All those folks  
whose names I called here? [background comments] If  
not, then we'll go to the other two, right. Oh, I  
think one more is coming up. No? So Adrianna is  
here, right? We've got Adrianna. Nina? Nina is  
here. Is it Adrianna Mitchell? Right. Janelle  
Welch. Is Janell Welch here? There's Janelle and  
Janelle Peterson, Janelle Peterson, Janelle Peterson,  
Janelle Peterson. No? And what's that? [background  
comments] Yes, alright, then Najat, why don't you  
take a seat over there at the—at the panel over on  
the far end, Najat. There you go, right next to  
Adrianna. There you go right in front of the  
computer. [background comments] Great. Oh, okay.  
We'll keep it for later. Absolutely. Great. So  
we'll hear from Janelle Peterson later, which is  
absolutely perfect and is Marissa Richardson still  
here? She is. Okay, alright. So why don't we  
begin. Najat, do you want to begin us off and then  
we'll go right down the line. [background comments]

NAJAT MATARI: My name is--



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FEMALE SPEAKER: [off mic] [interposing]  
Touch the mic.

NAJAT MATARI: You can hear me now?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, she can.

NAJAT MATARI: Hello, everyone. My name  
is Najat Matari (sp?) known as Nancy in the Queens  
Library. I am the Customer Service Specialist in  
Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural  
Center. I just want to just say a few things about me  
and my experience at the Queen Library. 2010 is when  
I came to America not speaking English, just very  
few, very limited. I came into the Queens Library  
with welcomed arms and amazing staff. The materials  
and items they had, the literacy classes they had I  
took the ESL classes, and worked my way up to being  
the first graduate in the Queens Library and  
graduating and achieving my High School Equivalency  
diploma. Thank you. I feel proud. I feel empowered  
especially for coming from a Yemeni culture where  
female Muslims cannot succeed to have education. You  
know, it broke my heart, but I feel really, really,  
really proud that I can communicate with you all in  
English. The second thing that I want to bring up is  
that Queens Library did not waste no time guiding me

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step-by-step as I volunteered in a few branches. They have taught me. They had amazing staff. They had staff that also spoke my language. After volunteering in the Queens Library, I got hired as a part-time position and as a teacher assistant to give back what the library had gave to me. It was amazing. Today I'm on my third promotion. Like I said, I am at the Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center. It puts tears in my eyes that I get to meet diversity people. Yes, one of the countries is Yemen, as you guys know what's going on today, and it's not only about me, it's about my family who my sister-in-law received her citizenship. My father who can actually text me, which he just did a few minutes ago telling me where I am. So it's about the amazing things and experiences that I experienced in the Queens Library, and that are people like me coming into the train. I just met one-one of my family members, a close family member. She came from Yemen and she told me, "How did you learn how to speak English?" It was a simple answer: "Queens Library." So with that being said, I just want to thank you all—all the supporters who have supported for people like me able to succeed and to

be—and to be free, and most importantly to be safe.

So I just want to say thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much. Folks were so moved that they started to clap-  
-[laughter] before that was crushed. Thank you.

[laughs] Thank you so much, and were you able to  
text your father back and say, I'm at City Hall?

NAJAT MATARI: I told him this is my  
first time in Manhattan. So, when I—I told everybody  
because I've never been to City Hall, I've never been  
to City Hall because I was so excited.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's awesome.

NAJAT MATARI: I want to thank them.  
I'm—I'm happy.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Wow, well make  
sure you get a selfie like right there.

NAJAT MATARI: I'm trying to. Can I? Can  
I?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Seriously yes  
you can, you should.

NAJAT MATARI: Can I have a selfie with  
you, too?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, we should  
totally do that right now.

NAJAT MATARI: [cheers] [crowd laughter,  
comments, pause]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You totally got  
to tag me on that one.

NAJAT MATARI: Yes. [crowd laughter]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Alright,  
Adrianna.

ADRIANNA: Well, that's a tough act to  
follow. My story is pretty similar to Nagat, Nancy.

NAJAT MATARI: Najat.

ADRIANNA: Najat. I'm also an immigrant  
whose first interaction with America really was  
through the library. The first time I walked through  
the local library door was almost 12 years ago. I  
had just moved into this country, didn't really know  
anybody, was feeling alone and isolated. So I went  
there with a volunteer application. The staff was  
very welcoming, very nice. In fact, the person that  
I spoke to was like going on vacation, but she was  
like come back in a week and we'll talk, and I did,  
and they received me with open arms. They allowed me  
to not only to shelf books but also to help with  
library programs with children, and that allowed me  
to see like this is something I would like to do. I

was lucky to be hired after volunteering there for two years or so. But once I was hired for an information assistant, I realized, you know, this is a career I want to do. This is a profession I want to follow. So I was inspired and I went to library school and get my master, and it was a lot of fun to realize that then I went full circle back to the first library that I had worked in with my volunteer application and became library manager there. It was very exciting to—thank you—to be able to lead a team of people. So the incredible staff to serve the community to see what we can do together. I also took ESL classes. To me they opened my eyes to the world to see that actually New York is amazing. New York is people from all over the world, and we can all be together and learn from each other. I'm now the average manager for the New York Public Library. I was promoted a couple of years ago, and I'm proud and I feel responsible to—to serve all of immigrants to all our three boroughs that we serve. Especially in times like now where people feel vulnerable afraid and alone, and they don't know where to turn to. We are there. We're everywhere. We're in every neighborhood, and they can come to us guide them to

the right resources, the right information for them.

And I think for me that what the library means is  
this safe, welcoming space where every will come, but  
not only that. You'll know no matter who you are you  
will be treated with respect and people will—they're  
there to serve you and people will be kind to you  
and, you know, you will find people that not like  
you, which is a good thing because you can engage in  
dialogue, and we can all be together. So,  
particularly for immigrants, seven-day service is  
very important because most of us, not only  
immigrants, everybody works really hard. So if we  
are able to re-open everyday of the week, we can keep  
helping the [bell] city and all New Yorkers from what  
we do.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and  
perfectly timed, Adrianna. Thank you. Next.

NINA: Hello and thank you for the  
opportunity to speak about libraries. My name is  
Nina and I work at the Parks Parkchester branch of  
the New York Public Library, which is in the East  
Bronx. One of the reasons I love working for the  
library is that it offers space for individuals to  
share ideas and building connections. So last month

was Black History Month and we had an event, and African-American reading event where seniors came in and shared works by writers that had inspired them and given them strength through difficult times. It was intergenerational. Their kids were there. It was very emotional, and I think, you know, that's the kind of thing I want to nurture in the libraries. After that event we had a local musician come in and talk about the history of the freedom song for the time of slavery continuing to the Civil Rights Era and its role today. One participant was so moved by the music that he had to interrupt the program to share a poem that it inspired in him, and that kind of passion being shared from older generations to their children that were there is exactly what I want to see. The title of the event was *How Can We Sing in a Strange Land*, which seemed quite relevant to me. It made me think a lot about our new immigrant population and what it would mean to live in a place that feels strange to you. Because Parkchester is one of the few libraries that is open seven days a week, I was able to start an English language learning group, in which we used the library's access to the Mango languages on line through out databases.

1 So new immigrants come in. I teach them basic  
2 technical literacy skills, how to access the library  
3 resources and they have two hours to practice their  
4 English through this online resource and ask me any  
5 questions they have. This is important because it's  
6 provides technical literacy as well as language  
7 skills, but even more important to me is that is  
8 provides a space where new immigrants feel  
9 comfortable asking questions. After that class,  
10 they're more likely to stop and chat with me. One  
11 family that I work quite close with comes into the  
12 library almost ever single day. I will help the  
13 young daughter work on her math homework, talk about  
14 bullies at school, and anything that's happened to  
15 her, and I'll help her parents through things like  
16 signing in for email. One day I was helping them  
17 sign in and they, you know, I said okay put your  
18 password in. I'm going to look away, you know, don't  
19 show me and they said no, no, no. You know, you help  
20 us with everything. We trust you. We trust the  
21 library. So explained, you know, you still can't  
22 show me your password, but to me, you know, that's  
23 something that we do everyday, help people get into  
24 their email so they can apply for jobs. The things  
25



with technical literacy skills builds trust with communities as well as helping them advance their careers. So I think that's really important, and that's why I believe Sunday programs like my Mango languages, English learner class are really essential. The branches that are open seven days a week have more opportunities for programs like this, and with more funding, our libraries make a real difference, and I would like to make sure that, you know, New York isn't a strange land to anyone, but a home. Thank you. [bell]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Wow, did you guys practice this? [laughter] Everyone is coming right at two minutes and 59 seconds. Awesome. Next.

JANELLE WELCH: I'm not sure that that was loud enough. [background comments] Okay, from the top. Okay. [laughs] Good afternoon, my name is Janelle Welch. I am an NLS at Brooklyn Public Library, which is the ever—they love it.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You're doing great.

JANELLE WELCH: Oh, am I? [laughter]  
Okay, I didn't think so.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Trust me. If I  
can do this, you can do this. You got it, you got  
it.

JANELLE WELCH: I'm may stray away from  
this for a moment. Okay, from the top. Here we go.  
Again, my is Janelle Welch. I'm the Neighborhood  
Library Supervisor for the Brooklyn Public Library  
Crown Heights Branch. I've worked for the library  
for over 16 years. I started out as part-time organ-  
part-time shelf organizer for other branches or  
organizations. There may be a page, and I worked my  
way up to become a manager with a lot of  
encouragement from staff including patrons and  
mentors who would say go and get your MLS degree. I  
consider myself not just a library worker, but a  
library user. I live 16 blocks from my location. So  
I do not walk there in the morning. It's a little  
bit too much, but I will kindly walk home because I'm  
familiar with the community, and the needs of-what  
they ask for as I see them in the post office and  
supermarket. So, you know, we have a great community  
relationship. So I really know what the branch  
needs. Also, for the past two years Crown Heights  
has been bestowed the opportunity to have WiFi

connection, well not WiFi, portable hotspots in which you're able to have the device at home. So my branch is extremely busy, as most all the branches of Brooklyn Public Library, and the other--the other two library systems. So, you know, we are really hoping that the budget doesn't get funded, but to be expanded. A little bit more about Crown Heights. We have 20 laptops, and 10 desktops and we're extremely busy. We're one of the 12 branches of Brooklyn that does carry the TeleStory, the Visitation program via the web. So my branch is constantly busy. Just as with the other branches, we do have lately a dilemma of the infrastructure of the building, which are either the HVAC cooling centers as well as the boilers and heaters. So the boilers and--hold on. Wait a minute. Yes, the boiler and heating units. So, it can be a time in which the building can be freezing or the building can be frying or it's closing early because of the weather conditions. So that is one of the major issues with the libraries, and also a lot of buildings have roof replacement or roof repairs. At Crown Heights yes there are times of--of a good heavy rainstorm. We may have to--you could play connect the dots with the ceiling and the

1 bay storm of water damage there, but you're always  
2 welcome to come, but maybe not after a rain. So  
3 maybe you should come during rain storms. I can, you  
4 know, give you a guide or a tour through the building  
5 just so you could see the conditions that are there.  
6 But I am grateful for what the City Council has been  
7 doing, and I know you're a great supporter of  
8 libraries. Thank you so much, and I just want to  
9 also thank, you know, the different Council Members  
10 and Assembly Members who do our libraries be it if  
11 it's a meeting room or they just allocate money  
12 towards our building [bell]. So just want to say  
13 keep on investing libraries and thank you.

14  
15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you so  
16 much. You did great. That amazing. Is that the  
17 first time you've testified at City Hall?

18 JANELLE WELCH: Yes, it is.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You crushed it.  
20 Thank you. [laughter] Thank you. Next.

21 ADRIANNA MITCHELL: Alright, okay. Good  
22 afternoon to all members of the Cultural Affairs and  
23 the Library Committees. Good afternoon, Chair Van  
24 Bramer. I've had the privilege of hearing you speak  
25 and you're a great speaker, and thank you for

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allowing me today to testify on behalf of the  
Brooklyn Public Library. My name is Adrianna  
Mitchell. I am the Neighborhood Library Supervisor,  
fairly new to the Brighton Beach Library Branch.  
I've worked for the library for the past 11 years as  
Library Associate at the Pacific Branch, as a  
librarian trainee at the Carol Gardens Branch, as a  
Librarian at the Windsor Terrace Branch, as a Library  
Information Supervisor at the Sunset Park Branch and  
now as a Neighborhood Library Supervisor at Brighton  
Beach specializing in children's services at all  
locations aforementioned. So I'm actually personally  
and professionally invested in the Brooklyn Public  
Library since I-I started bringing my-my daughter,  
which is now 14 years old to Story Time at the  
Central Library. I've experienced hands-on all the  
wonderful services that BPL has to offer from  
volunteering as an English language facilitator at  
the Central Library in the multi-cultural center, and  
also I've witnessed all the cultural educational and  
recreational services that BPL has offered throughout  
my career. I have so much respect and love for  
Brooklyn Public Library. It has offered me the  
opportunity to impact people's lives in a positive

way, to be of service to my community and to be exposed to diversity. I'm personally very diverse. I'm a walking UN. That's how I describe myself. [laughter] Public libraries an essential part of every neighborhood. They are gathering places, safe havens, sometimes the only means for children to receive homework help, for people to fulfill, to get the high demand for English language learning. The only place to receive a warm or-or a cool place for those who do not have anywhere else to go, and also it's a place to minimize the digital divide which provides the use of computers, computer classes and WiFi and all of this for free. Unfortunately, the reality for us is that buildings are run down and not upgraded to 21st Century library needs. Not all libraries are fully staffed and we can't increase our programming due to lack of funds. I do want to mention, though, that over the past two years we did see an improvement of funding. We are able to invest in books again, and to hire a lot of staff, and I thank you for that, but it does not stop there, and we are graciously asking to continue investing in libraries [bell] and reinstate full funding. Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you so much. Wow. So, let me just say this. Looking at this panel, and looking into this panel, I'm sure everyone will agree particularly on a day when we honor the contributions of--of women, and--and the power of--of women, this is such a beautiful, remarkable, powerful panel, incredibly diverse, incredibly strong, and--and really the best of everything that libraries represents and that our city represents. So I just want to say--say thank you to all five of you for representing the libraries and the work the libraries do in our city and our--and our country. So, a big round of applause for all five, in the way that we do that is here and, you know, and I just want to say thank you. I mean hearing from the three library presidents is very important obviously in regards of give and take, and--and I want to thank, you know, the--the Government Affairs teams at the there systems for helping us to arrange them because I find these panels incredibly uplifting and--and really empowering in the work that I do, but also I think for all of you, too, to be here fighting for your--your--your libraries, your systems and the people that you work for, and interface with every single

1 day. This is an incredibly important exercise. So I  
2 just want to say keep coming, keep testifying, and--  
3 and it's so great that there are so many people who  
4 are here for the first time testifying for the first  
5 time. This is your City Hall. This is your city,  
6 and--and--and this is your fight? And you are  
7 personally invested in this fight in a way that maybe  
8 you weren't ten minutes ago before you took that  
9 seat. So--so thank you and--and I'm very grateful for  
10 the opportunity and I realized also--it's Najat? That  
11 we did that photo and I didn't take a selfie of the  
12 two of us. [laughter] So we totally have to do that  
13 now, and then--and then I'm going to send that out.  
14 We're going to take a--a five-minute break, and then  
15 we're going to continue with the--the Cultural Affairs  
16 portion of our hearing, and thank you, Commissioner  
17 Finkelpearl. You are a Mense in every way. [pause]

19 FEMALE SPEAKER: [sound check, pause] Mic  
20 check. Everyone at this time please we're going to be  
21 back in session. Find your seats at this time.  
22 Please at this time find your seats. Ladies and  
23 gentlemen, at this time I kindly ask you to find your  
24 seats. We're going to be back in session. Thank you  
25 so much. [background comments, pause]



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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good afternoon,  
everyone and welcome to the second portion of our  
Fiscal Year 2018 hearing on behalf of the Committee  
on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International  
Intergroup Relations. Thrilled to be joined by  
Council Member Andy King, and I know we have some of  
the women on the committee who will be joining us  
after the proceedings on the steps conclude, but they  
are engaged obviously in a very important exercise  
recognizing and honoring women in the city and in  
this country today. All of us who are in red today  
in solidarity including myself. So I want to thank  
Commissioner Finkelpearl who has graciously allowed  
us to allow some incredible library workers to  
testify in advance of when they might normally, but  
it certainly seemed like the right thing to do, and I  
have great and unending respect for Commissioner  
Finkelpearl, which only goes up when moments like  
that happen and not only is Commissioner Finkelpearl  
understanding and appreciative of the moment, but  
actually sits and--and listens to the testimony, and I  
think gets as much out of hearing those women talk  
about their lives, and their journeys and their  
professions as I do. So I want to say that at the

outset, Commissioner Finkelpearl, and I also know  
Commissioner Finkelpearl long enough to know that he  
would—he would get it, and—and appreciate it. I know  
how I feel about those moments as well. So I meant  
that, Commissioner Finkelpearl. So we begin this  
portion of the testimony to discuss the Expense and  
Capital Budget of the Department of Cultural Affairs  
and the state of the arts and culture in the city of  
New York strong, and in many ways stronger than it's  
been in quite some time. I'm proud of the work that  
Council has done working with the Administration to  
see increases in the operating budgets of cultural  
organizations in the city of New York, a dramatic  
increase in the City Council's cultural initiatives,  
which are benefitting more and more groups including  
some of our smaller cultural organizations serving  
very, very diverse populations including our  
immigrant communities, and we continue a robust  
capital program where we are seeing incredible  
expansions and renovations and new structures being  
built in all five boroughs. But as I mentioned to  
Dean Fuleihan the other day, obviously with the work  
that was done last year and the increase that we saw  
to the Department of Cultural Affairs' budget from

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the executive side having that not baselined  
represents a potential cut if we were not to see that  
restored and, of course, I know that many will  
testify to day to the need and the belief that we  
should be increasing cultural funding not just to the  
tune of the \$10 million that we saw last year, but  
even more. So, that is where we are today, and Dean  
was correct in saying that it's not technically a cut  
yet, but, you know, I—I certainly want to hear from  
the Commissioner about the work that he's doing  
within the agency, and within the Administration to—  
to make the case that that funding is necessary, and—  
and then we'll talk a little bit about what the  
Council can do as well in that regard. But I think  
in this very, very strange time that we live in, and—  
and this very, very particular place that we live in  
just as our friends in the libraries, culture and the  
arts is in a very unique position to—to bring people  
together, and to create a common language that—that  
allows people to better understand who we are and  
what we're about, and—and process everything that's  
happening. So we are as a—a community just as  
important as any other, and—and I want to recognize  
that at the outset. So, we're going to hear from

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Commissioner Finkelpearl, and then we're going to hear from some of our friends in the audience from the cultural community, and with that I think we're going to ask Commissioner Finkelpearl to attest to the honesty of his statements.

LEGAL COUNSEL: Please raise your right hand. 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?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I do.

LEGAL COUNSEL: Thank you. Okay and first let me say that while my heart is with the cultural organizations and the cultural life, my mother was a librarian and both of her parents were librarians, and I think Jimmy knows that I also love libraries. I was happy to sit through that testimony of the actual librarians on the ground. So thank you. Good morning Chair Van Bramer and members of the committee. I'm here today to present testimony regarding the Mayor's Preliminary Fiscal 2018 Budget for the Department of Cultural Affairs. I am joined here today by a member of DCA staff members. First, I will review the numbers. We are proud to remain

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the largest local funder for arts and culture in the  
United States. DCLA's total expense budget for  
Fiscal Year 2018 is forecast at \$142.9 million  
including \$107.8 million for the Cultural Institution  
Group; \$28.56 million for the Department of—for the  
Cultural Development Fund; and \$6.1 million for  
agency operations. This does not include any funding  
that is typically added at adoption including member  
items and initiative from the City Council. I'd like  
to point out that our [coughs]—in our current Fiscal  
Year Budget the agency's operation accounts for just  
3.4% of our total expense budget. The rest goes  
straight to the cultural community. Turning to our  
Design-Build we are currently—we currently have  
\$807.3 million allocated for 398 active projects at  
202 cultural organizations over the next four years.  
That's Fiscal 17 through 20. This includes \$152  
million that was added at adoption of the FY2017  
Budget. This robust funding, which is allocated by  
the Administration and City Council and Borough  
President offices supports project that are critical  
to growing and sustaining cultural groups in all five  
boroughs, and I would add here that this just doesn't  
happen in the other city. Some highlights of our

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current Capital Portfolio include infrastructure  
upgrades at the Dance Theater of Harlem,  
reconstruction of the Bronx River Arts Center, fire  
safety improvements for the Bedford-Stuyvesant  
Restoration Corporation, conversion of an existing  
property for the Louis Armstrong Houses new  
administrative-administration study (sic) and a full  
restoration of Snug Harbor's Music Hall. To provide  
a quick update on the current fiscal year budget,  
funds from all this year's CDF funding in all five of  
the City Council's initiative is flooding to groups  
across the city to sustain their public programming.  
As you know, there were challenges in getting fund  
for the Council initiatives allocated on time this  
year, and as I said during testimony on this topic  
last month, the agency is committed to working with  
the Council to avoid any delays of this funding for  
next year. We have had several productive  
discussions regarding possible solutions with you  
Chair Van Bramer along with Council Finance. I'm  
confident that-that we can arrive at a solution  
before the beginning of Fiscal Year 2018. I'd also  
like to provide an overview of the agency programs  
and initiatives. [coughs] The FY 18 Cultural

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Development Fund applications for the next round of funding were due on February 13th for cultural programming taking place between July 1st 2017 and June 30th, 2018. We have nearly 800 applications that will go to panel and 364 groups on the multi-year renewal process. The panel review process, which involves close collaboration with the City Council will commence later this month. For the FY18 Capital applications, the deadline to apply for capital funding from the Mayor and City Council is coming up. So far the volume and amount of funding request appears to be on par with previous years. As part of our current budget we are [coughs] for the first time providing energy support for organizations that operate city-owned facilities under my agency's jurisdiction but not members of the Cultural Institution Group. From BRIC to Harlem stage to Prodenis (sic) Puerto Rican Traveling Theater. These are a diverse organization serving New York as across the city. The participating-the participating organizations have all been notified of their awards and are in the process of the returning the paperwork. They will receive their initial payments shortly. On the cultural plan, I want to thank you

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again for the opportunity of last month to present  
testimony at the full Council hearing on this—at a  
full Council hearing on this topic. Cultural Affairs  
staff stayed through the full hearing, and reported  
back to those who testified after me. We are still  
working towards publishing the draft recommendations  
at the end of April. We've participated in 195  
events to date. We've sent two surveys, one to the  
general public and one for artists and Cultural  
Affairs. Chair Van Bramer, we appreciate your  
support in co-hosting the discussion last month at  
the Museum of Moving Image last week. With NYCHA  
residents an amazing evening. Council Member  
Levinhurst (sic) did a workshop this past Saturday at  
the Park Church Co-Op in Green Point. DCLA was  
present for the entire event, and Council Member Koo  
joined us at a Flushing town hall—a Flushing town  
hall for bilingual Mandarin English Create NYC  
workshop earlier this week. We're entering into the  
last stretch of public engagement for the plan so if  
any are interested in hosting an event, let us know  
now. We have made major progress on DCLA's Workforce  
Diversity Initiative since publishing the report on  
our grantees in January 2016. We've activated more



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than \$4 million to his effort at connecting the  
city's cultural institutions to new pools of talent.  
We invested \$500,000 to help launch the CUNY Cultural  
Corps this year placing more than 70 graduates of  
CUNY's Service Corps and paid positions at cultural  
institutions across the city. Thanks to a matching  
grant of \$500, 000 from the Rockefeller Foundation  
bringing the total to \$1 million, this program is set  
to expand to dozens of additional cultural  
institutions later this year. Through the City's  
Theater Subdistrict Council, we are able to direct  
more than \$2 million towards programs at 11 groups  
and consortiums of theaters. These programs will  
connected unrepresented populations with careers in  
theater. These are good paying jobs often unionized.  
The study of employees at our cultural groups found  
that the theater community faced particularly tough  
challenges when it came to employing people from a  
variety of backgrounds. We have also consciously and  
consistently foregrounded disability. In our  
definition of diversity, we have taken meaningful  
steps to better address this at our agency. These  
include designating a Disability Service Facilitator  
and hiring a Disability Consultant for the Cultural

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Plan process. These positions have helped make our public events and our RFP process more inclusive, and we are creating a new position at the agency that will explicitly address disability arts and disability inclusion. In other recent news, my agency joined the Department of Veteran Services last week to announce our latest Public Artists and Residents, or PAAR and that is Brian Doerries who is the Artistic Director of Theater for War Productions. Theater for War Productions produces programs addressing the enduring impact of war and other community issues such as gun violence, mental health, addiction prison reform, sexual assault and domestic violence. Co produced by the Brooklyn Public Library, the residency will combine theater and public forums that engage both veterans and civilians. These communities' specific performances will foster health and healing through open discussion and exchange. The free performances will take place in more than 60 venues across New York City including public libraries with each of the projects tailored to the needs of different communities. The residency is being funded by the Southwest New York Festival(sic) Foundation. With public support for art and culture,

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an open question on the federal level, our  
collaboration with the Council and others dedicated-  
other dedicated partners is more important than ever.  
We thank you for this support, and look forward to  
continuing our work together to make sure that every  
New Yorker has access to the transformative benefits  
of arts and culture. I'm happy to answer any  
questions you any have at this time.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much, Commissioner, and I want to talk a little bit  
about the failure to baseline the increase and what  
you see as the need, and I realize that you as the  
Commissioner are in an interesting position, but you  
also probably know that one of your other colleagues,  
the DYCD Commissioner came here a couple of days ago  
and received some tough questioning about the degree  
to which he advocates for his own agency. So I-I  
want to ask you to expound a little bit about what  
that looks like for the Department of Cultural  
Affairs, and before I do that, acknowledge we've been  
joined by Council Member Elizabeth Crowley from the  
Commissioners I mentioned earlier, and I'm sure some  
of the other women on the committee will be joining  
us once they conclude from the steps of-of City Hall.

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So talk to me about those--those discussions what that looks like, and if--if you believe, as I do, that not only should we have that \$10 million restored and--and baselined, but--but actually increased?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So I think for of all that, of course, that \$10 million was added at adoption last year that we are at the beginning of this process. We expect to be working together as we year after year, and I will say that--that we did an analysis recently adjusted for inflation as to what the three last administrations had produced in terms of the cultural budget. And this is a product of everybody's work the Council's work, the administration's work and the amount of money adjusted for inflation from Giuliani to Bloomberg to de Blasio has stepped up each--in each administration. I'd be happy to share those numbers with you. So, I-- I want to say that that to me proves that, you know, that this administration does believe in--in--in arts and culture that the Mayor--that the first budget of this administration if we think back, and I know this is ancient history, but a couple of years ago that substantially reducing that idea of what the budget dance was, and again, this was a--a budget

1 recommendation by the outgoing Bloomberg  
2 Administration but adopted by the de Blasio  
3 Administration to baseline an enormous amount of  
4 money which had been the subject of the budget dance.  
5 So that last year was the first time in—in recent  
6 memory that there had been additional money outside  
7 of the great work that the Council has been doing  
8 that additional money for just that baseline support  
9 of general operating support or yearly (sic) funding.  
10 So every—everybody all of our grantees who got  
11 funding got more funding got more funding last year  
12 than they got the year before. So I'm—I'm just  
13 saying that I think that that demonstrates our  
14 commitment to arts and culture and that the work that  
15 we've done together over these last three years has  
16 been tremendous, and has been really the highest  
17 budgets that this agency has ever seen. So, that's  
18 my answer to that.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So having said,  
21 that, and I'd venture to see those numbers, the  
22 insulated adjusted numbers that you—that you spoke  
23 of, do you think it was a—a good thing, a wise  
24 investment that we added the operating support for  
25 culture last year?

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COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So I think  
that yes, of course, I do believe that, and I think  
that the agency—I mean that the agency disbursed it  
in a way that was fair and that the organizations  
that used the money, I think used it well.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Then, do you  
think that we should continue that funding at a bare  
minimum?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, what, you  
know, again I'm here to—to present the budget that  
exists and I look forward to working with you as we  
did last year, and as the groups in this room  
effectively worked on that together. We're  
continuing the process. This is where we stand.  
That's all I can say.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, I'm—I'm sure  
you can understand that there's a little bit of  
frustration. I mean I certainly understand that you  
are here to present the—the Mayor's Preliminary  
Budget for the agency that—that you are privileged to  
be the Commissioner. But it also certainly seems to  
me that you—you should be able to say negotiations  
notwithstanding and—and the outcome to be determined  
that the city of New York and the organizations that

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received of the bump in funding that that's a good  
thing for the city of New York and that that should  
continue.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So again, I  
mean I—I do think that that we have together again  
with the Council and together with the community  
successfully increased the budget of this agency in  
the ways it hasn't—haven't been before baselining the  
money at the beginning, putting the additional \$10  
million last year. I think the administration  
understands the value of arts and culture, and I  
think that the, you know, final results will be the  
story at then end of the day, but that the, you know,  
that coming into the budget with this robust budget  
is a baseline that is not seen in any other city in  
America that, you know, per capita San Francisco pays  
a-spends a little bit more based on a hotel tax, but  
it is a remarkable budget, and we look forward to  
working with you going forward. So, I mean that's  
similarly—similarly saying I do think that the  
organizations used it well. I think there's a lot of  
need in the cultural field, and I believe that, you  
know, there is also a lot of need elsewhere in the  
city budget, and we have to see how it all plays out

at the end of the day, but it was a, you know, a good result last year. The amount of money falling into the--the initiatives was fantastic and the additional \$10 million was highly welcomed in the cultural organizations. I've talked to scores of them this year, and--and again I--I think I used the money well.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So you think that it would be hurtful if the \$10 million were not to be restored and--and kept?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I think it was helpful that it was added. It was added as, you know, not a baseline addition. I think that, you know, some organizations have--have been very conscious of that. I talked to certain organizations that say, you know, we--and CIG. For example, I went to a board meeting and they said we put that money into a particular initiative. Actually, it was a debt reduction initiative because they weren't sure they were going to get it next year. So I think that the [coughs] money was extremely well used, that the cultural organizations in New York can use it and could use it again and we look forward to the--the process, and--and it's sort of interesting because people have referred to this again as a budget dance,



1 but it's a budget dance based on an increase not  
2 based on a cut, right? The budget dance in previous  
3 years if you go back five or six years was, you know,  
4 we're worried coming into this that the cuts that  
5 weren't baselined is an increase that wasn't  
6 baselined. Again, I know people are going to fight  
7 for it. I know people are going to testify on behalf  
8 of it, and I look forward to the process.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, I mean It--  
11 it certainly was--it was an increase, but given the  
12 fact that there hasn't been an increase for very long  
13 and given the fact that all of these folks are doing  
14 incredible work, and costs have risen. You know, one  
15 could--one could argue that it's --it's it was long  
16 overdue and--and really we're really just sort of  
17 catching up in some ways for our cultural, and you  
18 mentioned the City Council's cultural initiatives,  
19 which were obviously extremely proud that it's  
20 approaching \$30 million now, just the value of the  
21 City Council's cultural initiatives, an extraordinary  
22 jump over the last three years working with the  
23 Speaker. As the chair I'm really proud of--of that  
24 work, but just as we did with--with libraries there is  
25 sort of the--the belief that the core operating

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support for—for our cultural should—should really be  
baselined and—and I know the request last year was  
for 40 and—and—and it shall be again. Ultimately  
when—when we get to the place where that funding is  
in place and it's baselined, will we be where we need  
to be?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I mean I think  
that that's one of the big questions. This year also  
as cultural plan we had 196 meetings with over 10,000  
people in person and, you know, we all know that the  
budgets will be adopted by the time we actually issue  
the plan, but I think that the answer to that  
question will be clearer once the cultural plan is  
complete as well. Like [coughing] so what our—and—  
and with some studies and research that's going to be  
released very soon, I think we're really—we've never  
spent this much time as an agency listening to the  
needs of our constituents, and actually one of the  
things that's already come out of the Cultural Plan  
is that we need to do more of that going into the  
future. So I actually think that the comprehensive  
question—the answer to your question will come with  
the report on June 30th.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So you're not  
saying that we won't have—I'm sorry. You're not  
saying that—that the—the-what the cultural plan will  
tell us in terms of need, which won't come until  
after we've got the budget and, therefore, we won't  
know what we need until--?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: No, no I mean,  
yeah, yeah, in a way I'm saying that. I mean look  
the—there's a lot we already know, right? So you and  
I and many—most of the people in this room have been  
working on this stuff for years. So there's a lot of  
stuff that's coming out of the Cultural Plan that's  
stuff that we already understand. I'm saying that—  
that for me to say that, you know, I mean your  
question was with the \$40 million will that be  
sufficient because that can be, you know, if the \$40  
million happens, if it's baselined in some future  
year, would that answer the cultural needs of the  
city. I think that was your original question and  
my—my answer to that was we're listening intently  
about the cultural needs in every part of New York  
City, and I'll have a better answer to that. I'm not  
saying that I don't understand that there could be  
good uses put to that money just like the \$10

million. We didn't say we're not going to any money until after the Cultural Plan. We-the Administration, you know, again it's all collaboration with the Council. We put the \$10 million in there because that was felt to be a good use of public money in that fiscal year.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So it's conceivable that the Cultural Plan could come back, and we actually need more than \$40 million?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I am convinced that that will happen, but the question is what can we do? The question is what are the levels of priorities and how can we meet, and if we-if we answered every request that's being put forward to us in the Cultural Plan, yes, it would be a tremendous amount of new money. What are the-there's-there's want, there's need and there's sort of levels of needs and how many people are served?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right, so talk to me a little bit about the-the advocacy, if you will, that goes on. You know, is this-is this a topic of discussion with-with the Deputy Mayor, with the Mayor. Is-is-is the status of-of the \$10 million an active discussion point. Talk just a little bit

about that. Obviously, you can't share, and I'm not asking you to share, and I'm not asking you to share all of the--the nature of the discussions, but I think it's important for me and probably important for the community to know that this is on everyone's radar screen that you're making sure that it's everyone's radar screen within the administration and--and that there are folks who--who understand how important this is.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes, yes, I can absolutely assure you of that. I mean I meet with the--my boss is the First Deputy Mayor. I meet with on a very regular basis. We talk about the budget at every meeting especially in--after January 1<sup>st</sup>. So absolutely this on the radar screen. I've talked to a lot of other people in the administration. One of the things we've been doing with the Cultural Plan is also talk to many more people, more in-depth than we ever have done. So commissioners or other agencies are recognizing the cultural--the need for cultural programming within their agency. We had a conference with 14 people at DOHMH, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene last week all of whom have art as part of the portfolio of

responsibility. So, I think that the--spreading  
knowledge and the information and also understanding  
what is already happening in other agencies has never  
happened more. It's Administration 1. I think it's  
on the table.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Do you speak to  
the Mayor directly about this? I mean how-how-how-  
how engage is the Mayor in this directly? Obviously,  
you participate with Mayor Shorris and you--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --speak  
regularly but-but how-how engaged is the Mayor in  
this particular piece?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: He's engaged.  
I mean I, you know, I don't want to talk about, you  
know, individual discussions that-that absolutely the  
Mayor and his team the First Lady is a-a big cultural  
advocate, as you know, an important person to talk to  
about culture. On a very regular basis I talk to her  
as well. There are certain people within the Mayor's  
team that are very up-to-date and I talk to all the  
time about this. Yes.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So-so you feel  
confident that there's the-the access and the-the  
validation for what you're fighting for--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --in-in the  
administration?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I do.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And talk to me a  
little bit about how the additional funding was  
distributed and some of the formulas that you use--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yep.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --and-and were  
we to get \$20, \$30, \$40 million would you do the same  
thing, and-and what kind of results are you looking  
for with the formulas in particular that you're  
using?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay so I mean  
I can-I'll, you know, for the first part of the  
question, which is how do we use the \$10 million the  
additional \$10 million this year. So, as you know,  
it's split between-between the CIG and the program  
groups. Within the CIG half a million was carved out  
for the CUNY Cultural Corps and the other \$5 million

1 was distributed to the institutions. The large  
2 institutions got a smaller percentage increase a 6%  
3 increase, and the smaller ones got a 12% increase.  
4 Within the program groups, money was set aside for  
5 the energy money getting to the non-CIGs that are  
6 under our—you know, that we're—we're the landlord  
7 essentially ,and that was about a million dollars, a  
8 little bit less and they—that's all rolling out. And  
9 the other was distributed again with a formula that  
10 give more money to the smaller organizations than the  
11 bigger in terms of percentage of increase. And so I—  
12 I don't actually—that was a rather complicated  
13 formula, but it was essentially the same idea,  
14 smaller budget organizations got a larger percentage  
15 increase. So that's how this \$10 million was used.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And if you were  
18 to have at your disposal \$20, \$30, \$40 million, would  
19 you continue to use the same formula?

20 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah,  
21 probably. I think some version of that. Again, the  
22 idea of giving a higher percentage increase to  
23 smaller organizations was one that seemed to be fair,  
24 and good—good for—for the city. I am committed to  
25 pursuing the long-term value of the CUNY Cultural



Corps and the energy subsidy to the non-to the CIGs.  
This is all still under discussion that wasn't  
baselined, but the value of the CUNY Cultural Corps  
has been just tremendous. The kids in that--in that  
have been fantastic. I've gotten just reports even  
today of--of the value of those--our young people to  
the institutions. So these are--I'm a big CUNY  
champion and a graduate. So these are all things  
we'd like to do and--and we haven't put together  
formulas yet, but I mean that was something we  
carefully considered. It wasn't something where we  
just say, you know. So that would be again under  
consideration during the budget process.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Talk to me a  
little bit about the Capital Budget, and--ore the  
capital need and--and how we're addressing it.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yep.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Obviously you--  
you heard some of the testimony before where--where  
libraries are talking about some of those  
institutions are really falling apart or--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Uh-huh.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --or weak and  
things of that nature. Do you as the commissioner

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know of--of cultural organizations, institutions that  
are faced with similar issues? Is there in some ways  
a--a similar type of need, and--and desperation on the  
part of some cultural organizations to get some of  
that capital funding for--for not just great and  
wonderful expansions, which are necessary, but in  
some cases the--the ability to keep air and water--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --out?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah, and I--  
yes. So, you know, there is a tremendous need. I  
think that we have a robust budget for capital such  
as grants, \$152 million last year. I think there's a  
difference in the sense that the cultural  
institutions are, you know, aside--there's the 33  
city-owned institutions and the additional ones that  
are on city property, but the, you know, the other  
organizations we're looking at 200 organizations. I  
think my testimony said just short of that. So then,  
you know, 100 and [coughs] but 175 of them are on  
private property and they're privately owned. So I  
think that there's--it's a slightly different calculus  
to the libraries, which are, you know, vast--209 is

1 it? 209 branch libraries all over the city that are  
2 city-owned properties. We have a much smaller  
3 number. The other big difference is that the library  
4 system for the most part on an expense basis is paid  
5 for with city money, right? The-that is not true for  
6 the cultural sector. So the cultural sector if you  
7 look across the average at CIGs even, which are the  
8 most highly invested in by the city is I think 22% of  
9 the-the operating budget if your average CIG is city  
10 funded. So it's a very-it's a different formula.  
11 These are off-these are private non-profits that are  
12 all different in their needs, and the capabilities in  
13 terms of capital investment. So, it's a little bit  
14 different, but believe me when we look at these  
15 capital [coughs]-as you know, reviewing the capital  
16 needs of the cultural community that needs are  
17 tremendous. They're quite similar in some way, but I  
18 just think that that structure of ownership is  
19 different in that. Great. So, the maintenance of  
20 let's say a particular museum or-or a zoo-or-or a  
21 science institution, it's a different situation  
22 because they're private non-profit, largely privately  
23 funded.  
24  
25

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And are we doing  
enough and are we creating like a mechanism so that  
the smaller cultural can--can draw down capital--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --funding?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So that was--  
that was actually, if I may give credit to--

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]  
Yep.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: --to my  
predecessor. In this job, one of the big things that  
happened under the Bloomberg Administration was the  
democratization of the capital budget at the cultural  
institutions in New York City. If you go back a  
generation, all the money went to the CIG, and they  
began to crack a little bit under Giuliani and under  
Bloomberg. It's, you know, as people in this room  
may quite well know, we have a tremendous amount of  
cultural and--and by the way, That's everything from a  
new building for Weeksville Cultural Center to a new  
sound system to, you know, there's equipment  
purchases, which are also highly valuable to smaller  
cultural organizations. So, we do feel that--that

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it's-it's working, and that it's getting the money  
out to the organizations. It's getting the-the  
projects out to the organizations.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I have a few  
more questions, but I know Council Member Crowley  
would-would have a few questions as well so I'm going  
to let her go, and then I'll come back.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Good afternoon,  
Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Good  
afternoon.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: So when you-did  
the CIG's Report to you and so do they-do they break  
down their budget? Like when you said earlier that  
there was only an operating budget of like 22%--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: --and that's the  
most we cover for when--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
No, no, that's the average.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: And that's the  
average, but you know this because you see their  
operating budgets. Do they-do they send them to you?

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COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Right, yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: So you have more  
information about them than we have about libraries?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: That could be  
true. So by the way also I--just to be clear, we sit  
on the board of all of the Cultural Institution  
Group. So I'm officially--I'm a board member. I'm a  
board member of--

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing]  
The City sits on the Library Board. No, there are a  
lot of similarities. That's why I bring this up  
because--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: --all the  
libraries are city-owned properties, right, and--and I  
believe all your CIGs are--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Uh-huh.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: --and that's why  
they report to your agency.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes, correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: So why is it  
that your CIGs are opened on Saturday and Sundays and  
libraries are not?

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COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: You know, I-I  
can't comment on the library side of life. I-I would  
say that [coughs] the vast majority of our CIGs are  
open on Saturday and Sunday. I think that is when  
most of the attendance happens at a lot of cultural  
institutions.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: There is, too,  
for Saturdays at libraries, too. So when it comes to  
your Capital Budget, you only have about \$10 million  
in the next--am I reading that right? \$10 million in  
the next ten years?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, I know  
what you're referring to, which is the Ten-Year  
Capital Plan.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So the--we have  
talked to--to OMB about this a lot. So we don't  
anticipate having years where there's only \$10  
million of capital money available. What we know is  
that it's a real year-to-year situation. So [coughs]  
the library system or let's say, you know, another  
agency in the city government might have a capital  
plan, right? We don't have a capital plan in the  
same way because we look at it year to year. We

1 don't--the Metropolitan Museum of Art or Weeksville  
2 Cultural Center or another--the Brooklyn Children's  
3 Museum might have a capital plan. These are private  
4 non-profits that have facility plans and, you know,  
5 so we look at it on a year-to-year basis. We've got  
6 a very robust capital budget under this  
7 Administration as they did under the last  
8 administration as well. So we do not anticipate that  
9 being in, but we can't put in but we can't put in a  
10 number because we don't have a capital plan for the  
11 facilities because even if they're city-owned,  
12 they're not managed by us. Do you see what I'm  
13 saying? The--

14  
15 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing]  
16 But can't you ask your institutions to give you at  
17 least a five-year capital plan?

18 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So I mean,  
19 look, we're working with 200 different institutions  
20 right now. Some have plans and some have--some don't  
21 to--we--we feel like the system--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing]  
23 Yeah, I'm really--sorry--sorry. I'm really focusing on  
24 the ones that are city-owned land.  
25



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COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay, the-the  
CIG. So I mean what we feel is that we have-we have  
a very open process. We meet with lots of  
organizations around this time of year. We  
understand year-to-year what the needs are. I  
actually think the system is working well. We might  
get testimony to the contrary, but I do think it is  
working well [coughs] that we are able to assess and  
then with-in collaboration with the City Council and  
the borough presidents put in money for the-for the  
most important projects, the most pressing projects  
across the city, and it's a robust budget.

COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [pause] I don't-  
I don't have any other questions. Thank you for--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
Okay, thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much, Council Member Crowley. Commissioner, talk to  
us about the-the cultural initiatives and how you  
feel they are performing and-and are we-are we  
collectively doing a better of reaching more people  
and creating more equity and-and-and distributing  
these funds in a-in a more fair and just way?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So I'm a big fan of a lot of these initiatives, all the initiatives. I think they're great. I think the fact that they're spread across the Council districts the way that they are is—is a great avenue to reaching all corners of the city. We had a [coughs]—we've had a researcher working on—on doing some—she's a graduate student at the City University. [coughs] And I think that—that the—what happens is both the CDF funding and with the Cultural Initiatives is that it actually fills in a lot of holes that are not. For example, the Department of Education let's say the distribution of arts education across the city, which by the way, interestingly enough, it isn't correlated with low-income communities getting less service. Actually, that's quite a good finding. I'm very happy to hear that, but there still are holes in the map of where the Department of Education is able to reach all the schools. So both the City Council and initiative and CDF funding are really filling in a lot of those holes. So I do think that it's widely distributed. Every corner of the city has it, and I think that actually fills in a lot of—of holes.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And the \$92 million for arts and--and education, you've been I know involved in--in how that money has in some ways been disbursed.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Obviously, it's-- it's a chance for Forenia (sp?)

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing] Yep.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --leading the charge with that, but talking about how you think that's been helpful, and obviously the need for that to be continued?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes. So I mean the--the arts education budget overall I think is \$368 million for the--so it's more than the entire Cultural Affairs budget including capital. But, you know, that somebody said to me yesterday, did you know that one out of 300 people in America is a public school student in New York city. That was an interesting statistic. There's a lot of people. They have a lot of needs. I have no criticism of the amount of money that's being spent, the \$24 million that was added by this administration has been well

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and effectively used. The other thing and again I'm--  
I'm not here to testify on behalf of DOE, but they  
have 290 more certified arts teachers in the public  
school system than they did three years ago. That's  
fantastic. That's the basis, it's the foundation.  
So I'm very happy with the way it's being spent on  
very--

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

And some of our cultural organizations have received  
funding and have been involved in that. No? I mean--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes, so there  
were cultural organizations involved in training the  
teachers, et cetera. Absolutely, but [coughs] I-I'm  
very much in contact with Paul King who runs the arts  
enterprise for the public school system. We're on  
his committee. We see him all the time. Great  
communication.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Council Member  
King.

CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you,  
Commissioner. Forgive--forgive my voice. I just have  
one quick question. In the scope of the funding that  
you have for cultural programs I don't know--I'd like  
to get a listing of your cultural programs in all of

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our districts so I can tap in to know what cultural  
programs that exist in my district with all the  
council members as well. But how do you assess the  
timing where you're going to open up any new sites,  
or whatever funding that you have? How do you  
determine where you go that you have cultural like  
I've-I've here see here between the Dance Theater of  
Harlem--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: --the Bronx Arts  
Center-River Arts System that you're doing the  
reconstruction. How do you all determine if you're-  
where you're going to open up new centers or sites  
like that?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So these are  
based on those organizations make capital requests to  
the agency, and often-and so those are, you know,  
independent non-profit organizations. We're not  
going to them and saying we've got a space. The  
answer is the pilot comes to us and says we have  
space that has a capital need. It's going to serve  
the city in such and such a way, and we assess it on  
the basis of a set of criteria, which has to do a

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public service. Accessibility for people who are  
handicapped, or people with disabilities. The—and  
also there's sort of that green, you know, energy  
savings sort of initiatives are—are with it as well.  
Each of the organizations around this time of year  
makes an application to us. We end up with a lot  
more applications than we, you know, can and sort of  
base on analysis done, and there's a collaboration  
with the City Council [coughs] who has a lot of, you  
know, capital money as well for the cultural  
institutions. The final determination is made by  
each and put together with the borough president to—  
to fund the projects. So it's—it's applications to  
us that I think is essentially the answer.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, so they  
really, okay I got it. So application for those  
programs or sites that exist--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
Uh-huh.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: --but you're not  
into as if creating new sites?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay. Alright,  
thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much, Council Member King and Council Member Crowley.  
So obviously this is the Preliminary Budget and we  
have a ways to go, but I'm sure that we'll be hearing  
from many, many advocates in a few minutes--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]  
Sure.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --about the  
incredible need for appropriate levels of funding for  
the arts, and that's given all of the victories that  
we've--we've had and shared together over the last few  
years, which are real and--and meaningful and  
substantial and I'm--I'm enormously proud of that, and  
that includes our recently increased Percent for Art  
Law. So we are seeing a lot of forward movement, but  
we--we desperately need to increase the Operating  
Budget and the Capital Budget for culture and the  
arts in the city of New York. So, I want to thank  
you again, Commissioner, for your patience--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: That's fine.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --and your--your  
decency, as it relates to some of the citizen  
activists who--who were here a little earlier and look  
forward to working with you to put as much pressure

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as we can on some of the folks that you work with,  
and we all work with to make sure that great things  
happen for all the people that you and I both  
represent and fight for everyday. So thank you.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Commissioner  
Finkelpearl, you are free to leave or listen to as  
much testimony as you'd like. So I'm going to call  
the next panel. We one incredibly stalwart library  
advocate who was bumped and--and waited. So we are  
going to hear from Marissa Richardson first, but also  
I want to bring up the first cultural panel with  
Marissa. She'll go first, and then she can either  
listen to lots of great cultural testimony or she can  
depart. But Marissa is going to be joined by Carl  
Goodman representing the Cultural Institutions Group;  
Katherine Green representing Arts East New York; Lisa  
Levy from the Center for Arts Education and Jenny  
Lolitas from Art New York. There are five chairs  
there. Please assemble. We will have Marissa go  
first because she was an incredibly good sport, and  
then we'll go down the line right there. Then we  
have a few more panels after that. We'll do five at  
a time. Okay, three more panels after that. It is



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not that much. We're going to go to three-minute  
clock and ask all of you to be concise, and again  
thank you for representing Urban Librarians Unite and  
feel free to begin.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Turn on the mic first.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Please turn on  
your mic. The little button in front of you.

MARISSA RICHARDSON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: There you go.

MARISSA RICHARDSON: Alright. Hello,  
good afternoon. My name is Marissa Richardson. I am  
a member of the leadership of Urban Librarians Unite.  
I'd like to thank the Chair of the committees and the  
Speaker for the opportunity to speak here today. I am  
here to speak on the organization's behalf and it is  
lovely to see you here today as we once again ask you  
to increase funding for libraries in New York City.  
I would like to reiterate the numbers. We are in  
line with the libraries asking for \$34 million in  
operating funds and \$120 million in capital funds.  
Representatives of the libraries have laid out the  
need very carefully in giving you details about the  
hours we will gain and the access to the people of  
New York City will have. This extends out to farther

neighborhoods of New York City that perhaps aren't pretty and have two lines in the front. There will be calls for us to have more books or less books or different books, but that's not really what I want to talk about today. I have a little bit more freedom in what I can than some of my colleagues, and I'm going to get right to the heart of the matter. As you must give libraries this funding because [pause] we desperately need funding for the fabric of democracy that we are facing currently in our political climates. Propaganda is on the rise. Hate crimes and bigotry are increasing. Fake news is incredibly confusing and hiding the truth daily. Educating—education is being bought and sold and history seems to suddenly have become a fluid concept, and you know where none of that is true is the library. The library becomes a place where we can to the root of information about what is currently going on in the world and how we as citizens can organize and take action. Very quickly, libraries have become the people's university with increased attention to adult learning and senior programming. Libraries quickly become our great equalizer in times where all you need to access that information is a little bit

of plastic, which fits conveniently in your pocket,  
and the funny part is is if you lose that plastic,  
there is, in fact, an app for it in all three library  
systems. Above all, we have to consider what  
increased funding would look like to the quality of  
life in New York City. With \$34 million of operating  
fees, the door to libraries across New York City can  
remain open with Sunday service, which his a huge  
boon for working families and with \$120 million in  
capital funding means that we can offer our patrons  
safe and accessible and warm buildings to enter every  
time they come to the library for decades, and I'm  
going to make the wild assumption that we're all here  
because we want to make our city a better place.  
Yes? [background comments] Yes, you folks work  
behind the scenes to make my job possible, and you  
don't get to see what I see everyday in my work.  
[coughing] The library, though, your work as well as  
mine unshackles the minds of our citizens and shows  
them new horizons in our lives and their communities,  
and I would like to work together with you to help  
the library help New York City as a whole. And thank  
you s much for your time. [bell] Oh, wow, that was  
perfect.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That—that was  
perfect in every way, Marissa. Thank you so much  
for—for being a good sport and for hanging out and -  
and for joining this—this—this cultural panel. It's  
like you're in interesting territory, but they're—  
they're good people as you—as you probably know.

MARISSA RICHARDSON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Libraries and  
culture go together and make wonderful—wonderful  
partners, and as you probably know, Urban Librarians  
United is one of my favorite organizations.  
Christian and Lauren are really, really good friends,  
and have done great work. So thank you. As you  
already heard, I—I support you 1,000%.

MARISSA RICHARDSON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So I am going to  
ask Marissa because I—I am told that Andrea Louie is—  
is going to be testifying in some ways with Carl  
Goodman right to your left. So if you would Marissa  
take a seat, but you're done. So you can head out,  
and Andrea Louie is going—we're going to call Andrea  
Louie up to sit in your seat.

MARISSA RICHARDSON: Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much for being here. Feel free to listen to as much  
cultural testimony as you would like. They're--  
they're great folks, but Andrea is going to join and  
then I will allow Carl to go first, and then you'll  
all work out the five of you together how you're  
going to do this. Than you very much.

CARL GOODMAN: Right. Block paper  
scissors. Before I--before I start I--I'd just say we  
have a number of employees at the Museum of the  
Moving Image. With library sciences backgrounds we  
work very closely with libraries where funded through  
many projects through the Mellon Foundation. It also  
works for--on software that we're developing with  
libraries and it's just a really a pleasure and honor  
to be group together with them on this day, and must--  
as it must be an honor for you to be able to  
represent and fight for both. I'm Carl Goodman,  
Executive Director of the Museum of the Moving Image,  
and current Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group  
or the CIG. I'm here today to provide testimony on  
behalf of the CIG's Coalition of 33 cultural  
institutions on city-owned land and located in all  
five boroughs of the city. First, I want to

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acknowledge, you, the Council's vital support for  
culture and the arts in the city, support that yields  
monumental return on investment for all of its  
residents through the education of its children,  
adults, seniors and social services for those with  
the greatest need, support for small businesses, and  
the enrichment of the city's tax base. We are  
especially grate to the Council and the  
administration for last year's one-time \$10 million  
increase to the DCLA budget, which was split evenly  
between the CIGs and the cultural organizations  
receiving funding through the cultural development  
fund, which we affectionately call the program  
groups. And let's also not overlook the Council's  
tremendous expansion with existing programmatic  
initiatives that allow artists and cultural  
organizations to better serve school students,  
seniors and immigrants. We run four such programs  
funded by Council Member Van Bramer, and it's just a-  
a wonderful thing that's a very important part of our  
mission. This the third year that we have worked  
with the program groups to advocate for increased  
resources for culture and the arts. Our joint  
advocacy is not merely strategic. It's born out of a

deep natural longstanding and growing connection  
between and among CIGs and program groups. As the  
Council determines its budget priorities for 2018, I  
am pleased to join with my colleagues the CIG and the  
program groups in support of a \$40 million increase  
to the DCLA budget to be—to be split evenly just like  
last year between the CIGs and the program groups.  
Included in this \$40 million, we asked that the city  
consider baselining the \$10 million increase that we  
received last year, as you discussed earlier. So  
very quickly and I'm sorry I took a lot of notes and  
I need to say certain things. How do we leverage the  
funds? We offer 37,200 on-site programs to 4.1  
million participants. The programs integrate with  
many, many other city agencies and offices. We are  
an agency of interagency collaboration within the  
city, NYCHA, Immigrant Affairs, Crisis Management,  
Department of Education. The Queens Museum New  
Yorkers program work specifically with immigrants to  
do skill building, literacy, art making classes  
taught by teaching artists in native tongue. To  
newly arrived adult immigrants, the museum offers  
programs involving film screenings for young student  
immigrants around the film *The Immigrant* by Charlie

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Chaplin will be discussed, the first wave of  
immigration and its relation to today. We work with  
2-1/2 million school children many of whom or most of  
whom are in public schools meaning that most school  
children visit one or more cultural institutions per  
year. We also provide opportunities for life long  
learning to residents of all ages, a tremendous  
program. For instance [bell] Carnegie Hall's Lullaby  
Program. We create jobs. We have over 13-7,000 full  
and part-time employees in all through the city  
including union positions. The-over 10% of the CIG  
employees actually reside in Council Member King's  
district, interesting Steven Levin a close second, a  
Council Member Van Bramer. The rents are too damn  
high and-and I hope to be able to along with you to  
increase your numbers. [laughs] And we support-we  
support merging established New York City based  
artists through employment opportunities and  
programs. The program from the Hall of Science, the  
Museum of Natural History among others, Advanced  
Technical Literacy among youth, and our breeding  
ground for future scientists and technology industry  
workers. We service incubators for the development  
of emerging and mid-career artists. For instance a



growing NYC tech start-up will allow the Museum of the Moving Image to award \$40,000 to 18 artists who will create animated work for the museum's elevator. The elevator moves up and down because of the support from the city of New York and, in fact, part of that \$10 million, \$4.5, some of it went to repair that elevator. Then we get third parties to fund the rest of it, and the fact is that of every dollar we get from the city here at the museum, we raise about seven, and the same is true across the CIGs. We are affordable with many institutions offering free days. There is suggested rather than required admission. Even before IDNYC memberships 35% of our visitors attended for free. We have a strong and direct impact on the city economy. We spend \$364 million on local vendors on goods and services, that's a drop in the bucket to what our visitors spend on small businesses in the area. Now this is important. With the potential abolishment of or severe cutbacks to a number of federal agencies that provide funding for many of our programs like the National Endowment for the Humanities Funding for the Muslim Voices Program at the Museum of the City of New York and many others. Increased support from the City helps to

1 fill the gap, and sends a powerful message to the  
2 rest of this nation that the arts and culture are not  
3 merely an amenity. They are a necessity. Now, in  
4 the three months ahead, each and every council member  
5 will be hearing from us--you're going to be sick of  
6 us--so you can better understand why the requested  
7 increase of \$40 million split between the CIGs and  
8 the Program groups will directly benefit their  
9 constituents. For the museum, the full amount will  
10 mean we can open on Tuesdays, and more important,  
11 each and every Council Member will be hearing  
12 directly from their constituents, and to learn about  
13 the invaluable life changing and life affirming  
14 cultural experiences, not to mention the jobs that we  
15 provide. Thank you for the extra time.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, Karl,  
18 and let me just say I spent a lot of time with all of  
19 you, and no one will ever get sick of seeing you.  
20 [laughter] I'm pretty sure I can attest to that on  
21 behalf of all of my colleagues, who I'm sure will  
22 look forward to hearing from all of their  
23 constituents on--on this issue. So thank, Carl, for  
24 the work that you do, and is Andrea testifying next,  
25 and then we'll go down line if that's okay?

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ANDREA LOUIE: Great. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And we're going  
to—we're going to adhere a little bit more to three-  
minute rule. Because Carl is in my district, we gave  
him a little bit extra time.

Ah, right. Duly noted.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I'm just joking.  
I'm just joking for everyone who is not in my  
district. [laughter]

ANDREA LOUIE: Yes, well, in honor of  
International Women's Day, I'm very pleased and  
honored to be the first woman to speak on the  
Cultural Affairs panel. So thank you for that. Yes,  
the Majority Leader Van Bramer and members of the  
committee, please accept my deepest appreciation to  
give testimony today—today regarding the Fiscal 18  
Budget for the New York City Department of Cultural  
Affairs. As you know, my name is Andrea Louie and  
the Asian-American Arts Alliance is a proud grantee  
of DCLA and for 35 years has supported individual  
artists and small arts groups across the five  
boroughs of New York. I'm also proud to share that  
I'm one of the co-chairs of the newly formed Citywide  
Arts Advocacy group New Yorkers for Culture and Arts,

which is a union of the New York City Arts Coalition and One Percent for Culture. I know that you'll be hearing testimony specifically from New Yorkers for Culture and Arts later today. I join my non-profit arts colleagues including Carl to ask for a funding increase of \$40 million to be equally divided between the Cultural Institutions Group and the Cultural Development Fund. The increase would allow more New Yorkers from each of the Council's districts to be better served by arts and cultural activities thus transforming lives and increasing the diversity of all the stories that deserve to be told, heard and honored in our community. Certainly, there is no great time than now for us as a city to support diversity, and a multiplicity of views to the power of arts and culture. To that end, the Alliance supports the Asian-American Cultural Workforce in New York welcoming all who identify as having roots from the Pacific Islands through the Middle-East including North Africa. Forty-seven percent of our community are New Americans. While Asian-Americans make up more than 15% of the city's population and are the fastest growing racial and ethnic group, they remain underrepresented across nearly all disciplines.

Also, according to the DCLA Diversity Study last year, Asian-Americans also only make up 7.3% of the staff and 3.78% of the leadership at our arts and cultural organizations. While all of us deeply benefit from the impact of organizations that make up the CIGs, it is also the small community based arts organizations that work directly in neighborhoods serving people where they live and work. And a great many of these serve New York's most marginalized including communities of color. More than a third of all DCLA grantees have annual operating budgets less than \$100,000 and are disproportionately reliant on government funding making them particularly vulnerable to whatever happens as the outcome of these budget hearings. The Alliance was privileged to hear many such voices just on Monday at our community convening to inform the city's cultural plan process at the newly renovated Elmhurst Library, a program that was generously supported by Council Member Peter Koo as part of the Cultural Immigrant Initiative. All who attended were deeply engaged and deeply invested in the city and the role that arts and culture can play in the neighboring individuals, families and neighborhoods to thrive. We are

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grateful for your leadership and the \$10 million  
increase to this year's budget, but more than ever  
there is still so much to do. I urge the New York  
City Council to increase expense funding for FY18 to  
DCLA by \$40 million so that organizations like the  
Alliance can continue to expand [bell] our work.  
Thank so much.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Perfect in so  
many ways, Andrea, and as always, not only did you  
come in right at three minutes, but you mentioned the  
new Elmhurst Library, which is really an incredible  
job.

ANDREA LOUIE: It was incredibly  
beautiful and we were honored to have our community  
there.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: It's a stunning  
facility, that I got to work on before I even got  
elected, and you can combined the Cultural Immigrant  
Initiative in your testimony, which I can never hear  
enough stories about how folks use the Cultural  
Immigrant Initiative, and when folks come and testify  
and mention that they received it, and how they used  
it, it is among the highlights of my day every single

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time someone says something about the Cultural  
Immigrant Initiative. So thank you very much. Next.

SAMUEL MANNING: Great. Good afternoon.  
My name is Samuel Manning. I'm here on behalf of  
Katherine Green. Katherine Green—

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]  
Please send her our love.

SAMUEL MANNING: Will do.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: She is one of  
our favorites.

SAMUEL MANNING: Well, great.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: She's amazing.

SAMUEL MANNING: That's great to hear,  
and I'll—I'll do that.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes,

SAMUEL MANNING: Certainly. Chairman Van  
Bramer and members of the committee, my—for the past  
eight years, we have worked tirelessly to build  
strong cultural infrastructure in East New York  
Brooklyn, a community providing access and  
affordability to high quality programming for the  
residents for the residents we serve. We have found  
that this is only possible by addressing social and  
economic challenges that our constituents face in

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everyday lives. Therefore, we utilize the arts as a nucleus that affect the various issues that hinder the growth of our beloved neighborhood. We focus on three kick-key areas: Economic development, health disparities, environmental sustainability as well as community life and safety. Using arts and cultures as a mechanism for radical change. I'm h ere today to join my colleagues with the Cultural Committee to ask for funding to increase of-provide \$40 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs to equally divide between the CIGs, the Cultural Development Fund for grant making. These funds will provide DLCA with fiscal capacity to increase funding for a current funded institutions and organization including underfunded groups at the five boroughs, arts councils, which administer re-grant programs, which serve individual artists and local cultural organizations in a wide and more diverse array of socially underserved communities and grantees. These funds will also allow us at Arts East New York to expand our program model. Thus, providing access and opportunity to more community members. Our current program allows us to reach a variety of residents in several ways. Our summer outdoor performance event



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series provides access to free cultural performance  
such as the Chinese ribbon dancing, the Japanese  
drumming, South African choir ensembles and dozens  
more. Artistic performances that families would  
otherwise have to travel far and pay high fees in  
order to expose—expose their children to. These  
events are staged at our own East New York Farmer's  
Market where after the show residents have the  
opportunity to shop with local gardeners. This only  
helps the families to assist in also healthy living  
and practices, and also circulate the dollars in our  
community. Our Renew Lots Vendors Market and Artist  
Incubator Partnership with New York City Department  
of City Planning and Small Business Services provides  
opportunities to local entrepreneurs and artists  
alike with affordable storefronts, retail and studio  
space made from recycled shipping containers. It  
also serves as a cultural hub for neighbors to engage  
as well as tremendous economic impact by hiring local  
youth to the lead tours, attracting tourism dollars  
to the community economy—to the economic community  
economy. And last, education. As we are currently  
hold After School in Arts East New York Youth  
program, Youth University for young adults at East

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New York Family Academy, Saturday music and arts  
classes and summer camp programs for youth. With the  
proposed funding increase these programs can double  
to impact to making East [bell] New York, Brooklyn, a  
place once identified with poverty, crime, and  
deprivation and resources an oasis of opportunity for  
existing community residents that have held it  
together over the years. Those very same residents  
who created gardens from abandoned city lots and mom  
and pop shops that hire local residents and  
organizations that take guns out of the hands of  
youth, and replace them with opportunity in spite of  
being ignored by city budget allocations. These are  
the beneficiaries you must consider when negotiating  
this \$40 million investment of resources that we're  
asking you to consider today. Once again, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much and I really appreciate—appreciate you bringing  
home the message of how incredibly important this  
funding is, and that we're not just talking about  
extravagances or [coughing] or—or luxuries, but  
actually talking about life and death and making the  
difference in—in keeping people well. So thank you  
very much for that. Lisa Levy is our next, Jenny.

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LISA LEVY: Thank you. My name is Lisa  
Levy and I am the Director of Advocacy and Engagement  
for the Center for Arts Education. Thank you to  
Chair Van Bramer, the staff and the rest of the  
committee for inviting us to testify. I recently  
joined CAE. So this is my first opportunity to  
testify before this committee. I'm excited to be  
here today with some familiar and friendly faces.  
Because of my work as an advocate, I am fully aware  
that many of you care a lot about cultural arts as  
well as education. So I will try to be brief as I  
tell you a bit about what brought me here today. I  
wondered despite the fact that many of us have been  
here in City Hall numerous times have we really  
looked around at the landmarked building with its  
quotes from wise people like Abraham Lincoln, murals,  
statues, carvings and cornices. Many of us consider  
ourselves fortunate because we live in New York City  
surrounded by arts and culture. We have world class  
museums, theater, Broadway, architecture, music and  
dance venues, which attract visitors from around the  
world. Yet many of New York City's public school  
students do not have access to these institutions  
because of financial reasons. We do have policies

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for which we can thank this committee and this  
Council, which have helped bring positive change.  
Thanks to funding from the Council and this  
Administration in the first year and a half of IDNYC  
alone, according to a report released recently by the  
Mayor, more than 400,000 memberships with cultural  
institutions were initiated. We also thank the  
Council for New York City's first cultural plan,  
which is currently in the works. This an exciting  
opportunity to incorporate ideas about arts, heritage  
and culture from members of the community, from every  
part of the city to encourage participation, counter  
inequity and strengthen civic engagement. Last, we  
acknowledge the investment of \$92 million in our  
public schools over four years beginning in 2014,  
which allowed more than 250 arts teachers to be hired  
in just the last two academic years. This money will  
expire next year, and so for the momentum of academic  
achievements to continue, this funding must be  
renewed, and I appreciate the fact that it was  
mentioned earlier. So thank you. All of these  
initiatives are valuable and reach so many New  
Yorkers, many of whom could not otherwise be able to  
access arts and culture. But here's the thing,

without continued funding, they won't continue.

Today, along with many other organizations, we respectfully request that DCLA's budget be increased by \$40 million. Arts, architecture, music, dance, theater and digital media. I'm sure I don't have to convince you that these things are important, and with sufficient funding we will be able to ensure that the doors of creativity and the arts remain open for New York City's kids. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much, and you set the record. You came in under time.

LISA LEVY: Well, it's—it's Women's Day. So, you know.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Fair enough.

LISA LEVY: That is so standard.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Alright, Jenny to close out this panel.

JENNY LOLITAS: It will save time. First of all, I'm going to deviate from my prepared testimony, if you don't mind, and what I'd like to do is give the top nine reasons why I think we need to baseline the \$10 million, and why we need the \$40

million in addition. First of all I want to give my tremendous respect and thanks to the City of New York to Commissioner Finkelpearl, and especially to you and the City Council. On January 18th we opened the Art New York Theaters, which were filled up completely by the city of New York and that was a landmark for my 25 years at Art New York and First Field, and for that I thank you, but there are a number of reasons why we need to baseline this money, and I'm not in a political position so I can say things. So number one: Rising costs to pay rent, salaries, union salaries, wood for sets, costumes, et cetera every day. I mean every year costs go up, and the increase that we get from Cultural Affairs is not keeping up with the cost of living. It's certainly not happening at state level, and we all know the AMA (sic) is about to be dismantled. For those of us who are not representing—who do not work for the CIGs we don't have retirement programs. Some of us can have our own retirement funds, but I have to tell you that most people who lead arts organizations most founders are working 'til they're dead. We lost Miriam Colon at the age of 81 on Friday. She was the Executive—she was the Artistic Founding Director of the Puerto

Rican Traveling Theater. She was still working.  
Many people in their 70s are still working. I will  
be working to my 70s. That's why I got my new hit.  
Staff salaries. Here's another problem. We can't  
keep up with the wealthier organizations. So we lose  
people. We don't have enough money. Our cost of  
living salaries of 3% are really not doing it, and  
I'm not even giving myself a cost of living raise  
sometimes. So we have to understand that we need to  
baseline this money because costs are going up and  
rent is just one of them. Federal situations. I've  
experienced so much anxiety because of I recently had  
my hip replaced so I was home a lot to read the  
newspaper, and there's nothing worse than reading  
about Donald Trump when you're trying to get better.  
I'm really, really worried. He has dismantled every  
social program that means something, and I'm not even  
talking about the OATH.(sic) I'm talking about the  
fact that the White House website is not multi-  
lingual. I'm talking about the fact that LGBT youth  
are not being considered and their rights are not  
being considered. I'm—I'm concerned about the  
planet. I'm concerned about the fact that we have  
attorney general who lied under oath. I could go on,

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but when those funds disappear from NYCHA for social  
services, for immigration, we're going to have to  
fight for our own dollars, and we can talk about how  
important we are as a collaborator with those  
services, and as arts and education [bell] but I'm  
concerned, and this is something we have to think  
about. And I think it's—I'm not the only one there.  
If you can give me a few more minutes. The Cultural  
Survey on Diversity, 12 organizations got funding,  
but I want you to know that there are many other  
organizations that did the right thing without city  
funding. They're investing in diverse to find their  
staff. My organization did that as well, and I'm  
proud to say we're working on a initiative to Doors  
to buy Boards. (sic) The democratization of capital  
funding began with the Giuliani Administration. I  
know because the two sample groups were my own in the  
Roundabout Theater Company. The problem is when you  
give small organizations capital money, you need to  
give them money to maintain the buildings. It's not  
enough to build it. You have to have money when the  
boiler breaks. You have to have money to pay the  
higher air conditioning costs. That's number 9.  
Number 10 is for you, Jimmy. The Cultural



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Immigration Initiative worked for one of my members  
called the National Asian-American Theater Company  
that had their 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary production called  
Sagittarius Ponderosa about a transgender youth who  
returned home when his father was dying. That  
funding made that show possible. So thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Wow. Thank you  
for—for everything, but I certainly am—am moved by—by  
the story you just told about that Cultural Immigrant  
Initiative grant. So let me just say to all five of  
you it's incredibly important that we get this  
funding. Obviously, at a minimum of baselining the  
\$10 million so that folks don't get a cut, which  
would be insane and then baselining whatever we get  
so people know what they're getting every year, and  
they don't have wonder should I hire a new person or  
do a new program. But I can't plan for that going  
forward. So I won't go too far. That's not good  
planning and that's not efficient. That doesn't work  
for us. Your value is clear. The mission is—is  
real, and you have my continued and undying support.  
So I want to thank all five of you for being here and  
for the work that you do, and the power cases you  
made for the \$40 million, and for all of your

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colleagues who are not here today. So thank you very  
much to this incredible panel. We have—

SAMUEL MANNING: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: We have two more  
panels that are going to speak I think to—to—to more  
general issues, and then we have a couple of panels I  
think of folks who—who particularly want to talk  
about one particular project and we're going to hear  
from all those folks together. So I'm going to hold  
the Community United folks to the end so all of you  
can be together. I think there is seven of you who  
are registered to testify, but we'll continue on for—  
for now with Kat Parker. Is Kat Parker here from the  
League of Dependent-Independent Peers. Come up, Kat,  
you're—you're up on the big seat. Is Isabel also  
testifying from the League of Independent? Rosabell  
Quizanos, Fran Garber. Is Fran Garber still with us?  
Yep. You're up Fran from the Regina Opera company  
and Amy Fiore. Is Amy Fiore still here from TADA,  
who we love, TADA, and then Heather Woodfield? Is  
Heather still here? Right. So we'll hear from this  
panel, and there are two others, Marta Morena Vega  
and David Johnson who will testify together after  
this panel, and then we will to the one or two panels

on Community United. [pause] So, League of  
Independent Theaters will only have one person  
testifying. So why don't we ask Marta Moreno Vega to  
join this panel, and then David, you may have your  
own panel to yourself. That's just—that's it's  
before we hear from the Community United folks. So  
Marta will join this panel. Thank you. The League  
of Independent Theaters for having one person  
testify. It helps us get more folks in more quickly,  
but why don't you go forward and start the testimony  
in this panel.

KAT PARKERS Alright, thank you so much.  
I did want to take a quick moment to say how  
impressed I am that everybody is wearing read in  
support today, and for the process that happened  
outside earlier. So thank you for that. Thank you  
certainly to you, Mr., the Chairman Jimmy Van Bramer.  
We first meet and to the entire committee for the  
opportunity to testify today. My name is Kat Parker.  
I'm with the League of Independent Theater. The  
league is a 501(c)(6) political avocy—advocacy  
organization. We are the only one that is—and we are  
testifying today on behalf of the city's 50,000  
independent theater artists, 86% of whom vote. I am

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here today to join with the other members of the  
cultural community to ask for a funding increase of  
\$40 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs to  
be equally divided between the Cultural Institutions  
Group, and the Cultural Development fund for grant  
making. The cultural funding in New York, as you  
know, suffered a series of cuts during and after the  
2008 Financial Crisis at a time when other sources of  
funding public and private were also being cut back  
and withdrawn. The budget has never returned to that  
2008 level in real terms or as a percent of the City  
budget although the City Council has fought for the  
increases over the last few years, which we  
appreciate tremendously. Now we're facing a new  
crisis. The federal government is targeting the rich  
culture of our city in retaliation for attempting to  
keep an open inclusive community. The National  
Endowment for the arts is fighting for its survival  
but cuts may hit the arts in other ways. The New  
York City Housing Authority has already seen at least  
\$35 million in cuts, and many other programs may see  
similar cuts that impact the arts. For example, cost  
of cultural exchange funding or increased visa  
requirements. We still don't know how bad the pain

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will be for our community particular for the smallest  
and most diverse independent arts organizations  
through the five boroughs. The independent artists  
that basically volunteered their time to bring the  
arts out into the boroughs and to people on an  
affordable level. On the plus side, the contrast  
between our portions nationally—nationally and  
locally couldn't be starker. New York we know that  
strong cultural institutions allow more stories to be  
told, more ideas to be heard and more people to be  
included. This summer the city will be adopting a  
cultural plan asked for this council. It speaks to  
the hope of an even more robust, diverse and exciting  
cultural exchange. We call for the City Council to  
continue its commitment to all of the beautiful,  
vibrant exchanges of theater, dance, comedy, music,  
art and more that makes the city even more tolerant  
and inclusive to continue to be a cultural beacon for  
the world. And that's why I'm here today with our  
colleagues in the cultural community to ask for a  
funding increase of \$40 million to help sustain these  
and a thousand other programs in this city. Thank  
you so much for this opportunity.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much. Marta.

MARTA MORENO VEGA: [off mic] Look at  
this room. Look at the artwork in this room [pause]  
[on mic] This \$40 million, \$20 million, right, if  
equitably distributed—now notice the words that are  
being used—goes to 33 organizations. \$20 million  
would go to better an 1,200 organizations. So that  
in and of itself is inequitable. The second piece is  
that the 1,200 organizations do not get  
administrative monies, do not get operational monies.  
They just program dollars. So when people speak  
about equity, right, they are sort of putting a  
blanket over the reality that it is inequitable, that  
the division is not equal. The 33 organizations get  
\$20 million that can go for operations, can go for  
staff, could go for programming, and small  
institutions that reflect the diversity of the city,  
that are grounded in the communities, they deal with  
the most vulnerable, they deal with the immigrant  
communities, they deal with fluid gender communities  
that are safe spaces, sanctuary spaces, right have to  
divide \$20 million and in the case of the \$10  
million, right, 27%, six organizations even of the

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CIGs got more money than the rest of the--than the  
rest of CIGs. Most of us had to divide \$5 million.  
The Caribbean Cultural Center that deals with more  
than 20,000 people, young people in public schools,  
in El Barrio, which is one of the most vulnerable  
areas, right, didn't receive any increase. So many  
of our institutions received no increase from the \$5  
million, and even those that did could only use it  
for programs. There is an inequity built in like the  
portraits in this room, there is an inequitable  
process. And, of course, we all want increases, but  
we want equitable increases, and I call on you,  
Jimmy, because I know that you're about equity, but  
we have to look at how this is divided. From our  
position given the historical inequity that our  
institutions have experienced \$40 million should go  
for the stabilizing of institutions within  
communities that are serving directly our  
communities. They don't have wealthy board of  
directors to rescue them. Our institutions reflect  
diversity, reflect people from communities that are  
grounded in the cultures that they are gifting the  
city with. And we need to work out the distribution  
of funds more equitably, more racially equitable,

more culturally equitable. The division of art money cannot be 33 organizations get the majority of New York City funding, and then 1,200 mostly of color, mostly grounded within our communities have to divide money that doesn't allow them to exist. What we're developing in New York City is a cultural art system of poverty for institutions that reflect the majority population of the city, which are people of color, and native people that generally don't even get mentioned. So I call on this committee. I call on you, Jimmy, because you use the terminology of equity, but the system of distribution has to change. Yes, \$40 million increase to go to community based organizations to sustain our community in this period of hysteria, right? Because the most vulnerable communities will be our communities?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yep. Thank you, Marta. Next.

FRAN GARBER COHEN: Hi. Thank you. I'm Fran Garber Cohen President and Board of Directors Chairman and I do everything for Regina Opera Company located in Sunset Park in Brooklyn. I'll be brief. Just anted to say that we are among the thousands of small groups that are funded by the Department of



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Cultural Affairs with City Council Members Gentile and Menchaca. For 47 years Regina Opera has offered year-round fully staged operas and ticketed and free concerts in Southwest Brooklyn. Regina Opera performances are places where thousands of Brooklyn residents, many of them retirees, come to meet their friends, stimulating their minds and getting them out of their home. Attending our performances distracts them from their troubles. We've also been told that our performances have—are of high quality. Regina Opera provides affordable entertainment for audiences who may not otherwise attend live opera performances. Some are on fixed incomes and cannot afford the tickets. Some cannot travel to Manhattan. Others are intimidated by the major opera houses or have not been exposed to operas—operas previously. Regina Opera offers matinee performances, reducing travel after dark. The response of the audience is overwhelming. Four thousand people will attend performances during Fiscal Year 2018 taking advantage of the low cost and free tickets. Our tickets for operas are between \$20 and \$25, \$12 for concerts, even less for students. Many ticketed—many tickets are donated to senior centers through course—during

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the course of the season. Regina Opera is unique in  
Brooklyn. Music schools and other groups presents  
occasional operas or concerts in Brooklyn, but Regina  
Opera is the only group presenting professional level  
fully staged operas and operatic concerts year round,  
and the company has been doing so for 47 years.

Regina Opera also helps the entire community. The  
performances add to the culture of the vitality,  
which serves as magnet for prospective residents and  
businesses. We directly affect the economy of the  
locality by employing local residents and purchasing  
local goods. Our performers and audience members  
frequently shop and eat in the area. Regina Opera  
depends on the support of audience members and on the  
New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. We ask  
that the expense money for culture be increased by  
\$40 million for culture divided equally [bell]  
between the cultural institutions and the CDF groups  
like us. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

Next.

AMY FIORE: Good afternoon. My name is  
Amy Fiore. I'm the Director of Development for TADA  
Youth Theater, and I agree with my colleagues about

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the necessity for a \$40 million increase, but I'm  
here today to talk about something slightly  
different. I want to implore you to consider  
increasing or elimination—eliminating the budget cap  
that limits the Cultural Immigrant Initiative grants  
to organizations whose budget is \$1 million or less.  
The value of this initiative is immeasurable and  
especially in a city like ours, and in this political  
climate, the necessity for a program like this is  
even greater today than it was created. The ability  
to apply for this funding, however, is limited only  
to our organizations who operating—operating budgets  
are \$1 million or less. Despite the Department of  
Cultural Affairs asserting since the inception of the  
initiative, the issues created by such a threshold  
since it rolls out excellent services to immigrant  
communities by some of the city's finest art service  
providers. I don't doubt the challenges that the  
smallest cultural organizations in our city face. I  
know their struggles—struggles to be enormous and  
their resources few and far between. But sadly,  
slightly large cultural organizations also suffer  
from proportional budget cuts in funding as well as  
decreases in the individual contributions. Long time

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fundes a regularly spending down their endowments or  
moving on to serve newer, smaller cultural  
organizations because they assume "midsize arts  
organizations" or comfortably funded by their  
counterparts. The benchmark \$1 million budget cut is  
a seemingly reasonable one, but anyone who has tried  
to rent an apartment or buy a gallon of milk in  
Manhattan after previously shopping in Long Island  
City knows that \$1 million does not equal \$1 million.  
The location difference among cultural organizations  
is a significant—a significant variance that should  
be considered when determining the budget for this  
initiative. For my organization based in Midtown  
Manhattan 15% of our annual budget is spend on rent  
for a space we need to provide our programs and serve  
our mission. Without that quarter of a million  
dollars in rent an amount that is apparently  
inexpensive for our neighborhood, our financial  
statement would look drastically different. It is  
well known and reflected in census data that innocent  
immigrant groups cluster in certain areas. In  
speaking with representatives from several council  
and their offices, I understand the intention of this  
initiative was in part to serve those densely

populated immigrant communities by funding tiny  
immigrant run cultural organizations who are best  
equipped to provide organic cultural programming that  
celebrates the specific heritage—heritage of the  
constituency. I do not for a moment suggest that a  
minimum budget be set for this funding or wish that  
any well deserving group loses out to a larger  
organization. I wonder, however, about the other  
communities in New York City that are characterized  
by the melting pot we imagine our city to be. My  
organization sought to propose arts education  
programs in widely diverse schools that enabled  
children to explore and share their cultural heritage  
with classmates, and their community by researching  
their own immigration to be less, and collectively  
creating the theater piece that celebrates their  
diversity. Of course, there would be great value in  
small [bell] ethnic cultural groups providing  
programing that exposes students to a culture beyond  
their own. But when the funding is niche the  
experience has the potential to be limiting, and in  
this time of political turmoil experienced arts  
educators will be invaluable in facilitating a  
creative and unifying program and schools that serve

children from a number of different cultural  
backgrounds. The experience of those educators comes  
at a cost, and as well, and one that puts my  
organization over the million dollar budget cut. As  
you said--

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]  
Hey.

AMY FIORE: I'm time up?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Coming to a  
close there?

AMY FIORE: Yes, I am. I thank you.  
[laughter] I was just going to quote you back to  
yourself.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I read it, and  
it's a brilliant quote. [laughter]

AMY FIORE: I thought you'd think so.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, interesting.  
I have to say that's one of the more--more intriguing  
testimonies that I've heard today, challenging my own  
initiative, which is gutsy and--and I--I hear what  
you're--you're saying and--and I'll certainly think  
about it but, you know, I felt very strongly from the  
inception that--that this was aimed at addressing some  
issues of heavy, yes, equity, but it also relates to--

1 to size and—and it was one of the ways where I sort  
2 of thought how can we—how can we really create a  
3 funding stream that's really targeted to small or  
4 very small cultural organizations, you know that  
5 serve immigrant communities that are really about  
6 capacity building, and I'm sure you do amazing work.  
7 I know. I—I've seen TADA, and that's why I said I  
8 love you guys when I called you up. So, you know, and  
9 we've also increased other initiatives, which you can  
10 compete for, and can draw down. So, I appreciate it.  
11 I'll continue to think about it, but just so you  
12 know, the—the rationale and—and the belief, you know,  
13 continues and remains, but I—I—I respect you for  
14 coming here and—and—and making the pitch, and—and,  
15 you know, I—I—I respect the work that you do.  
16 Heather to finish out this panel.

17  
18 AMY FIORE: Thank you.

19 HEATHER WOODFIELD: Thank you. I want to  
20 thank the Council for this opportunity to testify on  
21 behalf of New Yorkers for Culture and Arts, a new  
22 organization, which is the culmination of a merger  
23 between the New York City Arts Coalition and One  
24 Percent for Culture. New Yorkers for Culture and Arts  
25 will advocate for strengthening policy, increasing

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and securing sustainable public funding while  
advancing equity, diversity and inclusion to help  
venture a vibrant future for culture and arts  
throughout New York City. We commend the City  
Council and the Administration and the Department of  
Cultural Affairs for supporting culture and art both  
through expense and capital funding and for last  
year's \$10 million increase in operating support  
complemented by increases to the City Council  
initiatives. Now, more than ever, with threats of  
federal cuts to arts, humanities and science it's  
vitally important that the city continue to grow its  
support for culture and arts. Therefore, we are  
joining with members of the cultural community to ask  
for a funding increase of \$40 million to the  
Department of Cultural Affairs, to be divided equally  
between the CIGs, Cultural Institutions Group and the  
CDF, the Cultural Development Fund for grant making.  
Even with the \$40 million increase, the DCLA budget  
would still be less than .3% of the overall city  
budget, a very small contribution in light of the  
social and economic benefits, which culture and the  
arts brings to New Yorkers. An additional \$40  
million would provide DCLA with the fiscal capacity



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to increase funding for currently funded institutions  
and organizations, including underfunded groups, the  
Five Borough's Arts Counselors, which administers re-  
grants program which serve individual artists like  
myself, and local cultural organizations, and a wider  
and more diverse way of new grantees. With an  
additional \$40 million in funding, cultural  
organizations could expand life long learning  
opportunities for all New Yorkers, access to culture  
and the arts for city residents, programs aligned  
with City priorities and in collaboration with city  
agencies, and workforce development opportunities  
including artist support. We urge you to increase  
funding for DCLA by \$40 million to be divided equally  
between the CIG and the CDF, and we thank you for you  
time today, and for your steadfast support of the  
non-profit cultural community. We look forward to  
continued collaborations between city government,  
cultural organizations and artists in order to better  
serve all New Yorkers.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much, Heather, and you came in under by the most. So-

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HEATHER WOODFIELD: [interposing] I  
planned for two.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: What's that?

HEATHER WOODFIELD: I planned for two  
minutes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much for—for your testimony. I want to thank all of  
you for this very spirited and challenging panel, and  
we will continue on down this road together all of  
us. Thank you very much, and David is going to come  
up and speak for a couple of minutes by himself  
before we hear from all of the folks from Community  
United. So, thank you very much, David for waiting  
and for the Community United—Community United folks  
for waiting as well. [background noise, pause]

DAVID JOHNSON: I had my own panel.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

DAVID JOHNSON: My name is David Johnson.  
I'm the Executive Director of Exploring the  
Metropolis. Like everyone today, I would like to  
thank Council Member Van Bramer and the entire  
Cultural Affairs Committee for the opportunity to  
testify today. Since 1982, Exploring the Metropolis  
has focused on solving the work space needs of New

York City's performing artists. Currently, we administer the ETM Con-Edison Composer residencies. The Choreographer and Composer Residency in partnership with the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning and the Ridgewood, Bushwick Composer Residency. Since 2009, ETM has supported nearly 70 composers, choreographers and performing artists providing them with more than \$650,000 worth of no cost rehearsal space and cash support. In addition, ETM has provided more than \$110,000 worth of support to NYC's non-profit cultural and community centers to maximize the space usage, supported more than 60 free public programs for New York City audiences, and these have ranged from new music premiers to work in progress dance showings. We've had composition workshops for visually impaired students and New Children's Opera. So why is work space important for performing artists in New York City? Why is this important for all of us? For our Jamaica where we offer free rehearsal space for three months for choreographers and composers, applications tripled in the second year. We were anticipating an applicant pool that was much more geared towards emerging artists, but since the beginning of the program we've

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had--well, we've had a Bessie award winner every year.  
We had Pam Tamowitz. We've had Christopher Williams  
this year. Last year we also had Doris Duke  
performing artist who was one of those artists and  
residents as well in addition to other emerging  
artists. Artists at all career stages in NYC need  
the support. This is not just emerging. Even for  
artists who are working at an advanced or master  
level, work space can now be prohibitively expensive.  
So there's the impact on communities. Right now we  
have Randy Wolf. He is a composer. He's a  
Guggenheim fellow. He's a Harvard PhD and he's in  
residence in a senior facility in Bushwick at he  
Ridgewood, Bushwick Senior Citizen Council. He has  
worked over the last 30 years with artists like John  
Kale, Marie Sindeck (sp?), Heidi Latski, and he  
needed a quiet space to work during the day because  
to make ends meet his wife teaches piano. So he  
couldn't compose at home any more and needed this  
space. We're matching these amazing artists who need  
the space with the communities that want the arts.  
So I'm here today to join with other members of the  
cultural community to ask for the \$40 million  
increase to the Department of Cultural Affairs to be

split between the City Cultural Institutions Group  
[bell] and the Cultural Development Fund, and we hope  
last year's \$10 million can be baselined as well.  
Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you,  
David, for being here. Thank you for the work that  
you've done for a long time and thank you for always  
reminding us about the issues that you—that you work  
on so—so incredibly well. So thank you very much for  
being here, David. Now we have several folks, and I  
don't know if there is any particular order, but we  
are going to keep folks to the three-minute rule, and  
I guess we will have—hold on one second. [pause]  
You know what, we're going to take a two-minute  
break, right, and I'll be right back and then we'll  
hear from this last two panels. [background  
comments, pause] Alright, thank you very much. We  
are back in session. We are going to hear from  
several folks. Why don't we call up two—the stands,  
Sidney Goldfisher. I Sidney Goldfisher still with  
us? Okay, Mr. Goldfisher, have a seat. Judith  
Kalamandre. Is Judith Kalamandre, Faith Steinberg,  
Faith Steinberg number 3, Claudia De Salvo number 4  
and William Roudenbush number 5, and that will be the

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first panel, and then secondly we have Regina Carp,  
and Regina Kalamandre or Camilla Kalamandre will be  
on the second panel. So this is the first panel.

The second panel will be Regina Carp, and Camilla  
Kalamandre. So we're going to a three-minute clock.

[background comments, pause]

MALE SPEAKER: Well, how will we get this  
working? That's it?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: There you go. I  
think you're on. Would you like to start sir?

SIDNEY GOLDFISCHER: Yes, please.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay.

SIDNEY GOLDFISCHER: I'd like to thank  
the City Council and the committee for the courtesy  
and the opportunity to speak. It's invaluable and  
gratifying and again I greatly express my  
appreciation. My name is Sidney Goldfisher. I've  
lived in New York for 90 years, and watched the  
gradual loss of trees and greenery and space. I went  
to my elementary in Bensonhurst. There was a farm  
across the street from the school. Lafayette High  
School on Cropsy (sic) Avenue working from with a  
horse. Things have changed. I'm talking in reference  
to the American Museum of Natural History and which

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has now apparently abandoned this grandiose plan to  
create a center that will permit—and this is a quote.  
It's hard to believe. They plan to educate the next  
generation of teachers sciences—scientists and  
workers to ensure scientifically literate nation, our  
nation—and our nation's workforce preparedness.  
Fantasy a Trumpian delusion that has now been  
abandoned in the light of community opposition. This  
evident in a Wall Street Journal article on the  
Museum's plan and the heading is Bugs will Top  
Billing. No longer STEM science, no longer  
innovative science, no longer cutting of the edge  
science. Cutting of the edge science has been  
replaced by display for cases for millions of bugs  
and enhanced catering facilities. Worthwhile  
endeavors but not worth \$350 million. Not worth an  
additional \$6 million of precious city funds. These  
used chunks would be better spent on enhanced science  
teaching in our neighborhood schools. I have a  
detailed analysis of the scientific components of the  
plan for—for you, but more egregious than the waste  
of public funds is the proposed destruction of  
precious park land and trees that will be lost  
forever. So I would greatly appreciate if you

consider this. I'm sure that you will and that the  
\$6 million extra that that they won is an insult to  
the intelligence, judgment and fair play of the  
people in New York City. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

CLAUDIA DI SALVO: I'm going to go next.  
Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak  
with you. My name is Claudia DiSalvo and I'm  
President of Community United to Protect Theodore  
Roosevelt Park. Never doubt that a thoughtful group  
of committed citizens can change your world. Indeed,  
it is the only thing that ever did. That's a quote  
from Margaret Mead. We are all involved in a drama  
with the American Museum of Natural History. Our  
good museum is acting badly and irresponsibly towards  
its neighbors. If the American Museum of Natural  
History did not engage in a land grab with an  
additional \$125 million public tax dollars money,  
without public hearings, this would have been a done  
deal, and let me add that when Jean Van Architect was  
asked who is going to be doing project? Can you  
achieve your goal without the taking of public  
parklands? She said yes. What motivates me to work  
everyday, our mission to save public parkland, comes



from one essential question. I am sitting here look back and a long time Upper West resident who has spent my life as an educator and I ask myself what will be our legacy if the American Museum of Natural History plan I fully implemented? I can assure you of several outcomes. Future generations will view the decision to create a legacy for yet another billionaire, not doubt well intended person, which interrupted a very fragile environment in a highly urbanized location as tragic a historical fallacy. What our future generations will question is the efforts of a community to protect and a failure of leadership to preserve and maintain a very important and valuable public green space. They will judge harshly the choice to destroy rather than enhance both the scientific education and the health of local parkland with the legendary trees, the lungs over the earth. They will mock the replacement of science in this atrium when they view taxidermist birds, bats or butterflies hanging 100 feet from the atrium ceiling that—and there will be no programmable science in the atrium. This, by the way, is to be built 30,000 square feet, which—of which is a third of an acre of our public parkland not to mention the trees the

1 museum is taking. And everyone from our public  
2 officials and our commissioners have said one way or  
3 another that this is okay. They think this is being  
4 done in the name of science. We need to understand  
5 and consider that if we are changing our future in a  
6 very negative manner for the price of someone's  
7 legacy, not to confirm we are living in an age of  
8 climate deniers. Ladies and gentlemen, with  
9 thoughtful planning, communication and collaboration  
10 we can have it all, a state-of the-art 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
11 museum complex that houses a world class STEAM  
12 program, Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and  
13 Math that will deliver all of the wonderments the  
14 museum can magically exhibit and a quality of life  
15 public park that is part of the historic district  
16 master plan complete with our legendary trees and  
17 canopy that has served our community for decades.  
18 [bell] The future is happening now. Our journey is  
19 now beginning with your help. Thank you.

20  
21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

22 Next.

23 WILLIAM ROUDENBUSH: Hello. My name is  
24 William Roudenbush, and thank you for hearing us  
25 today. We value our democratic processes so much and

so much more these day s that getting a chance for  
the community to speak and have true democracy in  
action is a rarity. So it's important and we value  
it very much. So thank for that. I'd like to speak  
a minute about our dollars and how they travel and  
how the travel back and forth as far as these larger  
culture-cultural institutions and how much depth they  
have and how we further enable them with these  
capital projects. Now, if we were only talking about  
for instance some money for a building, that would be  
one conversation, but we're talking about public  
money for a building that's going to be on public  
parkland. So now we're talking about two costs to  
the public, and what is the benefit for the park  
user? Well, they're only redesigning the concrete in  
front of the park users—for park users so not very  
much. This is an institution that has over \$300  
million in debt. If you want to add their interest  
rate, cap agreements with interest rates swaps you're  
looking at more. When it's all paid and done, it  
will be more than \$477 million. Of this you're  
looking at the debt service payments, which as we all  
know is the interest and the principal. So you're  
looking in the neighborhood of between \$15 and \$17

million every year until this debt is paid off and  
it's only going upwards. At a time where the net  
director was let go last week because of financial  
irresponsibility and overextension, what are doing by  
enabling this institution to rack up more debt, to  
become larger and to become more costly when we also  
have to heat and cool and maintain these buildings?  
This seems to me at a time where the Mayor seems to  
claim that we're trying to prepare for the Trump  
Administration shortfalls in critical programs as a  
special move by Marta's testimony, that we are going  
to allow ourselves to be in a situation where we're  
going to have to fund this building in perpetuity  
when se should be saving money. And by the way, this  
is largely funded by a billionaire's funds. Now when  
you're making a deal for these kind of people, and  
you say we're going to give you public money and  
public land along with public funds, do you think  
that the next guy that comes along is going to ask  
for anything less? Of course they're not. That  
means more public land, more public money. They have  
so many resources and they should use them, and as  
far as the education that's going to happen in this  
building, certainly it's going to be grand. I've had

the presentations. They do great work over there,  
but when we're talking about public funds and science  
education, I have a few public school teachers who  
would like to talk to you about how they can stretch  
a buck and what they can do with these same funds  
when it comes to teaching science in our classrooms  
and they teach it every single day not just on a  
single field trip. We love the museum. They're very  
big and they're very powerful and they are throwing  
their weight around and we are just a community who  
wants to see responsible government, responsible  
development and just in your own document it's \$62.1  
million over the next ten years to just this  
projects, and that doesn't even talk about the  
heating, cooling and maintenance. I think we can do  
a little bit better, and by the way, what are we even  
talking about when the size of the atrium is larger  
than the size of the public parkland they intend to  
take. Thank you very much for your time. We really  
appreciate you, City Council.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thanks very  
much. Next. [bell]

FAITH STEINBERG: [off mic] [on mic] 43  
years, and I will not be mincing words because I'm

very angry. Mr. Richard Gilberg, Board of Directors  
of the--of the American Museum of Natural History  
the so-called philanthropist more like a tax dodger  
has hired a very well paid stooge to manipulate our  
City Council Members, the public and ostensibly  
progressive elected officials in the city and state  
plus at least one social service NGO that I know of  
working for the homeless and seniors thus having full  
support from these latter institutions. He city and  
state investment in this boondoggle, the--the Gilder  
Center is at last one--at--at the cost of \$1 million--  
\$100 million and growing as--to--to \$165 million of our  
tax dollars without ever asking the public. Now, I'm  
concerned about housing in the city. So NYCHA, New  
York State and New York City funded housing received  
\$3.6 million or there about for the years 2016 to  
2020 and it's essential to mention 60,000 and  
counting homeless including families with children.  
It's disgraceful. This claim is that the museum has  
in storage artifacts. Sometimes I hear \$37,000 and  
sometimes \$37 million. They haven't gotten their  
stories straight, and these art--artifacts with  
research will cure the world of all its illnesses,  
and if you got--if you believe that, I have a really

good bridge to sell you. The Economist Center is scheduled to be named for the Richard Gilder Center who is a Reaganite a member of the Right Wing Think Tank, Manhattan Institute that in this day and age of climate change is, of course, denied. The center will be an anarchy guzzling massive building with not a solar panel in sight, and will have a school for children and labs for scientists granting PhDs. First, classroom education and degrees is not the mission of a museum. The museum is so [bell] is one huge leaning facility that has many beautiful exhibits. I just want to read one more thing.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay.

JUDITH STEINBERG: This project because it is in the historic district must apply-be approved by the Parks Department, the Land-Landmarks Preservation Commission, the EPA, the Community Board and yet before these approvals were met with, it was touted as a done deal. Sounds pretty fishy to me, and there's a president-present president and the vocabulary is kind of the same. The Art of the Deal he wrote. Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I wasn't sure  
which president you were referring to, but that made  
it clear. The next--the last on this panel. Yes.

JUDITH KALAMANDRE: [off mic]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Oh, you need  
your--

JUDITH KALAMANDRE: [off mic]

FEMALE SPEAKER: There it is.

JUDITH KALAMANDRE: It's red.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Okay, there you go.

JUDITH KALAMANDRE: Okay, my--my name is  
still Judith Kalamandre. I am staggered by the  
amounts of money that the Museum already owns that as  
you correctly point out is going to be even more. Is  
money going to the American Museum of Natural History  
request then going to be paying off debt service for  
that long. The other cultural, small cultural groups  
we heard described their mission are so impressive.  
They're so useful, they're so needed. They're here.  
Over here is the fat cat looking down at those little  
mice institutions. Picture in your mind the size of  
the American Museum of Natural History. Can we  
believe they can't find space in there already?  
Maybe with a different architect. Maybe by walking



those halls, which don't need to be expanded. This—I  
have attended already I would say four public  
meetings on the purpose of the expansion. In talking  
about the visitor experience, which seems to me a  
larger—seems to mean a larger gift shop, more  
bathrooms, maybe better signage. I mean what—where  
does science come into this? The museum has a vast  
bus. Maybe they call it a van where they put their  
exhibitions into and drive them to other places. I  
found this out when I admired the horse exhibition a  
few years ago, which I felt was so fantastic, and I  
was told no it wouldn't just be this event. It's  
something that goes into that van, and we bring it to  
other places. You know, do we have to build a wall  
around the trees in the park outside because that's  
what that funny looking Guggenheim like addition  
looks like. Out of place and out of context. I live  
on the block. I live right there, and I am in the  
museum I would say three times a week. I appreciate  
it. It's appreciated it New York. It doesn't need  
more [bell] money taken from all these other places,  
and burdening us, the taxpayers with further debt.  
Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [coughs]

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JUDITH KALAMANDRE: [off mic]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: What's that?

JUDITH KALAMANDRE: There is a plaque in the museum's entries that Monsanto, the great chemical company the poisoner of people and soil, and I'm wondering what-what kind of quid pro quo will be going on in the teaching effort.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay. First I think I'm going to allow Councilwoman Helen Rosenthal to say a few words. Obviously, this is her-her area, and with great service to our city, I would like to ask Helen Rosenthal to say a few words.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thanks so much, Chair and thank you for all of your dedication to our cultural institutions and to our libraries. A great rally today, and I really just wanted to thank my resident-the residents from District 6, which I'm a Council Member for, for coming today. You guys have been dedicated and coming to the meetings and speaking up about your concerns. There's no question that, you know, we've all been concerned about several things, much of which I wrote in a letter as well, and there will be additional meetings for the public to have their input. Over the year, I hope

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you're going to come to those meetings as well, and  
continue to raise your concerns. You know, I've  
enjoyed meeting with I think almost all of you. I'm  
not sure I've met with Sidney, but on this issue,  
although we've met on other things, and thank you for  
taking the time-the time to come to the City Council  
today.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, very  
much and it was certainly good to hear that you all  
appreciate the museum, and in some cases using it  
several times a week, which is terrific, and-and all  
of your-your comments have been heard. So thank you  
all very much. I believe that we may have one or two  
or more people who would still like to say a few  
words, Regina Carp and Camilla Kalamandre. Is that  
so?

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Just the one.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: What's that?

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Just one person. (sic)

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So Regina is  
going to finish it off?

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Alright, Regina.

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REGINA CARP: [off mic] You are very  
nice.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So are you.

[background comments]

REGINA CARP: Should I go t here.

[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You could if you  
would like to.

REGINA CARP: I'd like to.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You will not get  
extra time, though. I'm just saying. No double  
dipping. [background comments]

REGINA CARP: I'm ready.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: I'm going to see if  
your mic is on.

REGINA CARP: Yeah, go ahead.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: If you're ready?

REGINA CARP: I'm ready. That's it?

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Yep, I think so.

[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Regina, are you  
ready?

REGINA CARP: Yes, I am.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great.

REGINA CARP: On the Upper West Side sits a very small park, the Teddy Roosevelt Park. On a quiet--mine is more poetic [laughs] On a quiet morning in spring time, it seems wonderfully at odds with the surrounding city. It pits-pit green sod against city sharp angles, green life against brick and asphalt, winding paths against the unbending streets of New York's remorseless grid into which it has been squeezed as if in a vice. On such a favorable morning, Theodore Roosevelt Park resembles--resembles nothing so much as a small defenseless principality surrounded by a predatory empire hostile to its spirits, covetous of its green field, yet miraculously surviving nonetheless. A sort of a municipal Lichtenstein. In the least poetic Goa City, it makes the unexpected triumph of poetry over practicality, and a certain vague sentimental sentiment over the hard calculations of interest and profit. Its mission is so singular, so beautiful and gallant and that is why so many New Yorkers, tourists, and especially Upper West Siders have taken it to the hearts. Let us hope that this little principality can survive in the center of the Empire City. I think that's a fitting ending for this

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meeting actually, and I have to say that, you know, I  
feel it's—it's almost when I heard about this project  
of the incursion into the parks, it was like a coup  
de gras. I just felt overwhelmed. It was the last  
bit of calm in the Upper West Side neighborhood where  
building after building is—every—all Landmark  
Commission approves everything that's to be built.  
So I'm just hoping that this will not happen. Thank  
you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
much. At least one person is applauding you for that  
testimony. [coughs] Thank you all for being here, for  
sharing your thoughts on this important institution  
and this important project. You have all been heard  
and we—we're thrilled to have you here always. So  
with that, I will thank your staff who have been here  
for five hours with me as well during this important  
day of testimony on Culture and Libraries, and with  
it [gavel] we conclude this hearing on the  
Preliminary Budget for Cultures and Libraries. Thank  
you very much.

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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 April 6, 2017