

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

----- X

November 20, 2017
Start: 1:18 p.m.
Recess: 5:50 p.m.

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

B E F O R E:

STEPHEN T. LEVIN
Chairperson
JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS
Co-Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Annabel Palma
Fernando Cabrera
Vanessa L. Gibson
Corey D. Johnson
Ritchie J. Torres
Barry S. Grodenchik
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
Rosie Mendez
Ydanis A. Rodriguez
Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.
Rafael L. Espinal, Jr.
Mark Levine
Helen K. Rosenthal

Eric A. Ulrich

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

Steven Banks
Commissioner
NYC Department of Social Services

Maria Torres Springer
Commissioner
NYC Department of Housing Preservation
and Development

Molly Park
Deputy Commissioner for Development
NYC Department of Housing Preservation
and Development

Margaret Brown
NYC Department of Housing Preservation
and Development

Victoria Reing
Director of Policy and
Deputy Counsel
Bronx Borough President

Giselle Routhier
Policy Director
Coalition for the Homeless

Josh Goldfein
Staff Attorney
The Legal Aid Society

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

Laura Mascuch
Executive Director
The Supportive Housing Network of New
York

Dinick Martinez
Homeless living in shelter

Nathylin Flowers Adesegun
Member of VOCAL-NY
Homeless living in shelter

Angela Hernandez
Homeless living in shelter

Erin Drinkwater
Representative
NYC Department of Social Services

Sarah Mallory
NYC Housing Preservation and Development

Scott Andrew Hutchins
Picture the Homeless

Jose Rodriguez
Picture the Homeless

Mary Crosby
Picture the Homeless

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

Peter Malvan
Street Homeless
Safety Net Activists

Griffin Kinard
Homeless living in shelter

Wendy O'Shields
Representative
Urban Justice Safety Net Activists

Mark Green
Community Leader

Sam Winfrey
Homeless living in shelter

Charmaine Gayle
Living in shelter

Diann Mitchell
Living in women's shelter

James Baldwin
Homeless youth

Madge Philantrope
Homeless

Junior Pacheco
Homeless in shelter

Rhonda Jackson
Homeless in AFIC shelter

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
2 COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

5

2 [sound check]

3 [pause]

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good afternoon

5 everybody. [background comments] My name is Council
6 Member Stephen Levin; I am the Chair of the Council's
7 Committee on General Welfare. I want to thank you
8 all for coming out to today's important hearing. I
9 would like to thank my colleague, Council Member
10 Jumaane Williams, Chair of the Housing and Buildings
11 Committee, for joining this hearing. This hearing is
12 entitled HPD's Coordination with DHS/HRA to Address
13 the Homelessness Crisis.

14 This past year the General Welfare
15 Committee has held an array of hearings on
16 homelessness; in fact, the General Welfare and
17 Housing and Buildings Committees held a hearing
18 together in January on supportive housing at the
19 Schermerhorn supportive housing development in the
20 district I represent in Brooklyn.

21 At today's hearing, the Committees will
22 seek to learn what resources HPD provides to homeless
23 New Yorkers, both families and individuals, and how
24 many of them are moving into permanent affordable
25 housing. We will also examine whether there is

3 adequate interagency coordination between HPD, DHS
4 and HRA to ensure that homeless families and
5 individuals have better access to affordable housing
6 and to affordable permanent housing.

7 Lastly, the General Welfare Committee
8 will consider the following pieces of legislation:
9 Intro 1524, which is sponsored by Council Member
10 Rafael Salamanca, at the request of the Bronx Borough
11 President, in relation to radiator inspections in
12 homeless shelters and Intro 1529, which is sponsored
13 by Council Member Jimmy Vacca, also at the request of
14 the Bronx Borough President, in relation to the
15 phase-out of existing cluster sites.

16 Throughout the first term of the de
17 Blasio Administration the homeless crisis has been at
18 the forefront. The City has seen record levels of
19 homelessness and the Administration has put forth
20 numerous initiatives to address this challenging
21 issue, including Housing New York, Anti-Tenant
22 Harassment and Anti-Eviction Program, expanding
23 rental assistance programs, 90-day review on homeless
24 services, NY 15/15, the borough-based shelter plan
25 aimed at phasing out cluster sites in hotels, the

3 Turning the Tide document, and decreasing the overall
4 number of shelters across the city.

5 We hope that in the Mayor's second term
6 we will see significant results in alleviating
7 homelessness. I will continue to work with this
8 Administration and advocates to address this critical
9 issue.

10 At this time I would like to acknowledge
11 Council Members that are here -- Council Member Helen
12 Rosenthal of Manhattan; Council Member Barry
13 Grodenchik of Queens; and that's the four of us right
14 now, along with my Co-Chair, Council Member Williams,
15 but I am sure that other Council Members and members
16 of both committees will be joining us throughout this
17 hearing.

18 Lastly, I would like to thank the staff
19 of the General Welfare Committee -- Andrea Vazquez,
20 Senior Counsel; Tonya Cyrus, Senior Policy Analyst;
21 Dohini Sompura, Finance Unit Head; Nameera Nuzhut,
22 Finance Analyst; and the staff of the Housing and
23 Buildings Committee for putting this hearing
24 together. I would also like to thank my staff --
25 Jonathan Boucher and Edward Paulino as well.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
2 COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

8

3 And I will turn it now over to my
4 colleague, Jumaane Williams for his opening remarks.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you,
6 Chair Levin. Good afternoon everyone. My name is
7 Jumaane Williams, the Chair of the Committee on
8 Housing and Buildings. I do want to apologize; I
9 will be stepping out twice during the hearing, once
10 to do something I have to do real quick and the
11 second one, to take a vote, I'm sorry, to get my
12 attendance taken for another hearing. I'm sad to say
13 there are a lot of hearings going on today, so you
14 will see Council Members going in and out; it's not
15 because they lack the seriousness of this issue, but
16 we just have a bunch of hearings going on at the same
17 time, particularly when we get close to the end of
18 the year.

19 As Council Member Levin noted in his
20 opening, the Mayor's Administration has pursued
21 several initiatives to address homelessness. The
22 Housing Preservation and Development has lots of
23 programs, such as Our Space, HomeStretch and Moving
24 On, all of which finance affordable housing for
25 extremely low-income households.

2 In September, the Committee on Housing
3 and Buildings held a hearing on HPD term sheets and
4 we hears about HPD's new term sheets for extremely
5 low-income and very low-income households which are
6 included in the Extremely Low and Low-Income
7 Affordability (ELLA) and Mix and Match programs.

8 Last week, the Administration also
9 released the new Housing New York 2.0 plan which
10 announced an additional 300,000 affordable homes by
11 2026 and creating 25,000 affordable homes a year. I
12 very much look forward to learning about HPD's work
13 on this issue.

14 I'd like to thank my staff for the work
15 they did to assemble this hearing including Mike
16 Twomey, my Legislative Director; Meagan Chen, Counsel
17 to the Committee; Jose Conde, Policy Analyst to the
18 Committee; and Sarah Gastelum, the Committee's
19 Finance Analyst.

20 With that, I'd like to remind everybody
21 who would like to testify today to please fill out a
22 card with the sergeant. We are also joined by
23 Council Member Cornegy. With that, I'll pass it back
24 to my co-chair.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS 10

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
3 Chair Williams.

4 At this point the sponsors of the
5 legislation are not here at the moment, so we will
6 turn it over to Commissioner Torres-Springer and
7 Commissioner Banks for their testimony. Before you
8 testify, can I ask you to raise your right hand,
9 please? Do you swear or affirm to tell the truth,
10 the whole truth and nothing but the truth and to
11 answer council members' questions honestly?

12 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Yes.

13 [background comment]

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Sorry. Sorry,
15 just one thing I didn't mention, I failed to and we
16 have to make it. I believe this issue of housing and
17 homelessness, if not the most, one of the most,
18 probably the top issue going on in our city today, so
19 this is a very, very important hearing; I'm glad that
20 both Commissioners are here; I wanna thank my co-
21 chair for this, and you see how packed this is and I
22 know we have probably some folks in the overflow, but
23 the crunch is being felt more and more and the crisis
24 seems to be getting worse and worse, not better; I
25 know that we're doing a lot of work; however, we

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
2 COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS 11

3 haven't gotten there yet, so this is a very important
4 conversation; I just wanted to make sure I put that
5 on the record. Thank you.

6 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Thank you. Good
7 afternoon; thank you, Chairman Williams and members
8 of the Committee on Housing and Buildings and
9 Chairman Levin and members of the General Welfare
10 Committee for giving us the opportunity to testify
11 today. My name is Steven Banks and I am the
12 Commissioner of the New York City Department of
13 Social Services, overseeing the Human Resources
14 Administration (HRA) and the Department of Homeless
15 Services (DHS). I am joined by the Commissioner for
16 Housing Preservation and Development, Maria Torres
17 Springer, and I want to thank the Commissioner for
18 her support and partnership, and I also want to thank
19 the Council for your support as we continue to
20 implement our reforms.

21 As you know, I have testified before the
22 General Welfare Committee at a number of hearings
23 about the challenges of homelessness faced by many
24 New York City families and individuals, and the new
25 and expanded initiatives this Administration has
implemented to prevent and alleviate homelessness.

2 The Administration has made unprecedented
3 investments to address the economic insecurity
4 experienced by low-income New Yorkers, many of whom
5 rely on HRA and DHS benefits, programs, and services.
6 Many of the Administration's achievements squarely
7 benefit New Yorkers who seek our assistance and
8 services, including: a rent freeze and low rent
9 increases for rent regulated apartments, wage
10 increases for City workers, universal Pre-K, expand
11 Paid Sick Leave, the IDNYC identification card, and
12 universal access to legal services for New Yorkers
13 facing eviction.

14 To begin with, I want to talk about the
15 rise in homelessness in New York City, over the last
16 two decades. The average monthly census of DHS
17 shelters increased 115 percent during that time --
18 rising from 23,868 men, women, and children in
19 January 1994, to 31,009 in January 2002, and reaching
20 51,470 in January 2014. Had this Administration not
21 stopped this trajectory, the DHS shelter census would
22 have likely reached nearly 70,000 this year, rather
23 than the 60,000 level it has been at.

24 As we described in the Mayor's Turning
25 the Tide plan released earlier this year to reform

2 the City's approach to homelessness, there are many
3 factors that have contributed to the steady upward
4 trajectory of the shelter census over the past nearly
5 four decades:

6 First, stagnant wages resulting in an
7 increasing gap between wages and rent -- between 2005
8 and 2015, the median New York City household income
9 increased by just 4.8 percent in real dollars, while
10 the median rent increased by 18.3 percent in real
11 dollars;

12 A net loss of about 150,000 affordable or
13 rent-stabilized apartments between 1994 and 2012;

14 Systematic reductions by the federal
15 government to multiple anti-poverty tools such as
16 cash assistance, food stamps and Medicaid;

17 Insufficient support and resources to
18 address barriers to housing facing New Yorkers with
19 mental health and substance use disorders, including
20 long periods of institutionalization or
21 incarceration;

22 And the abrupt end of the Advantage
23 rental assistance program by the State and City,
24 which offered subsidies for people in shelters if
25 they took part in job training -- between April 2011,

3 when the Advantage program ended, and 2014, when this
4 Administration reinstated rental assistance and
5 rehousing programs, the DHS census grew by an
6 extraordinary 38 percent -- some 14,000 people.

7 Combined, these and other trends mean
8 that by 2015 the City had only half the housing it
9 needs for about three million low-income New Yorkers.

10 As a result, these New Yorkers end up
11 sacrificing a great deal to stay in their homes and
12 maintain their connections to their communities.
13 Some 360,000 New York City households pay more than
14 50 percent of their income on rent and utilities.
15 Another 140,000 households pay more than 30 percent.
16 This means that a total of a half a million New York
17 City households are paying an unaffordable amount of
18 their income for housing. Many people who face these
19 rent burdens cycle in and out of poverty, living just
20 one personal crisis away from homelessness. In fact,
21 an ongoing longitudinal study suggests that nearly
22 half of all New Yorkers lived in poverty at some
23 point between 2012 and 2014 (the three-year period of
24 the study).

25 As a result of these economic factors, 70
percent of the shelter system census now consists of

3 families, and 34 percent of the families with
4 children have an adult who is working.

5 At the same time, domestic violence is a
6 major driver of homelessness, with some 30 percent of
7 the families with children in the DHS shelter system
8 having a history of domestic violence.

9 Homelessness in New York City and
10 jurisdictions across the country is the very real
11 result of decades of changes in our economy and past
12 choices made in New York City, Albany, and
13 Washington. The devastating impacts of economic
14 inequality and past inaction from prior
15 administrations led to the homeless crisis we face
16 today, but the initiatives of both HRA and DHS are
17 beginning to reverse the trend. A recent Furman
18 Center study, for example, found that the year over
19 year shelter census growth from calendar year 2015 to
20 calendar year 2016 was the lowest increase since 2011
21 before the Advantage program ended. And the shelter
22 census has remained roughly flat year over year for
23 the first time in more than a decade.

24 Breaking the trajectory of exponential
25 shelter system growth is the result of significant
policy reforms implemented by the Administration.

3 Since coming into office, the
4 Administration restored the City's rental assistance
5 programs and directed unprecedented resources towards
6 a new comprehensive and holistic approach to fighting
7 homelessness focused on prevention, street homeless
8 outreach, expanded transitional housing options,
9 averted shelter entry, expanded civil legal services,
10 and more robust rehousing and aftercare services.

11 The City's prevention first strategy
12 includes an array of tools, which recognizes that the
13 path to homelessness is not linear and therefore our
14 approach cannot be one-size fits all.

15 Since FY14 we have enhanced our services
16 and assistance, including these initiatives:

17 Creating and implementing rental
18 assistance programs and restoring Section 8 and New
19 York City Housing Authority priorities which through
20 last month have helped 71,596 children and adults
21 move out of, or avert entry into shelter, through
22 this commitment of permanent housing resources;

23 Provided emergency rental assistance to
24 217,000 households through FY17, helping rent-
25 burdened New Yorkers at risk of eviction stay in
their homes;

2 Launched the largest municipal commitment
3 ever to build and expand supportive housing by
4 committing to developing 15,000 new units in 15
5 years;

6 Aggressively expanded free legal
7 assistance for New Yorkers in danger of illegal
8 eviction by increasing funding for legal services for
9 tenants to \$62 million by FY16 -- a more than tenfold
10 increase. At the same time, evictions dropped by 24
11 percent and more than 40,000 New Yorkers were able to
12 stay in their homes in 2015 and 2016;

13 Began implementation, over the next five
14 years, to provide access to legal services for all
15 New York City tenants facing eviction in Housing
16 Court, which at full implementation will serve
17 400,000 New Yorkers;

18 Implemented 46 systematic and management
19 reforms to streamline how we address homelessness as
20 a result of the 90-day review of homeless services
21 last year;

22 Closed, as of last month, more than 1,000
23 cluster units, which is nearly a 30 percent reduction
24 in the 17-year cluster apartment shelter program,

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS 18

2 which had 3,658 active cluster site units in January
3 2016 when the closure plan was first announced;

4 Through HRA's Source of Income (SOI)
5 discrimination unit, taking action to prevent and
6 prosecute housing discrimination based on source of
7 income -- and fighting SOI discrimination, through
8 the City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) filing of
9 five complaints against large landlords and brokerage
10 firms that together control about 20,000 units
11 citywide. (In 2015, the Commission quadrupled the
12 number of investigations into Source of Income
13 discrimination and in 2016 it filed more than 120
14 Source of Income discrimination investigations -- the
15 highest number in its history;

16 And created the Homelessness Prevention
17 Administration housed within HRA to oversee
18 prevention programs to improve program management and
19 effectiveness.

20 We are moving forward in the
21 implementation phase for these substantial changes in
22 the four-decades-old homeless services system -- but
23 we regularly acknowledge we are addressing systemic
24 problems that built up over decades, and as such,
25 while many clients have already benefited from our

3 reforms, others have not yet felt the full impact of
4 these systemic changes that are underway.

5 The City's portfolio of prevention tools
6 is more extensive than ever before; it includes
7 historic investments in the agency's Homebase
8 program, expanded payment of emergency grants, legal
9 services, and rental assistance.

10 Since 2014, we expanded the Homebase
11 program from 14 locations in FY15 to 24 locations
12 that exist today. We encourage families facing
13 potential homelessness to seek help first at one of
14 our Homebase offices in all five boroughs. As of
15 FY18, a total of nearly \$59 million annually supports
16 an enhanced Homebase program that provides
17 coordinated preventive, aftercare, and community
18 support services, including benefits advocacy,
19 budgeting, employment, short-term financial
20 assistance, and assistance with housing relocation.
21 As a result of the increased investment in Homebase,
22 we reached 27,607 households in FY17, a 131 percent
23 increase in households served compared to FY14. Over
24 90 percent of these households remain in the
25 community and have not entered shelter within one
year of receiving services.

2 Helping New Yorkers at risk of eviction
3 remains a crucial priority for this Administration.
4 Clients facing eviction or other emergency situations
5 can apply for an Emergency Cash Assistance Grant,
6 also called a One-shot Deal, at their local HRA Job
7 Center. Eligibility for such a grant depends on
8 household size, income, resources, ability to meet
9 future rent obligations, and other factors. And some
10 grants are issued as loans which require repayment.

11 By providing emergency assistance, we
12 have helped more than 300,000 New Yorkers remain in
13 their homes while saving taxpayers' money because
14 rental assistance is much less expensive than the
15 cost of a homeless shelter. In calendar year 2016,
16 HRA provided rent arrears to 58,100 households at a
17 cost of \$214 million, and between January 2014 and
18 December 2016 a total of more than 161,000 households
19 received assistance, representing a 24 percent
20 increase in cases compared to 2013. The increase in
21 spending resulted from increased monthly rents
22 families and individuals have to pay, additional
23 households being found eligible due to the increasing
24 gap between rents and income, and enhanced targeting

3 of these services to prevent homelessness through
4 partnerships with community-based organizations.

5 With the enactment of Local Law 136 of
6 2017, New York City became the first city in the
7 nation to make the commitment that anyone facing an
8 eviction case can access legal assistance. Last
9 February, we added an additional \$93 million to our
10 \$62 million investment for tenant legal services, at
11 full implementation in five years, for a
12 comprehensive program to provide access to legal
13 representation to all low-income tenants facing
14 eviction proceedings in Housing Court earning up 200
15 percent of the federal poverty line -- about \$50,000
16 for a family of four -- and brief legal assistance
17 for all tenants facing eviction in court whose income
18 is about that level. In five years, at full
19 implementation, the City will spend \$155 million
20 annually to cover the costs of this critical program
21 keeping New Yorkers in their homes and communities.

22 As noted earlier, as a result of all of
23 the Administration's prevention initiatives,
24 evictions by Marshals have decreased 24 percent and
25 some 40,000 New Yorkers have been able to remain in
their homes in 2015 and 2016.

3 Tenants are encouraged to call 311 if
4 they are facing an eviction or visit HRA offices
5 located in the Housing Court.

6 In 2011, the State and City cut the
7 Advantage rental assistance program, which had
8 devastating impacts on the number of New Yorkers in
9 need of shelter and the DHS shelter census. In order
10 to reverse course, beginning in 2014, the
11 Administration implemented the City's LINC rental
12 assistance programs to help families and individuals
13 move from temporary, emergency shelter back to the
14 community by paying a portion of their rent. In
15 2015, the Administration implemented the City FEPS
16 and SEPS programs to expand rental assistance to both
17 prevent homelessness and promote shelter move-outs.
18 In addition to rental assistance, the Administration
19 reinstated New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)
20 and Section 8 priority referrals for clients in HRA
21 or DHS shelters.

22 In total, these initiatives have enabled
23 71,596 individuals in 26,356 households to avert
24 entry into or move out of shelter through September
25 2017.

3 In addition to rental assistance,
4 Homebase's aftercare services are available to all
5 households leaving shelter through a rental
6 assistance program, as early as possible in their
7 tenancy, followed by a thorough assessment, the
8 development of an individualized service plan, and
9 intensive services for the most at-risk households.
10 Services include long-term support as well as
11 engagement with households in the midst of short-term
12 housing crises.

13 HRA workers are also on-site at Homebase
14 to assist with tenant public assistance issues and
15 emergency rent arrears grant applications. Homebase
16 offers regular workshops for at-risk community
17 members, including former shelter residents, and
18 provides information on affordable housing,
19 subsidies, employment, work supports, and financial
20 empowerment.

21 Many people do not reach out for help
22 before they lose their homes -- in part because they
23 never knew help was available; therefore, Homebase
24 staff also conduct outreach by going directly into
25 the City's neighborhoods to engage people in public
spaces -- outside supermarkets, check cashing

3 businesses, nail salons, or at buildings where many
4 eviction notices are filed. They attend community
5 events, speak at places of worship, and build close
6 referral relationships with neighborhood schools.
7 Together, Homebase's efforts are a powerful component
8 of the City's strategy to reduce the number of
9 families and individuals in shelters.

10 With respect to the two bills relating to
11 HRA and DHS before the Committee today, we look
12 forward to working with the sponsors to address some
13 concerns that we have with the proposed legislation.

14 Intro 1524 would amend the Administrative
15 Code of the City of New York, in relation to radiator
16 inspections in homeless shelters. We would like to
17 work with the sponsor to align the language in the
18 proposed legislation with State Office of Temporary
19 and Disability Assistance (OTDA) requirements
20 relating to shelter conditions and inspections so
21 that what is required in the legislation is
22 consistent with the OTDA requirements to address
23 health and safety issues.

24 Intro 1529 would amend the Administrative
25 Code of the City of New York, in relation to the
phase-out of existing shelter cluster sites and would

2 require the department to develop and submit to the
3 Council a plan on the phase-out of the use of
4 clusters. The agency currently reports to the
5 Comptroller of the City of New York on our progress
6 on the phase-out of the cluster locations.

7 Legislation providing the level of information on the
8 phase-out that we are providing in these reports
9 would be feasible and address the underlying concerns
10 reflected in the introduction. In contrast, various
11 provisions in the proposed legislation would require
12 reporting on data that we do not have access to and
13 information that is dependent on the actions of
14 private parties. We stand ready to work with the
15 Council as we always do to craft legislation that is
16 both helpful and operationally feasible.

17 Thank you again for the opportunity to
18 testify. After the conclusion of our testimony
19 today, I look forward to any questions about HRA and
20 DHS programs and our work with HPD that you may have.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
22 Commissioner Banks. I also want to acknowledge that
23 we've been joined by Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez
24 -- or we were joined by Ydanis Rodriguez; he just

2 stepped out, and we'll turn it over to Commissioner
3 Torres Springer.

4 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Thank you.

5 Good afternoon Chair Levin, Chair Williams and the

6 members of the Housing and Buildings and General

7 Welfare Committees. My name is Maria Torres

8 Springer, the Commissioner of the New York City

9 Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

10 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about

11 the different tools and programs that HPD uses to

12 address homelessness. I would also like to thank

13 Commissioner Banks for his testimony and all of the

14 important work that the Department of Homeless

15 Services and the Human Resources Administration does

16 to confront homelessness.

17 Last night, more than 60,000 New Yorkers

18 slept in one of the many homeless shelters throughout

19 our city. This number is a grave reminder of the

20 severity of the affordability crisis we face. The

21 many individuals and families currently residing in

22 our shelter system come from neighborhoods across

23 each of the five boroughs -- they live, work, and

24 attend school among us -- they were our neighbors

25 until they fell on hard times and now lack a stable

3 place to call home. Homelessness tears communities
4 apart, uprooting families from their neighborhoods
5 and forcing children to commute long distances to
6 school.

7 One of the main underlying reasons for
8 homelessness is the mismatch in a city's housing
9 market. The tremendous demand for housing continues
10 to exceed the supply available, and the changing
11 composition of the New York City households does not
12 match the existing housing stock. The last two
13 decades in New York City are a case study of these
14 trends. While the population increased more in the
15 first six years of this decade than in the entire
16 previous decade, we added only half the number of new
17 homes during that six-year period than we did during
18 the prior decade. For these reasons, it is critical
19 that we increase the overall housing supply. New
20 housing, both affordable and market rate, is on the
21 way. There were twice as many housing completions in
22 2016 as there were in 2014, and the completions in
23 2017 are on pace to exceed 25,000 new apartments and
24 homes -- a pace which, if sustained, can better
25 enable us to keep up with population growth.

3 Stable housing is a determinant of so
4 many crucial social outcomes, including education,
5 health, and economic advancement. Homelessness moves
6 us further from achieving equity in all of these
7 realms, underscoring the importance of the work HPD
8 is doing to address the crisis. I am here to
9 describe these efforts in more detail and to renew
10 our request to all of you for your continued support.

11 Commissioner Banks already testified to
12 what DHS and HRA are doing as part of the Turning the
13 Tide on Homelessness Plan, the Administration's
14 comprehensive approach to combating homelessness. A
15 core underlying philosophy in this approach is that
16 we have to keep people in their homes and increase
17 housing opportunities.

18 HPD is a critical part of the effort to
19 help solve homelessness by keeping people in their
20 homes and neighborhoods so that they never face the
21 threat of losing their homes. We work tirelessly to
22 expand housing opportunities and to provide people
23 with services to ensure that they are not harassed
24 out of their homes. It is because of this commitment
25 that we have been able to build affordable housing at
rates New York City has not seen in 30 years. This

3 is why last week, we announced the details of Housing
4 New York 2.0, through which we are accelerating and
5 expanding our preservation and construction of
6 affordable apartments to reach 300,000 homes by 2026.

7 Increasing the availability of new
8 apartments is a key component in the Administration's
9 comprehensive strategy to combat homelessness. HPD
10 utilizes affording housing financing programs to
11 prioritize the development of affordable housing on
12 public land and to expand the amount of housing
13 available to the lowest income New Yorkers.

14 A portion of the new homes HPD builds
15 constitutes supportive housing apartments that are
16 specifically for formerly homeless households. Of
17 all the tools at HPD's disposal, supportive housing
18 is the best and most tested for meaningfully
19 addressing the homelessness crisis. Supportive
20 housing is a proven solution for people with long
21 histories of homelessness and related challenges,
22 including mental illness, addiction, and HIV/AIDS.
23 The production of supportive housing enables the City
24 to move people out of the shelter system and into
25 permanent, rent-stabilized homes with access to on-

3 site social services that help tenants maintain their
4 housing for the long term.

5 I would like to thank the Council for
6 holding January's hearing on supportive housing in
7 the Schermerhorn, a 217-apartment supportive housing
8 project in Cobble Hill, Brooklyn. I specifically
9 want to thank Chair Levin, whose district covers this
10 project, for his leadership in making that hearing
11 happen. As many of you witnessed then, the building
12 blends into the neighborhood and is a community
13 asset. The building was created when the developer
14 of the market rate townhouses on the same site
15 approached Breaking Ground about a partnership. Even
16 years after the Schermerhorn opened; passersby still
17 mistake this supportive housing building for market
18 rate condos.

19 Now this building is not an outlier; it
20 is emblematic of the high-quality planning and design
21 that is the standard for all of our supportive
22 housing projects. Supportive housing projects are
23 not facilities or institutions -- they are affordable
24 apartment buildings that provide tenants with rent-
25 stabilized leases and all of the same rights and
responsibilities as any other tenant in a rental

3 apartment in New York City -- they provide amenities
4 such as community spaces and computer rooms, all the
5 while incorporating innovative design elements that
6 make these buildings vibrant places to live. A
7 typical supportive housing project includes a 60/40
8 split between the supportive housing apartments and
9 other affordable apartments available to any
10 household that income qualifies. This ensures that
11 the projects are integrated and serve a range of your
12 constituents. I invite you and your constituents to
13 tour other supportive housing projects so you can see
14 the many ways these buildings enrich their
15 neighborhoods. When you visit one of them, you can
16 hear as well personal stories of tenants who
17 previously lived in shelter, often for many years,
18 but who are now reconnecting with family, addressing
19 their health needs, and finding employment.

20 Supportive housing is also a cost-
21 effective solution for addressing the homelessness
22 crisis. Peer-reviewed research found that for every
23 supportive apartment, taxpayers save more than
24 \$10,000 per year in public resources that otherwise
25 would be spend on shelters, emergency rooms, jails,
and psychiatric facilities. In fact, research has

3 even shown that contrary to popular belief,
4 supportive housing projects increase property values
5 in the areas surrounding them.

6 In 2015, the Mayor announced a major
7 commitment of \$1 billion in City capital over 15
8 years that will fund 15,000 supportive housing
9 apartments. Approximately half of these homes will
10 be new construction, supported through HPD financing.
11 This increased funding has allowed us to ensure that
12 a wide range of people who need supportive housing
13 have access to it. HPD's Supportive Housing Loan
14 Program (SHLP) has long been the primary financing
15 tool for the City's supportive housing production. I
16 am proud to say that since the beginning of Housing
17 New York (January 1, 2014), we have financed the
18 construction or preservation of more than 2,600
19 supportive housing apartments through this program.

20 But of course, supportive housing is not
21 the only tool we have for bringing people out of the
22 shelter system. We are working to increase the
23 number of set aside apartments in HPD programs, which
24 can be used to house homeless households with fewer
25 social service needs than those who might be better
suited to supportive housing. As part of our efforts

3 to expand homeless housing production while also
4 ensuring that homeless housing apartments continued
5 to be distributed in every neighborhood in which HPD
6 is doing business, we recently re-tooled our most
7 popular term sheets to require homeless set-asides.
8 The ELLA program (Extremely Low and Low-Income
9 Affordability) and Mix and Match (mixed income)
10 programs now both include 10 percent homeless set-
11 asides. While supportive housing is our best tool
12 for serving homeless individuals, these set-asides
13 are particularly useful for creating housing for
14 homeless families. These new set-asides, along with
15 the 30 percent set aside in our Senior Affordable
16 Rental Apartments (SARA) program, and the 60 percent
17 Supportive Housing Loan Program set-aside, have
18 enabled us to more than double the rate of our
19 homeless housing production since the onset of
20 Housing New York. During the second half of 2014,
21 for instance, we were producing homeless apartments
22 at a rate of about 1,000 homes annually. In 2017, we
23 closed on more than 2,500 homeless apartments. In
24 total, we have created and preserved over 6,500
25 apartments for formerly homeless households since

3 January of 2014 as part of the overall Housing New
4 York plan.

5 Now to sustain this rate of homeless
6 housing production, we are strategically utilizing a
7 number of limited funding resources. Project-based
8 Section 8 vouchers are our most important rental
9 subsidy for homeless apartments, but that supply is
10 finite, and its continued availability is currently
11 threatened at the federal level. To reduce the
12 pressure therefore on our Section 8 pipeline, we
13 recently launched the NYC 15/15 Rental Assistance
14 Program, a City-funded rental subsidy that will
15 enable us to meet our goal of creating 15,000
16 supportive housing apartments over 15 years, in
17 partnership with DSS. We are also creatively using
18 other federal programs, such as the Continuum of
19 Care, HOME tenant-based rental assistance, and the
20 Rental Assistance Demonstration program (RAD) to
21 maximize the use of scarce rental subsidy funds for
22 homeless housing production.

23 HPD uses tax incentives, loans, and
24 engagement with building owners to finance and
25 safeguard affordability, which is a crucial way to
prevent families on the verge of homelessness from

3 becoming homeless. We keep this housing safe and
4 healthy through enforcing the housing maintenance
5 code and working with partners to survey distressed
6 properties. We also leverage our preservation
7 programs specifically to provide housing for homeless
8 households. We recently revised the guidelines for
9 all of our preservation programs to require that 10-
10 20 percent of apartments are set aside for homeless
11 households when there is a turnover in occupancy.
12 Between January 2014 and June 30, 2017, we closed on
13 about 3,500 apartments designated for formerly
14 homeless households through this new requirement.

15 Another important way of keeping people
16 in homes they can afford is giving them the support
17 they need if they are ever faced with harassment by a
18 landlord seeking to displace them. HPD is very
19 active in combating harassment through enforcement of
20 the Housing Maintenance Code. HPD's Housing
21 Litigation Division brings cases in Housing Court
22 against owners who do not comply with outstanding
23 violations and, when necessary, seek findings of
24 contempt and jail against recalcitrant landlords.
25 HPD also actively participates in two anti-harassment
task forces. The Tenant Harassment Prevention

3 Taskforce is a collaborative effort between the
4 Office of the New York State Attorney General, DHCR
5 and City agencies, and has already led to two
6 indictments of landlords, one in Brooklyn and the
7 other more recently in Manhattan. The City Agency
8 Taskforce on Tenant Harassment consists of a joint
9 inspection team including HPD, DOB, DOHMH, FDNY, and
10 DHCR inspectors.

11 HPD, the Department of Homeless Services,
12 and HRA communicate daily in order to coordinate our
13 response to the homelessness crisis; one of the major
14 avenues for which is through our efforts to refer
15 homeless households out of shelter and into permanent
16 housing. For non-supportive apartments, DHS
17 identifies a household for referral based on
18 qualifications they have determined; then they assist
19 that household in completing an HPD-specific
20 application, which includes information such as
21 household size, income, and location preference. We
22 then take that application and use the various data
23 points to match them with a development that we think
24 would be appropriate. It is then the role of the
25 developer to accept applicants from our referrals.
HPD updates DHS frequently through this process to

3 keep them informed of the status of the application
4 and the placement.

5 For supportive housing apartments, HPD
6 and DHS conduct periodic meetings so that DHS knows
7 when specific HPD buildings will be completing
8 construction and when apartments will become
9 available. DHS also attends marketing and lease-up
10 kick-off meetings with HPD and the project
11 development teams so that they are aware of
12 construction and marketing deadlines. When an
13 apartment is available, DHS refers three suitable
14 shelter clients to the apartment through a similar
15 process as detailed previously, and the landlord
16 makes the decision. Again, communication between the
17 agencies occurs at several points during the referral
18 and placement process, and our agencies will continue
19 to seek ways to streamline the supportive and
20 homeless housing referral process and ensure that the
21 shelter system's most vulnerable clients receive the
22 housing they so desperately need.

23 HPD and DHS are also building on our
24 partnerships through joint initiatives already under
25 way. For example, working closely with DHS, HPD and
HDC launched the HomeStretch program, which leverages

3 shelter financing to provide cost-effective, purpose-
4 built shelter along with affordable housing for the
5 formerly homeless on the same site, creating pathways
6 from shelters to permanently affordable housing. The
7 first site to use this innovative model is the
8 Landing Road Residence in Council Member Cabrera's
9 district in the Bronx.

10 Working to solve homelessness also
11 requires partnerships with the City's excellent not-
12 for-profit organizations. For example, we're working
13 with Enterprise Community Partners on Come Home NYC,
14 a program that helps building owners lease apartments
15 to homeless clients; provides the owners with
16 financial protection against rent arrears, physical
17 damage to the apartment, legal costs; and connects
18 homeless families with services to help them remain
19 housed. The program provides hands-on assistance to
20 ensure a smooth referral and placement process. We
21 have also partnered with the Robin Hood Foundation on
22 our Moving On initiative to provide Housing Choice
23 Vouchers to supportive housing tenants who have
24 achieved stability and may wish to move into another
25 setting. In our last cohort, we were able to help 80
tenants move. This effort helps provide greater

3 options for formerly homeless tenants, while also
4 freeing up existing supportive housing placements for
5 households who need them most. Given all of these
6 efforts, and all of the homeless apartments that have
7 been produced, the question remains: should HPD
8 continue to find ways to do more to address the
9 homelessness crisis? And of course, the answer to
10 that is yes; there are still 60,000 New Yorkers in
11 our shelters, and even as a substantial number of
12 them benefit from HPD's programs every year, we are
13 committed to continually finding new ways to deepen
14 our work in service of homeless New Yorkers. So I
15 must now turn to all of you to ask for your and your
16 colleagues' help. To make any dent in the staggering
17 shelter census, we must continue this progress and
18 create even more supportive housing, and the City
19 Council is a critical partner in helping us build
20 more of it. HPD is extremely grateful to the Council
21 Members here today for helping us educate New Yorkers
22 about the benefits of supportive housing and for
23 welcoming a number of wonderful supportive housing
24 projects throughout the neighborhoods you represent.

25 In addition to Chair Levin and his
support of The Schermerhorn, which I mentioned

3 previously, many other Council Members are already
4 great partners to HPD in helping us bring new
5 innovative housing development to respective
6 neighborhoods. In Chair Williams' district, for
7 instance, we have Crystal Towers, an almost \$60
8 million, permanent supportive housing project with
9 123 apartments made possible through a joint
10 partnership between The Doe Fund and Crystal Ball,
11 LLC. Council Member Mendez has been a long-time
12 supporter of the Breaking Ground projects in her
13 district, the Lee, a supportive housing project in
14 the Lower East Side with 262 apartments, and The
15 Prince George, a supportive housing project in
16 Grammercy with 416 apartments. Council Member Torres
17 has been a strong ally in providing capital funding
18 to the Crotona Senior Residences, an 84-apartment
19 senior housing project with a 30 percent homeless
20 set-aside that will focus on the needs of LGBTQ
21 seniors. And Council Member Cornegy has been a great
22 supporter of the Woodhull Community Residence, a
23 supportive housing development planned for part of
24 Woodhull Hospital's parking lot in Brooklyn. These
25 are just a few examples of the partnerships we have
received from the Council throughout the last few

2 years to build more and better supportive housing
3 projects, but we can always use more help.

4 When proposing a new supporting housing
5 project, we often hear unfounded assumptions about
6 how the project will impact the surrounding
7 neighborhood, or questions about how we choose a
8 specific site and whether we are building supportive
9 housing exclusively in low-income communities. We
10 need your help to address these neighborhood concerns
11 and shatter any myth that supportive housing is bad
12 for communities or concentrated in certain
13 neighborhoods.

14 Many of our largest and oldest supportive
15 housing projects, such as the Times Square Hotel and
16 the Christopher, both in Council Member Corey
17 Johnson's district, have operated in high-value
18 neighborhoods for decades, proving that supportive
19 housing projects are successful components of the
20 neighborhoods' urban fabric. The high concentration
21 of supportive housing apartments in southern
22 Manhattan is also an important tool for affirmatively
23 furthering fair housing across the city. More than
24 three-fourths of DHS shelter entrants lived in the
25 outer boroughs before they became homeless. Upon

3 exiting the shelter system, many were provided with
4 the opportunity to live in one of the numerous
5 supportive housing apartments located in high-value
6 Manhattan neighborhoods.

7 Unfortunately, the reality is that the
8 homelessness crisis disproportionately affects people
9 of color and their children. The persistence of
10 racism and racial inequality in our country has
11 created structural inequities that subject people of
12 color to greater vulnerabilities that can threaten
13 their housing. Income, health, and educational
14 disparities both contribute to homelessness among
15 people of color and are intensified by it, creating a
16 negative feedback loop that allows racial inequality
17 to persist in our city. Greater production of
18 supportive and homeless housing can help bring an end
19 to this cycle. We need your support for the creation
20 of homeless housing as a means of engendering racial
21 justice. We have the capital resources, we have the
22 term sheets, we have the production teams needed to
23 tackle this crisis, but we need your support and
24 influence in your communities to ensure that all of
25 our projects that serve homeless households can
become a reality.

3 We are often forced to reduce or
4 eliminate homeless set-asides to garner support for
5 our projects, which minimizes our ability to make
6 inroads into ending homelessness in our city. As you
7 engage in public and private discussions on this
8 issue in your communities and with fellow elected
9 officials, we need your help in combating the
10 misperceptions associated with homeless housing.
11 I'll describe five ways we're looking for your help.

12 You can continue to be partners in this effort by:

13 1. Explaining that homeless individuals
14 and families are fellow New Yorkers who have fallen
15 on hard times and who need our genuine support the
16 most.

17 2. Illustrate that the very ELI and VLI
18 (Extremely Low Income and Very Low Income)
19 constituents we are all so fervently seeking to
20 support are the same individuals and families who
21 cycle in and out of the shelter system and who will
22 benefit the most from increased homeless and
23 supportive housing production.

24 3. Communicate to communities that they
25 cannot be both opposed to the siting of homeless
shelters and to the siting of permanent homeless and

3 supportive housing that would ultimately reduce the
4 need for shelters. One is a key solution to the
5 other, and opposing them both unfortunately gets us
6 nowhere.

7 4. Explain that homelessness
8 disproportionately affects people of color. Fear of
9 homeless housing is too often rooted in racism and
10 presents a barrier to its creation in more
11 neighborhoods throughout the city. We respectfully
12 need your help in unmasking this opposition so that
13 more homeless and supportive housing apartments can
14 ultimately serve the city's communities of color.

15 5. Dispel the myths about supportive
16 housing and homelessness and spread the facts that
17 will enable us to tackle this crisis.

18 We are all in this together, so I will be
19 leaning on all of you to do what you can to ensure
20 that we continue to create new opportunities for
21 homeless New Yorkers. We should build on the example
22 set just last week when we worked collaboratively
23 with the Council to successfully overcome challenges
24 in the Edwin's Place project. With the Council's
25 vote of support, we will be bringing 125 affordable

3 apartments, including 78 supportive housing
4 apartments, to Brownsville through this project.

5 I extend my sincerest gratitude to all of
6 you for your ongoing help defending City, State, and
7 especially Federal resources that are used to create
8 homeless housing, and I look forward to building on
9 our work together with our many partners both in the
10 Council and in the Administration so that we can
11 begin to turn the tide on homelessness once and for
12 all.

13 Thank you for your time and attention,
14 and my colleague and I would be more than happy to
15 now take questions.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
17 Commissioner Torres Springer. We've been joined by
18 Council Member Rosie Mendez, Council Member Eric
19 Ulrich, and Council Member Rafael Salamanca, and
20 Council Member Salamanca has a statement to make on
21 behalf of his legislation that is being heard today.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you,
23 Chair Levin and Chair Williams and members of the
24 Committees. I would like to thank you for the
25 opportunity for hearing on two pieces of legislation
that I believe are very important in ensuring that

3 most of the most vulnerable families in our
4 communities have safe places to call home.

5 A little less than a year ago my
6 community Hunts Point was shocked and deeply saddened
7 when two young girls lost their lives in a tragic
8 accident at home. With their families living in what
9 is known as cluster sites, the Ambrose sisters, ages
10 1 and 2, were killed when a faulty radiator in their
11 bedroom blew and spewed hot steam throughout the
12 room, leaving those two beautiful young girls with
13 fatal burns. It was later found that the operator of
14 this cluster site, the Bushwick Economic Development
15 Corporation (BEDCO) was negligent. Since 2004, the
16 Brooklyn-based not-for-profit had received at least
17 \$116 million in City contracts to run traditional
18 shelters in cluster-site housing, where homeless
19 families are placed in units in privately-owned
20 apartment buildings. Fortunately, since this tragic
21 incident, the Mayor's Office of Contract Services and
22 the Department of Investigation has opened a probe on
23 how it's used its funding and subsequently seized all
24 contracts with BEDCO and created a sequence of steps
25 to weeding out bad actors and ensure a true
accountability for safety in cluster sites. Of

3 course, the Administration has also committed to
4 shutting down all clusters in the near future.

5 With that said, as we continue to keep
6 the Ambrose girls in our thoughts and prayers, I
7 believe that the City leaders still have the ability
8 and the authority to make changes that could help to
9 prevent this from happening in the future.

10 Intro 1524, sponsored by myself, would
11 require DHS to inspect radiators during any
12 inspection related to health, safety, or physical
13 conditions of a homeless shelter. Intro 1524 would
14 take effect immediately. And I am remiss if I did
15 not say that this bill is also at the behest of the
16 Bronx Borough President.

17 Intro 1529, Council Member Vacca's
18 legislation, also at the behest of the Bronx Borough
19 President, would require DHS to report to the Council
20 and post on its website information about its plans
21 to phase out the existing stock of cluster site
22 shelters. The bill would include metrics to assess
23 whether existing cluster sites should be converted to
24 use as permanent housing for homeless families
25 residing in cluster sites or another homeless family;
be converted to a standalone shelter for homeless

2 families; or no longer be used by the department as a
3 shelter or permanent housing for a homeless family.

4 The bill would require DHS to submit to the Council
5 and post on its website the metrics used to develop
6 the plan which would include but not be limited to
7 the following:

8 a. The condition of the cluster site;

9 b. Whether the owner of the building and
10 the provider on the contract with DHS to provide to
11 operate the cluster site within such buildings have
12 cooperated with DHS in maintaining the cluster sites;

13 c. Whether the cluster site is rent-
14 regulated, and;

15 d. Whether the homeless family is
16 residing in the cluster sites have expressed an
17 interest in remaining in the cluster site as tenants.

18 While it has been a year since the tragic
19 incident in my district, it is my belief that without
20 real action to address these problems that led to two
21 children losing their lives, the same could happen
22 again in the future. While DHS and others are making
23 strides to fix these issues administratively, as
24 always, I believe there is a role the Council can
25 play by codifying and requiring established by these

3 two bills to ensure important procedures will survive
4 in future administrations, as well as phasing out
5 current, unjust infrastructure indefinitely.

6 I urge you to join me in supporting this
7 legislation, and again, I thank you, Mr. Chairs for
8 your time.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
10 Council Member Salamanca, and thank you for taking on
11 these pieces of legislation in honor of these two
12 children that lost their lives.

13 So Commissioners, I'll ask a few
14 questions and then I'll turn it over to my co-chair,
15 and then we'll hear from other Council Members as
16 well, and I'll be sensitive to your time as well.

17 So I just want to get kind of some big
18 picture questions in here so that we can kind of get
19 a sense of what HPD is doing with regard to the
20 system as a whole.

21 Mayor de Blasio announced earlier in his
22 first term his housing plan, which was for 200,000
23 affordable units preserved or built; correct?

24 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: That's
25 right.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: What percentage at
3 that time of those units were to be set aside for
4 families exiting the shelter system?

5 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: So, as
6 you've mentioned, Council Member, the original goal
7 was for 200,000 units and 20 percent of those units
8 being for extremely low and very low-income families.
9 That has since been accelerated and expanded to
10 300,000 by 2026, and the target for ELI/VLI, or
11 deeply affordable, was raised to 25 percent. Thus
12 far in the plan we have financed 6,500 units for
13 formerly homeless households that represent about 8
14 percent of the units financed to date.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, so 8 percent of
16 the units financed to date are for families...
17 [interpose]

18 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Formerly
19 homeless households.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: formerly homeless
21 households.

22 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Correct.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is that the target?
24 What is the target in terms of... of the overall number
25 of units preserved or constructed?

2 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: The work
3 that... [interpose]

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: 'Cause I understand..
5 'cause there's a lot of New Yorkers that are VLI and
6 ELI that are not homeless, right; that are in rent-
7 stabilized housing or in otherwise, you know doubled-
8 up housing, other types of precarious housing
9 situations; not necessarily in the shelter system
10 itself. So I just want to be clear; what is the
11 objective in terms of the number of that -- so I was
12 going to first ask about the 200,000, but now the
13 300,000; how many of those units do we hope, is our
14 expectation, is our goal to be going to families
15 exiting the shelter system?

16 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER:
17 Absolutely. So of the 300,000, the target for
18 extremely low and very low is 25 percent... [interpose]

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

20 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: we have
21 been doing 80 percent... [crosstalk]

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And how do you
23 define... sorry; how do you define very low and
24 extremely low?
25

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS 52

2 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Extremely
3 low for a family of three is \$24,000 and [background
4 comment] 48..

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So if we go by AMI,
6 it's..

7 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: That's
8 right, 30 percent AMI is extremely low and very low
9 is [background comments] 30-50 percent of AMI.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: 30-50 percent?

11 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: That's
12 correct.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, so up to 50
14 percent AMI is very low; up to 30 percent AMI is
15 extremely.. [crosstalk]

16 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Extremely
17 low. That's correct.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

19 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: And so
20 we've done to date 8 percent of our units for
21 homeless households; last year represents -- and
22 we're doing it at a faster clip -- the production
23 last year [background comment] 2,500 represents the
24 highest number or share of that that we've seen in a
25 long time. But to be very clear, 'cause I think this

2 point is important in terms of setting targets..

3 [interpose]

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right..

5 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: which I
6 know is your specific process [sic].. [crosstalk]

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: percentage-wise.

8 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Supportive
9 units are a part of that; the other piece of those
10 [background comment] units are what we call general
11 set-asides, so the number of homeless units that are
12 part of our regular term sheet programs that do not
13 have the on-site social services.. [crosstalk]

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

15 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: that
16 supportive housing does, right?

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

18 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: And we
19 have set in this Administration minimum targets -- 10
20 percent for our ELLA program, 10 percent for Mix and
21 Match; it's higher for SARA; it's higher for
22 supportive housing.. [interpose]

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: For formerly
24 homeless?

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

54

2 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: That's
3 correct.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay... [crosstalk]

5 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: But I
6 mention that because it's important to note that
7 meeting those targets, even the 10 percent for
8 [background comment] our ELLA program, that requires
9 continued partnership and support with the community
10 and with the City Council.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: It does? Like... so
12 there's exceptions to that -- so 10 percent is the
13 set-aside... [crosstalk]

14 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: To...

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: but then there are
16 exceptions to the set-aside...? [crosstalk]

17 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: To the
18 extent that a project goes through the public
19 approval process, and some businesses a rezoning is
20 needed, disposition...

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

22 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: what we
23 have seen, what we have experienced is that there are
24 a number of instances of where there is a desire for
25 that 10 percent to be pushed down, and we work very

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
2 COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

55

3 closely with the community and with all of the
4 members... [crosstalk]

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But if it's in the
6 term sheet... it's in the term sheet; is that right?

7 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Yes; those
8 are... [crosstalk]

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So the term sheet is...
10 I thought it's... it's not a definitive document;
11 there's... uh it's malleable...? [crosstalk]

12 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: It's a...
13 it's... it's... those are built for our very strong
14 guidelines for how we want the projects to work...
15 [interpose]

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How come HPD doesn't
17 just say to communities, that's the rule and...
18 [interpose]

19 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: And we
20 have said that; we said this is policy, and we have
21 said that directly to -- whether it's a community
22 board or members of City Council and what we find on
23 occasion, but it's enough to point out is that there
24 is sometimes resistance... [crosstalk]

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Ten percent of the
affordable units, right?

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS 56

2 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: That's
3 right.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So 10 percent... so if
5 a devel... [interpose]

6 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Of all the
7 units; most of our 100 percent affordable.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I see, okay. So,
9 sorry; I just want to kind of double-down on this
10 question.

11 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Of the 300,000 units,
13 what percentage of those units is it the goal of this
14 Administration to go to formerly homeless, people
15 coming out the shelter system?

16 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Right. So
17 we've done 8 percent thus far; we hope that we can
18 maintain that and exceed it, but exceeding that
19 requires partnership with all levels of government,
20 including the City Council, because some of those
21 numbers, or the siting of supportive housing projects
22 is often a point of controversy and... [interpose]

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sure.

24 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER:
25 discussion.

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I appreciate that.

4 So my understanding was during Mayor Koch's third
5 term, when he did an ambitious 100,000-unit
6 affordable housing plan, they dedicated 15 percent of
7 their units to formerly homeless; is that consistent
8 with your understanding?

9 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: I don't
10 know that specific percentage.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That's what I have
12 been told, and I should go and read a little bit more
13 about that. However, I think that anybody would, you
14 know in understanding the homeless crisis that we
15 have in New York City, and really, anybody knowing
16 anybody in New York City that's facing a housing
17 challenge knows that, you know, there but for the
18 grace of God go I, you know a lot of New Yorkers are
19 one paycheck away from being at risk of becoming
20 homeless and at risk of entering the shelter system,
21 and I think that it is -- should be -- the goal of
22 this Administration to allocate at least 15 percent
23 of these affordable housing plan, whether it's newly
24 constructed or preserved units, should to explicitly
25 to people exiting the shelter system, whether they're
single adults or families, because there's another

3 issue with regard -- and you spoke a lot in your
4 testimony about supportive housing, you know two-
5 thirds or more of the people in shelter are in a
6 family, and supportive housing units are woefully..
7 and families are woefully underrepresented in terms
8 of supportive housing. So when we're talking about,
9 you know supportive housing by and large is available
10 to about a third of the people that are in shelter;
11 the other two-thirds are in a family setting, you
12 know, supportive housing doesn't really work for
13 them. And there are a lot of people who are homeless
14 for no other reason but for the economics of their
15 situation. [background comments] So I mean I strongly
16 urge that this Administration set out an ambitious
17 goal when it comes to the percentage; it should be 15
18 percent; it shouldn't be negotiable; it shouldn't be
19 something that community boards can whittle away at,
20 or Council Members whittle away at, we need housing
21 for people coming out of the shelter system,
22 otherwise we're going to have 60,000 in the shelter
23 system perpetually and HPD's contribution will just
24 be to keep that number static, which is not where any
25 of us want to be, you know, moving forward, so.

3 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: If I could
4 just mention a couple of points, based on your
5 comments, Council Member. We could not agree more
6 that we have to use every tool that we have; a lot
7 of, as I mentioned earlier, the individuals, the
8 ELI/VLI families who we're helping through the plan,
9 which is now the most ambitious in the country, are
10 the same families who are cycling in and out of the
11 shelter system, or who are close to, and so expanding
12 the Housing NY plan we believe is the number one
13 tool, just writ large, [background comment] because
14 it is the strongest tool that we have to prevent
15 homelessness. In order to get as many units as
16 possible, in particular for families, outside of
17 supportive, those are the set-asides in our various
18 term sheet programs, from ELLA to Mix and Match, and
19 those are precisely the ones and precisely the
20 projects and precisely the percentages that if just
21 left to us, [background comment] we would love to do
22 more of and we certainly want to continue working
23 with the City Council and work with you with the
24 community to make sure that the myths and
25 misconceptions and questions that often come as we

3 try to increase those numbers are addressed
4 effectively.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So can you take us
6 through the different types of housing that HPD has
7 jurisdiction over? So there are a number of
8 different programs, but I want to try to get a sense
9 of what those various housing options are and what
10 potential opportunities are in those options. So
11 like, for example, Mitchell-Lama housing; HPD has
12 oversight over Mitchell-Lama; HDFC, buildings that
13 were built under the 421-a program, or inclusionary
14 housing..

15 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: buildings that were
17 built with Low Income Housing Tax Credits,
18 [background comment] housing trust funds, [background
19 comment] State funding, HUD 202 Housing. So of those
20 types of housing programs, can you just give kind of
21 a broad overview of what those programs are and if
22 there is turnover in those programs, whether that is
23 an option for families and individuals coming out of
24 the shelter system?

25 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Yes. So I
think the most useful way to think about it or how we

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS 61

2 set requirements based on whether a program receives
3 our funding and it's a new construction program
4 versus a preservation program, and so for a lot of
5 the portfolios that you just mentioned as part of the
6 preservation financing [background comment] that we
7 have provided, there is also now -- and this too is
8 recent -- a requirement of 10-20 percent dedicated
9 for formerly homeless households upon turnover of
10 those units, because obviously for a preservation
11 project, people are in place; there's some vacancy,
12 but they turn over **[inaudible]**... [crosstalk]

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How many units are in
14 existing HPD programs? Altogether, if you were to
15 talk about all of the units that are under HPD's
16 jurisdiction, do you have like a total count for all
17 the programs...? [crosstalk]

18 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Well it
19 would... Let's get... I'd like to get back to you on
20 that; it depends on what the impetus is of the
21 question, because we have regulatory agreements and
22 our programs range from those where we provide a
23 significant funding and subsidy, [background comment]
24 to a small tax exemption, to a home repair loan, to
25 down payment assistance, and so the number of

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS 62

2 projects, [background comment] it varies and we'd be
3 [background comment] more than happy to zero in on
4 the right portfolio... [crosstalk]

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right; I mean I'm
6 talking about rental housing that either you have a
7 regulatory agreement with and provided substantial
8 capital for, are within... you know and HDFC, which I
9 imagine would fall under regulatory agreement...

10 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Only 20
11 percent of HDFCs are under regulatory agreement.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Or Mitchell-
13 Lamas, for example.

14 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Okay. So
15 we'd be more than happy to compile that.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. My guess is
17 it's in the hundreds of thousands, right? I would
18 say that there are probably over 100,000 units in New
19 York City that have some... [interpose]

20 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: I'm
21 getting nods from my team, so yes. Okay... [crosstalk]

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, so some nexus
23 with HPD, right. Okay.

24 So for example then, a building that was
25 built in 1995 with HPD funds that's under... and low-

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
2 COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

63

3 income... you know, was assembled with low-income
4 housing tax credits, HPD and housing trust funds;
5 when those units are turning over now, that would
6 fall under... this 10-20 percent would be made
7 available to families moving out of the shelter
8 system?

9 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: I'm going
10 to ask our Deputy Commissioner Molly Park for that
11 particular program if the set-asides exist or -- I'm
12 sure they've changed over time, and so we'd have to
13 look at **[inaudible]**.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right. Okay.

15 MOLLY PARK: Hi, Molly Park; I'm Deputy
16 Commissioner for Development with HPD. For any of
17 those buildings that come into HPD for refinancing,
18 repositioning, and additional rehab loans so that we
19 are touching them today... [interpose]

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

21 MOLLY PARK: yes, we absolutely impose
22 that requirement. If there was no homeless
23 requirement that was imposed at the time, back in
24 1995, and they are not interacting with us today, we
25 can't unilaterally add that onto what they have to
do, but any time they come to us seeking anything,

3 any time we have a point of leverage, [background
4 comment] we apply that requirement.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Because that
6 is, obviously, I mean, you know one of the things
7 about referencing the Koch plan, back in the 80s and
8 90s there were so many vacant lots in New York City
9 and large swaths of, whether it be in Brooklyn or in
10 the Bronx and Queens where you had not-for-profit
11 purpose-built affordable housing -- 202s, you know
12 just regular affordable housing -- that to this day
13 maintains its affordable status. So as they are now
14 coming in for additional refinancing or additional
15 capital loan, every one of those -- now why is there
16 flexibility; why is it 10-20 percent? Is there any
17 leverage that HPD has to ensure that that is on the
18 higher end of that spectrum and not on the lower end;
19 that's a big difference, right... [crosstalk]

20 MOLLY PARK: Yeah, uhm...

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: you know 10-20
22 percent of 100,000 is an additional 10,000 units.

23 MOLLY PARK: Understood. [background
24 comment] So we look at it where there is a rent
25 subsidy that is attached to the building, so where
there is project-based assistance, we go with the

3 hither number; if there isn't project-based
4 assistance, we go with the lower tier, because we
5 need to make sure that the buildings are financially
6 sustainable over time.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I heard from somebody
8 that there is a complication when it comes to their
9 financing with their banks; have you encountered any
10 difficulty when it comes to -- because a lot of
11 these, if they're a Low-Income Housing Tax Credit,
12 you know or other types of projects where there are
13 other regulatory agreements between a developer and
14 whoever owns the tax credits; is there any challenge
15 in that regard, or is that not something that you've
16 encountered, 'cause I heard that?

17 MOLLY PARK: It's not usually an issue;
18 where we have to look at that is if we are requiring
19 homeless set-asides and there are no rental subsidies
20 associated with that; [background comment] we either
21 have to structure the rents so that they are
22 affordable to a household that's on public
23 assistance, which is what we do now in our Our Space
24 program with new construction, [background comment]
25 or we have to provide a rental subsidy.
Historically, that rental subsidy has been Section 8,

2 which you know, may or may not be available; now that
3 we have City-based rental subsidies, we're able to be
4 a little bit more flexible. So there has to be,
5 essentially, an escape clause if they are
6 underwritten at the higher levels and there is no
7 rental subsidy, but at this point that's not really
8 an issue because there are such robust City rental
9 subsidies.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Not every family
11 coming out of shelter can qualify for a rental
12 subsidy, correct?

13 COMMISSIONER BANKS: That's correct...
14 [crosstalk]

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right...

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think you've had
17 hearings on that.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So there are families
19 that don't qualify for a rental subsidy; could they
20 still qualify for HPD housing?

21 MOLLY PARK: Again, it depends very much
22 on the specific funding sources that are in there; we
23 use Low-Income Housing Tax Credits very frequently,
24 which is a Federal program that has federal
25 restrictions associated with it, but [background

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
2 COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

67

3 comment] one of the things that has been a real
4 innovation of HPD's over the recent years is
5 underwriting units to the shelter rents so that they
6 are affordable to a household that does not have a
7 rental subsidy, so that gives us a lot more
8 flexibility.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because in order to
10 qualify for PA, you have to be significantly lower
11 than 30 percent of AMI.

12 MOLLY PARK: Correct. So the homeless...
13 [crosstalk]

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: **[inaudible]**...

15 MOLLY PARK: when we are underwriting a
16 homeless unit in one of our new construction
17 programs, it is below the 30 percent AMI threshold,
18 so the rents on those units are a few hundred dollars
19 a month.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

21 COMMISSIONER BANKS: If I could be
22 helpful.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sure.

24 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Some families come
25 out of shelter with one of our rental assistance

3 programs and some families are linked to units where
4 the subsidy is with the unit, so it's like a project-
5 based.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uhm-hm, project-based
7 Section 8, right. And then are there... when families
8 are coming out, are they... so they're then pegged... So
9 there will be... sorry. If there are families coming
10 out of shelter and into a set-aside unit, are they
11 only for the ELI or can they also be for VLI; can
12 they also -- in other words, does the provider, does
13 the not-for-profit provider have the opportunity to
14 fill some of that set-aside with families making up
15 to 50 percent of AMI? Because one thing I also heard
16 was that there's a challenge because if a not-for-
17 profit has a waiting list of, you know, of many
18 people at a very low-income, or extremely low-income
19 at 30 percent or lower, you know then the set-aside
20 is filling those units that they have available for
21 extremely low-income and then that waiting list, you
22 know, people that are on that waiting list don't have
23 necessarily the access to those units, so is there
24 flexibility that a not-for-profit has to say we can
25 fill some of our 40 percent or some of our 50 percent

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS 69

2 AMI units with families coming out of the shelter;
3 not just the 30 percent or lower?

4 MOLLY PARK: So I'm going to take a stab
5 and if I'm not answering your question correctly...

6 [interpose]

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

8 MOLLY PARK: please let me know.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

10 MOLLY PARK: So one of the things that we
11 did in the term sheet revisions that we did this
12 spring was really ensure that all of our new
13 construction programs have both a tier of homeless
14 units and a tier of the 30 percent AMI units...

15 [interpose]

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I'm not talking about
17 new; I'm talking about these ones that we have been
18 talking about, the [background comment] refinancing
19 ones or... [interpose]

20 MOLLY PARK: Okay. Alright, thank you,
21 that's a helpful clarification. So in that case, if
22 we have imposed homeless restriction that wasn't
23 there previously, [background comment] as units turn
24 over, those have to be rented to families coming out
25 of the shelter system, until you get to the

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS 70

2 percentage that is set in the regulatory agreement
3 and at that point... [crosstalk]

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I see. So they get
5 first dibs?

6 MOLLY PARK: Correct.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, until whatever
8 it is, the 10-20 percent is met... [crosstalk]

9 MOLLY PARK: Correct.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: and then the regular
11 waiting list takes over.

12 MOLLY PARK: Correct.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, that's helpful.
14 And that doesn't matter what income level that is, so
15 the families coming out of the shelter system --
16 there's people who are in shelter obviously that are
17 working, that are... [crosstalk]

18 MOLLY PARK: Yes, correct.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: making 40-50 percent
20 of AMI.

21 MOLLY PARK: Correct.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Okay, that's
23 all very helpful. And this effort was undertaken in
24 the last year or two or was this something that's
25 been underway for longer?

2 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Well the
3 term sheets and the 10 percent for ELLA and for Mix
4 and Match [background comment] earlier this year,
5 [background comment] we made that change; for
6 supportive housing, that model has been around for a
7 while, so those percentages have been used, and on
8 preservation projects within this Administration, and
9 Molly will correct me if it was sooner than that, but
10 within this Administration.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uhm-hm. So more than
12 just the last year; that's been underway for a couple
13 of years? So brand new developments under MIH... So I
14 read in the Turning the Tide Plan that anything that
15 was done with 421-a, that 50 percent of those units,
16 of the affordable units, were to be set aside for
17 families exiting the shelter system -- that's in page
18 something in the housing section of Turning the Tide
19 -- I just read it before I came down here, so
20 [laughter] I'm pretty sure that's what it says.

21 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Not exactly. It's
22 50 percent of the community units...

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right. Okay.
24
25

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS 72

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: and it's under the
3 then-existing 421-a program, which has been changed
4 at the state level since the book was...

5 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: That's
6 right... [crosstalk]

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So then does that now
8 apply to the new 421-a?

9 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: The
10 community preference is not part of the new 421-a
11 program... [interpose]

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But it's part of the
13 MIH, right, community preference is part of MIH?

14 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Well with
15 MIH projects, the way to think about it is that two
16 the extent that there is HPD subsidy and we're using
17 term sheets, then our... because not all MIH projects
18 have HPD... [interpose]

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Well most of them
20 would have 421-a... [crosstalk]

21 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: have HPD
22 [sic] subsidy.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: right, will have 421-
24 a?

25

3 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER:

4 [background comment] Yeah, thus far... [crosstalk]

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I mean most
6 developers will take both, you know, both subsidies,
7 both from MIH, the density bonus, and the 421-a.

8 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: But in
9 terms of the homeless set-asides, we have... if an MIH
10 project uses City subsidy, then the relevant minimum
11 requirements that we had been talking about apply,
12 and so if it's an ELLA or a Mix Match; then it's 50
13 [sic] percent... [crosstalk]

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, but there are
15 plenty of private developments that won't be ELLA or
16 Mix and Match; they will be 421-a MIH projects...
17 [crosstalk]

18 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: And they
19 go through the lottery **[inaudible]**. That's right,
20 and so they have the standard community preference
21 that we are implementing today.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And that would be
23 that there [background comment] would be a homeless
24 set-aside? [background comment] In a project that
25 is a private development, 421-a MIH project, or just

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

74

2 an MIH project, 421-a aside, is there a homeless set-
3 aside in an MIH project?

4 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: I don't...
5 uh the answer's no.

6 MARGARET BROWN: No, if it is MIH that is
7 not financed by HPD or is not under the old 421-a
8 program, it would not have a homeless set-aside.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Oh, okay, but there's
10 a new 421-a, right?

11 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: That's
12 correct.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So how come there
14 wouldn't be a homeless set-aside within the new
15 421-a... [crosstalk]

16 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: The
17 homeless set-asides are part of the community
18 preference; policy language in old 421-a; that no
19 longer exi... that... [crosstalk]

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Not in the State... Not
21 in the... Not in the... Not in the statute; it was in
22 the... that was in HPD... that was in HPD... [crosstalk]

23 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: It was in
24 the statute.

25

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
2 COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

75

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That was in the
4 statute.

5 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: The
6 community preference was in the statute; it is now...
7 [crosstalk]

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Community...

9 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: no longer
10 part of the 421-a statute.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The homeless set-
12 aside language was in the statute?

13 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: The
14 community preference, from which half... the way it
15 worked... [crosstalk]

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

17 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: is that
18 there was community preference language in 421-a...
19 [interpose]

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

21 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: half of
22 the community preference units we implemented to be
23 set aside for homeless families... [interpose]

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right; let me stop
25 you there. Okay, so from whence does that policy
derive? Where does that policy come from?

3 MARGARET BROWN: That policy is...
4 [background comment] I'm sorry; the 50 percent
5 homeless requirement is... [interpose]

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Correct.

7 MARGARET BROWN: it was implemented by
8 virtue of the HPD Marketing Handbook, so as a policy
9 through the lottery program.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, so then there's
11 nothing that would prevent HPD from implementing the
12 very same requirement today on a new 421-a and a new
13 MIH if it wasn't... In other words, there's nothing
14 that would prevent you from doing that under the
15 enabling legislation of 421-a or MIH; is that right?

16 MARGARET BROWN: The challenge is that
17 the policy was implemented by saying that a portion
18 of preference units must be used for formerly
19 homeless households. Where there is not a
20 preference, there is not that same mechanism to do
21 that.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But there's
23 preference in MIH.

24 MARGARET BROWN: Yes, but it was specific
25 to the 421-a community preference that was put in.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS 77

2 Honestly, I don't know the flexibility we would have
3 to do [sic] with that... [crosstalk]

4 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Yeah. But
5 also, to the extent... wherever we have the ability,
6 because different projects use different programs,
7 right; either MIH, 421-a; City capital, and where we
8 are able, standalone 421-a, as part of the new
9 statute; no longer has community preference. If
10 there are other projects with MIH and City capital,
11 we use the strongest tool we have to get as many
12 affordable units, as deeply affordable units and...
13 [crosstalk]

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Understood..

15 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: homeless
16 set-aside.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I just don't
18 understand why an MIH project that has a
19 community preference -- as they all do -- would
20 not have the ability to have the same requirement
21 that HPD established in the prior 421-a on a
22 current MIH. If there's a community preference
23 -- you did it before on old 421-a's; you should
24 be able if there's... I don't understand what
25 prevents HPD from saying that 50 percent of

3 community preference units should go to people
4 that are formerly homeless [background comment]
5 in an MIH project.

6 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: And so
7 what...

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because there will be
9 a lot of MIH projects.

10 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: I
11 understand the question, and part of the answer
12 goes back to our conversations with the community
13 and with the City Council about the community
14 preference and to whom and how those units are
15 distributed. For every thought that the set-
16 aside should also apply to homeless households,
17 we also hear feedback; we want to make sure
18 they're made available to... [crosstalk]

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because I...

20 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: as many
21 community residents as possible [inaudible] more
22 than... [crosstalk]

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I would say that they
24 should come out of the general population and not
25 the community preference. I mean community
preference is right now being litigated in

3 federal court, so I don't even know if community
4 preference will stand the test of time, but even
5 if it doesn't stand, that should come out of
6 somewhere; there should be a homeless set-aside
7 in MIH, and if we have to legislate that, I mean
8 we'll explore that, but that should be... I don't
9 understand why that's not within the jurisdiction
10 of HPD to impose.

11 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Okay. I
12 got it. [background comments]

13 [pause]

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Sorry. Thank
15 you so much, Commissioners. I too want to just
16 do some broader stuff first, but first I just
17 want to mention -- I think it was in Commissioner
18 Banks' hearing [sic] -- 70 percent of the shelter
19 system census now consists of families and 34
20 percent of the families with children have an
21 adult who is working; at the same time, domestic
22 violence is a major driver of homelessness, with
23 30 percent of the families with children in the
24 DHS shelter system having a history of domestic
25 violence. I want to make sure we put that on the
record and wanted to highlight that for folks who

3 watch this at home -- a lot of them do, actually,
4 it's surprising. But I... [background comment]
5 yeah. But I want to make sure we say that,
6 because there seems to be some misconception of
7 what homeless means and who homeless people are
8 and who gets affected, so I just wanted to make
9 sure that we had that on the record and clarified
10 and highlighted, abundantly.

11 I do have a few questions. My first one
12 -- I always try to figure out why we seem to have
13 two different plans -- one for homelessness and
14 one for housing -- we have two different
15 commissioners; two different deputy mayors who
16 seem to be traveling kind of along each other
17 when it seems to me they should be combined, so
18 can you just help me understand the thought
19 process behind it?

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well one thing I
21 want to just say at the outset is; the Turning
22 the Tide plan incorporates the Housing New York
23 plan, and I know Council Member Levin recently
24 was looking at it; there's a whole chapter on
25 permanent housing that references the resources
that HPD is providing to us in order to deliver

3 that plan, including supportive housing,
4 including the housing for seniors of which we've
5 got more than 2,000 seniors in our system now,
6 the 421-a units, and so there's a joint approach,
7 a joint plan; we meet, the commissioner level and
8 our staff level once a month; we are on the phone
9 constantly, including all day Friday. So I think
10 you may see two different agencies, but you see a
11 very collaborative effort together.

12 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: And if I
13 could just add, Chair Williams, the Turning the
14 Tide Plan is the one unified vision; all of the
15 strategies and an entire chapter of Turning the
16 Tide relate to all of the different programs that
17 are under HPD's purview, which we've been
18 implementing with much speed and with a lot of
19 urgency -- 6,500 units financed to date -- that
20 is a clip that has gotten faster in every year
21 since the start of the Administration. And so
22 while the physical documents might seem like two
23 different things; we're not just traveling side
24 by side; we're, you know, traveling hand in hand,
25 because in order for the Turning the Tide Plan to
realize its full potential, the Housing New York

3 plan has to work alongside it, and in fact, the
4 coordination is constant and we're always looking
5 to find better ways to deepen our work.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: So for clarity,
7 you're saying there's one plan and it's Turning
8 the Tide; is that correct?

9 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: That is
10 the one unified vision for preventing
11 homelessness and for addressing homelessness that
12 includes in it all of the Housing New York
13 strategies that are relevant to that mission.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay. And why
15 do we need two commissioners and two deputy
16 mayors? Particularly the deputy mayor level, I
17 don't understand that; it seems if we're
18 coordinating this... [background comment] Okay.
19 I'm trying to understand why we need that for one
20 unified vision.

21 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Well... and
22 I'll start and the Commissioner can answer.
23 While there are two deputy mayors, the
24 coordination between them is also as robust as it
25 is between us, and I think the other point is
that tackling homelessness is not just the work

3 of one agency or one deputy mayor; in order for
4 us to use all of the tools throughout the
5 Administration it requires everyone. Our work of
6 course is more intense, but having two deputy
7 mayors I don't think is a negative; in fact,
8 having two deputy mayors focused on this is
9 testament to how urgently we are trying to
10 address this need.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I hear what
12 you're selling; I'm not sure that I'm buying it.
13 [laughter, background comments] It just seems to
14 me, just from a management point of view,
15 coordination is better when it's streamlined, and
16 I think, thankfully, the Administration is now
17 talking about it more streamlined; I don't think
18 it was at the beginning, I think it's getting
19 there now, but my point of view is, particularly
20 two deputy mayors talking to two different
21 commissioners, it's just like unnecessary
22 bureaucracy [background comment] for one of the,
23 if not the most pressing issue that we have in
24 the city right now.

25 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I mean as you know
-- and there have been prior hearings on this --

3 one of the significant management changes we made
4 was integrating the Human Resources
5 Administration and the Department of Homeless
6 Services, after 20 years of having those be
7 separated during a 20-year period of time in
8 which homelessness increased 115 percent in the
9 city; one of the findings of the **[inaudible]** last
10 year was to make that management change and to
11 integrate the two agencies; we've fully completed
12 the integration earlier this year, and we think
13 that that's providing significant management
14 reforms and the collaboration with HPD builds
15 upon that as well.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I just feel the
17 more we have a singular voice speaking about
18 homelessness and housing, it just joins the two
19 together, because very often we are talking about
20 it separately; even though you say there's one
21 document that includes all of them, it just seems
22 to be talking about it separately, that's just my
23 point of view, something I've been pushing;
24 hopefully you run that up the chain to figure out
25 how to streamline it a little bit more.

3 I think also in Commissioner Banks'
4 testimony there was a great number of things that
5 have enhanced the service and assistance, you
6 listed a whole bunch of initiatives, which are
7 great; I think 80-90 percent of them germinated
8 from the City Council, so and I want to just give
9 a tap on the shoulder, pat on the back to the
10 City Council for what they have done. That I
11 also wanted to mention because a lot of it the
12 Administration comes through kicking and
13 screaming and I think we have been correct, since
14 I see them here in the testimony, which leads me
15 to a few more questions.

16 I just wanted to clarify, with the term
17 sheets, the set-asides are mandatory or they're
18 not mandatory?

19 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: I would
20 characterize them as very strong guidelines which
21 we try to enforce in every which way and to the
22 extent, and we're certainly very hard on
23 development teams, and we essentially require
24 them to do it, and to the extent that those set-
25 asides are decreased, those are instances in

3 which we have faced either significant community
4 and/or Council opposition or question.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: So I just want
6 to know if there's a legal terminology problem;
7 are you just... [background comment] are you saying
8 it's not mandatory so there's some room to
9 negotiate?

10 [background comment]

11 MOLLY PARK: It's not a legal
12 requirement. When we, HPD, are in negotiations
13 with the development team, we do not have
14 internal negotiations that reduce those numbers.
15 When we are going through a public approval
16 process and it is a question of losing the
17 project in its entirety or adjusting the homeless
18 set-aside, which is unfortunately a situation we
19 have found ourselves in, we do on occasion adjust
20 that number.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Do you ever
22 make it zero?

23 MOLLY PARK: Not that I can think of, but
24 I, you know, hesitate to say never.

25 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Is there
something preventing us from making it legally

3 mandated or you just want to have the continued
4 flexibility?

5 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Well we
6 want to have as many homeless set-aside units in
7 our projects. It's a question of continued
8 negotiations and discussions, frankly, with the
9 City Council, because each particular members
10 may, for a number of reasons -- and they've asked
11 to try to bring that number down -- so we, as a
12 policy matter, know what we want; we negotiate
13 hard with developers and so to the extent that it
14 comes down, it's because of the flexibility that
15 we want to make sure exists as part of the public
16 approval process... [interpose]

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Sure.

18 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: to get the
19 project done.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I just want... so
21 what I'm understanding is; it's not a legality;
22 you just want to make sure flexibility is there;
23 part of that is some of us pushing back on the
24 negotiations.

25 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: That's
part of it.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Now,

4 thankfully, there's a lot of changes happening in
5 the housing plan; again, I'm going to pat some of
6 the City Council on the back for those changes we
7 continue to push; with the new term sheets that
8 are strongly recommended I think is helpful; it
9 also takes away some of the issues that we have
10 with member deference in terms of having nothing
11 in many projects. I'm going to continue to
12 hammer home; I don't understand why we didn't do
13 this in MIH, I think the discussion would've been
14 a lot of easier if we had a broader kind of
15 policy zoning change than trying to do it as
16 piecemeal. So can you please explain to me why
17 the Administration did not support something like
18 this that was suggested by many people in MIH
19 [background comment] and why you chose to do it
20 piecemeal now?

21 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Well I

22 wouldn't call it piecemeal; I'd say that we are
23 constantly trying to make the tools that we have
24 and policies that we have across our different
25 programs and in some ways it's like a little bit
of an alphabet soup; all of the programs that we

3 use and term sheets, but as aggressive as
4 possible in achieving our goals as it relates to
5 serving formerly homeless households, while at
6 the same time maintaining building feasibility
7 and project feasibility. As you might recall,
8 Council Member, Mandatory Inclusionary Housing,
9 getting that through the public approval process
10 was a very long and complicated effort and so
11 there were lots of differing opinions; at the end
12 of the day it passed and I know, because we've
13 spoken about this, that you have particular
14 concerns about the program, which I understand;
15 what I do know, at this point, is that we're
16 committed to making sure that that program is as
17 successful as possible and now have a tool where
18 we didn't before where any time housing is built,
19 any time there's a rezoning for growth, we can
20 now get affording housing; that is something that
21 we did not have before, it is a tool that is the
22 most powerful one that does not exist in other
23 cities, and so our goal is to, with both the
24 tools that we have today and with your
25 partnership and support, continue to look for
ways where our work can be improved.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Just want to be
4 clear -- so we didn't do exactly what we're doing
5 now in the term sheets, piecemeal, in a more
6 holistic zoning practice because you didn't
7 believe it would pass City Council?

8 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: No, no,
9 no; I was talking -- if there is something
10 specific that you wanted to... that **[inaudible]**
11 part of the question... [crosstalk]

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: But MIH -- very
13 specific [sic] -- the reason I voted against it
14 was 'cause I thought we should mandate
15 [background comment] a certain amount of
16 affordability in every project [background
17 comments] that was being rezoned; it seems that
18 we're doing that more piecemeal now, particularly
19 with the term sheets change. Why didn't we do
20 that when we were pushing for MIH?

21 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: I see the
22 question. So the addition of the \$1.9 billion in
23 the City capital budget and the changes to the
24 term sheets were made after we had a couple of
25 years, two and a half years of progress with the
new programs to make sure that they can work,

3 that they are the types of programs that
4 development teams are going to use and we can get
5 the housing built. Having two and a half years
6 of that progress under our belts, we essentially
7 doubled down on the commitment. And so I think
8 the point is, it's not that we're doing
9 piecemeal, but we really have realized -- and the
10 previous administration may have taken the tact
11 -- that the housing plan is not a static document
12 and we have to continually evolve, we have to
13 adapt it to changing environment and we have to
14 double down on the parts that work and rethink
15 the parts that don't, and so it's not piecemeal,
16 in my opinion; it's a reflection of us adjusting
17 to different realities on the ground.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: It sounds like
19 some of us on the Council and some of the
20 advocates who were chastised for pushing these
21 things just had I guess two and a half years more
22 vision than the Administration and that's
23 unfortunate because all the things we're talking
24 about were being talked about two and a half
25 years ago and we've lost two and a half years and
projects and units to address the housing crisis,

3 and I don't want to see that happen again. It's
4 similar with the numbers for the housing plan, as
5 everybody said they weren't at the right numbers;
6 we need to push and it seems like we're pushing
7 now, but again, we lost years and so I hope it's
8 going forward instead of chastising the folks who
9 are pushing, because we have to push at the times
10 when it's more tense, 'cause obviously we do
11 collaborate and we push things forward and we
12 have some good successes, and when it starts to
13 get tense, there's a lot of push-back on us,
14 those who are trying to voice opinions that we're
15 not where we need to be, and on advocates that
16 are often shown to be unreasonable. And the
17 things that we were asking for then were very
18 reasonable because we're doing them now and it's
19 just a frustrating thing to watch happen as I see
20 the housing and the homelessness crisis just
21 getting worse.

22 In terms of the set-asides, I'm actually
23 open to it; I know some of the advocates may
24 disagree, but I think we do need some of the
25 flexibility you're discussing in the term sheets,
but I just wanted to understand the legality of

3 it; I think each member should have some ability
4 to negotiate, I just don't think it should be
5 zero, so there should never be zero in terms of
6 the set-asides, particularly when it comes to
7 low-income and/or homeless.

8 With the housing plan, I think I heard
9 you say the new housing plan has 25 percent low
10 and very low-income **[inaudible]**... [crosstalk]

11 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Extremely
12 low and very low-income.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, so that's
14 very low and extremely low -- VLI and ELI.

15 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: That's
16 right.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: The population,
18 however, is 41.4 percent in those categories; why
19 does the number not match the population?

20 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: I'll say a
21 few things. The housing plan is meant to address
22 the needs of families and individuals at
23 different income bands. With extremely low and
24 very low, the target is 25 percent, but the
25 reality is that since the start of Housing New
York, more than 30 percent of production has been

3 for ELI/VLI, and in the last fiscal year it was
4 over 40 percent and so we are exceeding the goals
5 that we have established and our hope is to
6 continue to do that with the balance of the plan.
7 I'd remiss, however, if I didn't mention that in
8 order to ensure that it's a plan that meets the
9 needs of New Yorkers across the income spectrum
10 we're deeply committed to ELI/VLI, [background
11 comment] but the plan also has to make room, and
12 it does so in we believe a modest way, for
13 moderate and middle income families. The types
14 of families -- for instance, you can have a two-
15 person household, each making the minimum wage,
16 right, at full-time, and they are above 30
17 percent of AMI. You have families who are --
18 could be a firefighter and a teacher or a police
19 officer and a nurse; these are families who feel
20 like the New York that they helped build are
21 slipping away from their fingertips, and so while
22 we are deeply committed to ELI/VLI and we've
23 exceeded our target, we really are also of the
24 belief that the plan also has to serve families
25 who are in just great of a need at different
income levels.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: So I want to
3 make clear; I think the different income levels
4 need support, and I've always supported mixed-
5 income projects -- I'm actually sometimes
6 disappointed when projects are all at the lower
7 end, because I think we need to break up the
8 pockets of poverty in the city, but my question
9 is specifically: why are we not targeting a
10 product that meets who the city looks like? So
11 you've explained why we're targeting some of the
12 higher incomes, and I understand that, but if the
13 City now has 41.4 percent very low-income and
14 extremely low-income, why would the goals of the
15 housing plan not match that?

16 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Well in
17 terms of targeting a product, what I'll say is,
18 in part of the revision to our term sheets, all
19 of them now have significant percentages for 30
20 percent and 40 percent of ELI [sic], because like
21 you, we believe in having mixed-income projects
22 **[inaudible]**... [crosstalk]

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: You mean, uh 40
24 percent of AMI?
25

3 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: That's
4 correct...

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah.

6 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: right,
7 extremely low and very low. We believe in having
8 mixed-income projects, and we are exceeding thus
9 far -- you mentioned the percentage is about 40 -
10 - we did more than 40 percent of extremely low
11 and very low last fiscal year... [crosstalk]

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: But why not set
13 that as a goal?

14 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Because we
15 have to make sure that we are creating plans,
16 that we have a goal not just that we can achieve,
17 but we're also addressing and meeting the income
18 needs of different New Yorkers and also creating
19 buildings that are financially sustainable into
20 the future, and so we take great pains to make
21 sure not just that a building can be constructed,
22 but it has the type of economics that allow it to
23 be not just financially, but physically healthy
24 over the decades, because if not, it comes back
25 to the City and so our goal is 25 percent; we

3 have exceeded it thus far and we're always
4 looking to do more.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: And since this,
6 I was told, is one plan -- I would love for
7 Commissioner Banks to jump in any time as well --
8 but it sounds like you're saying we're afraid to
9 set a goal we won't reach? I just -- again,
10 [background comments] if about just under 60
11 percent of the population -- no, let me just keep
12 at this -- if 41.4 percent of the population is
13 where the largest need is, why does the housing
14 plan not match that need? The goal that we're
15 saying we want to achieve -- just percentage-
16 wise, not even a number, 'cause we can talk about
17 the number, but percentage-wise we're starting
18 off with the wrong target. So we can have a
19 discussion, if we set a target and figure out why
20 we didn't meet it, but I'm always upset if we're
21 setting a target that doesn't even match what the
22 problem is; how do we then solve the problem?

23 [background comments]

24 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Well we
25 don't think that -- setting the target, the 25
percent -- and it has been increased since the

3 beginning of the housing plan -- we believe is
4 the one that allows us to reach as many as we
5 can, given the resources that we have, that
6 solves for building feasibility, and it's also
7 important to remember that serving the most
8 vulnerable extremely low and very low-income
9 tenants does not stop and start with just the
10 production programs and so you really have to
11 view it, in my opinion, as part of the larger set
12 of tools that the City, with the partnership of
13 the City Council, has implemented over time to
14 start really balancing the equation in favor of
15 extremely low and very low-income families; it
16 includes the two years of rent freeze, it
17 includes legal services, it includes all of the
18 work that we do on the enforcement side to ensure
19 better housing conditions and so while I
20 understand your question about the goals...

[crosstalk]

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I wanna stop
22 there for a second...

23 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: it's one
24 of many tools to help this community... [interpose]

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: So the Housing
3 New York plan or the Turning the Tide plan does
4 not incorporate all the tools that we have
5 available; is that what you're saying?

6 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Well
7 everything that I mentioned is actually both in
8 the Turning the Tide plans as well as the Housing
9 New York plan.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: So then the
11 targets I'm talking about should the tools you
12 just mentioned.

13 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Well the
14 targets that we set are for projects that we had
15 financed and so these serve... [crosstalk]

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: So these
17 **[inaudible]** only for new construction financed?

18 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Or
19 preservation. Or preservation... [crosstalk]

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, so I
21 thought they were preservation.

22 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Yeah,
23 they're preservation.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I just want to
25 be clear...

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS 100

2 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Yeah.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: so the 25
4 percent is for the entirety of the plan preserved
5 and being built?

6 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Correct.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: But part of
8 that plan, you just said, includes the tools you
9 just mentioned -- the code enforcement, the rent
10 freezes -- [background comment] if they're
11 included in that plan, then I'm assuming they're
12 part of that 25 percent.

13 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: That
14 accounts specifically for projects that we
15 finance; the way to look at the other categories
16 [background comment] are people that we serve and
17 that number is quite significant -- as I
18 mentioned, given the reach of the rent freeze,
19 [background comment] the two years worth of rent
20 freeze, and all of the legal services
21 **[inaudible]**... [crosstalk]

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I see; this is
23 only where you're touching with dollars.

24

25

2 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Bricks and
3 mortar; think about them as the bricks and
4 mortar... [crosstalk]

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: So where is the
6 plan that covers everything?

7 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Well so
8 both Turning the Tide and Housing New York...

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Turning the
10 Tide includes everything?

11 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Yes, it
12 does.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Does Turning
14 the Tide [background comments] have a percentage?

15 COMMISSIONER BANKS: No, both the... I hear
16 what you're asking for, [background comment] the
17 Turning the Tide plan includes all the prevention
18 tools, all the tools to get people off the
19 streets, all of the tools to move people out of
20 shelter, ranging from the rental assistance
21 programs to the bricks and mortar programs; to
22 the after **[inaudible]**... [crosstalk]

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: So we have a
24 major crisis that I don't -- although I... and I
25 accept that it stopped getting worse; I do put

3 the prior administration at more fault, but we've
4 got it now, right, so I do agree... [interpose]

5 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Absolutely.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: that at least
7 it stopped going higher, but now it hasn't gotten
8 better, and so we're looking at the tools that we
9 have, which I think are good and they're fine and
10 I recommend them, but obviously not working to
11 push the tide down, and then you put a plan in
12 front that says there's only 25 percent of what
13 you're financing to meet 41.4 percent of
14 population and the need there and then say okay,
15 but we have the other tools, but those tools
16 aren't working anyway, so I'm trying to see what
17 we're doing to address it with some targeted,
18 some kind of focused goals, 'cause you've sent
19 out some goals.

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Let me just... I want
21 to challenge a little bit on something you said,
22 [background comment] because I think you're right
23 to credit the Council and the partnership between
24 the Administration and the Council, but for the
25 40,000 people that stayed in their homes because
of legal services and rent arrears payments, it's

3 working for them. For the 71,000 people that
4 have moved out of shelter or avoid going in
5 because of rental assistance the re-housing
6 programs, it's working for them, and we're
7 continually putting new pieces in place. The
8 supportive housing plan, the most ambitious plan
9 that has existed ever, is something that was
10 announced that everyone knew was going to take
11 two years to develop some of those initiatives.
12 So getting to a place where we've got a flat
13 census for the first time in a decade, is not
14 where we want to be but it's reflective of the
15 fact that there are tools in place that are
16 working. The question you're posing to us is;
17 how do we build on that; how do we go further
18 than stabilizing and breaking the trajectory?
19 Well the Turning the Tide plan provided a number
20 of tools to go further and together the two
21 agencies are working to do that.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: So one.. and
23 first of all, I will give the Administration and
24 the Mayor credit for just highlighting this and
25 pushing forward the plan; like I don't want to
discard that, Mayor Koch, as I mentioned, was the

3 last person to do that; we're doing it even
4 better, 'cause at least we're talking about
5 neighborhoods and Mayor Koch didn't, but to
6 challenge what you said, there's been a great
7 tension between social workers and community
8 organizers for a long time -- social workers like
9 to mention the numbers of people that they've
10 been helping; community organizers like to talk
11 about the power structure that needs to change to
12 help the masses of people, so I appreciate the
13 numbers that you put forward, but as a community
14 organizer in me, I'm very concerned when I see
15 targets that don't match the problem that we
16 have, and so I'm grateful that there are tools
17 there, but there are thousands and thousands of
18 people who are homeless and the crunch is getting
19 worse, lower at the bottom for people -- and by
20 the way, that doesn't even count the people who
21 are doubled and tripled up and so we don't even
22 have an accurate there, and so when I see a plan
23 that doesn't have the numbers, I'm saying we're
24 not where we need to be and we would push back
25 four years ago -- I'm gonna change the numbers
again [sic] -- and my hope is that we can just do

3 this immediately now. We don't have.. the plan is
4 not where it needs to be at this point in time --
5 I haven't done a deep dive into 2.0, so I'm going
6 to hopefully do that, but I'm very concerned at
7 the outset, if we have 41.4 percent of the
8 population at the low and very low-income but
9 only 25 percent of what we're trying to produce
or preserve is at that number.

10 I know my colleagues have questions; I
11 have a whole bunch of other questions that I'm
12 gonna ask... [interpose]

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, yeah.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: so I will pause
15 and let my colleagues jump in. Oh, we were
16 joined by Council Member Espinal and Council
17 Member Gibson.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Mr. Chair, before I
19 turn it over to Council Member Grodenchik, I just
20 have one... one question I just want to be able to
21 get to before turning it over to Barry. How many
22 units do you project each year will be able to go
23 families exiting the shelter system, so how many
24 units within HPD development?
25

2 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Based on
3 what we have seen -- just give me one second --
4 So we have Housing New York to date 4,500
5 placements... [interpose]

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: From the shelter
7 system?

8 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: correct,
9 and approximately 1,200 of those are not
10 supportive and therefore are more likely to be
11 for families and so that's what we've seen thus
12 far in terms of Housing New York; as more of
13 these projects come online I expect that number
14 to get bigger over time.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So 1,200 non-
16 supportive units...

17 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Thus far
18 under Housing New York.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: thus far, meaning
20 multiple... [interpose]

21 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Since
22 January 1, 2014.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Since January of
24 2014. Okay. So that's not... you know that's...
25 [interpose]

2 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: And that's
3 just... but to be very clear, those are just the
4 HPD programs and Commissioner Banks... [crosstalk]

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I understand we...
6 'cause I've had [background comment] Commissioner
7 Banks go over the CITYFEPS, LINC, SEPS move-outs,
8 you know...

9 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Right.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: so we know all of
11 those... [crosstalk]

12 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Right.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: but of the... so I mean
14 'cause this is important, this is... 'cause
15 supportive housing is... in large part, that's its
16 own initiative; it's the 15/15 or it was the
17 NY/NY's, you know did that in large part... do they
18 exist... they're going to continue to exist, you
19 know the supportive housing plans are a priority
20 unto themselves, right, so when we're talking
21 about what HPD's doing to address the two-thirds
22 of the people that are in shelter, the 40,000
23 people that are in a family setting, in the last
24 four years only 1,200 move-outs into an HPD unit.

25

3 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: And to put
4 that into context, so those are precisely the
5 types of projects, right; they're not supportive,
6 that we are in the future going to achieve more
7 of because of the new term sheet changes that
8 we've made, right? And those are... [crosstalk]

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So that will
10 accelerate?

11 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: That's
12 right. And for each of these -- we're financing
13 at a faster clip than we ever have before
14 [background comment] and the construction
15 timeline for each of our projects is two to three
16 years. But those units, the ones that are
17 specifically new construction and for families,
18 those are precisely the types of projects for
19 which that percentage, [background comment] as we
20 go through the public approval process, is too
21 often a source of... [interpose]

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I... I hear ya...

23 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: too much
24 opposition... [crosstalk]

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I hear you.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE, JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS 109

2 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: and which
3 we will really need your help and every member of
4 City Council...

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Of course.

6 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: to help
7 make sure we're pushing up as much as we can.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And what is the 6,500
9 units; that is...

10 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: That is
11 financed to date.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Financed to date..

13 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Both new
14 construction and preservation of formerly
15 homeless... [crosstalk]

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So of those, a lot of
17 those are preservation...

18 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: So 2,500
19 are supportive housing and [background comment]
20 the balance are what we call general population.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. But those are
22 move-outs or those are people that are preserved
23 in place?

24 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Those are
25 projects for which we have closed on financing

2 and if it's new construction, it's going to take
3 a couple of years before we're able to move
4 people in and for preservation, that's where upon
5 turnover we get the percentages that we were
6 talking about before.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So the turnover and
8 the new construction together, to date, 1,200?

9 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: That is
10 correct.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

12 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: That's
13 right.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, because that,
15 if the... Right, I mean, you know frankly, that's
16 an underwhelming number, right; we have to... that
17 has to be... [crosstalk]

18 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Oh I agree
19 and so being able...

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So I think... I think...
21 yeah...

22 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: to work on
23 those projects where we can get higher
24 percentages of the term sheets, working with the
25 City Council, would be much welcome on our part.

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I think it starts
4 with use setting a goal of 15 percent of the
5 affordable units of the 300,000; 15 percent
6 (45,000) should go to people exiting the shelter
7 system. So I think that's where we need to.. that
8 would be a good place to start, because we're
9 ahead of schedule on the overall picture, right,
10 we're ahead of schedule and that's why we're
11 doing 300,000 and not 200,000, so that we're
12 ahead of schedule, but we're behind on this
13 component -- we should be aggressive and we
14 should say HPD and the developers that are
15 contracting with HPD and the MIH developers that
16 are getting an MIH bonus through HPD, they..
17 [background comments] we should be hitting 15
18 percent of affordable units; of those 300,000,
19 45,000 should be going to families and
20 individuals moving out of the shelter system, so.

21 [background comments]

22 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: I
23 completely understand your... [interpose]

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I just.. it
25 seems that there's a fear of aiming high with
these numbers and these goals and we want to just

3 help you get over that fear, [background comment,
4 laughter] because... so you know I'm running for
5 Speaker in the body -- conventional wisdom says
6 I'm a long shot -- I won't get there if I don't
7 aim it, definitely, I could lose; that's okay too
8 and so I think it should be okay not to reach it,
9 but if we don't have it set properly, we won't
10 reach it for sure and [background comments] and
11 so...

12 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: No, I
13 understand; I do want to reiterate that we
14 believe that there are specific tools that we've
15 been using to house formerly homeless households.
16 Ultimately, however, the strongest tool we have
17 as a city, not just today but into the future, is
18 to build as many affordable units as we can;
19 that's [background comments] why we accelerated
20 the 200,000; it's why we added another 100,000,
21 [background comments] and so I want to make sure
22 that that effort does not get lost as we continue
23 to talk about how we can make sure our work is
24 effective as possible in serving formerly
25 homeless households.

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, we'll turn it
4 over to Council Member Grodenchik. [background
5 comment] Yeah. [background comments]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Good
7 afternoon; it's almost good evening, but I'll say
8 good afternoon... [crosstalk]

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: We're gonna do five
10 minutes and then have a second round.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: If I'm here
12 five minutes, you can... you can take me out.

13 Good afternoon, Commissioners; it's
14 always good to see you. I am not running for
15 Speaker -- I'm even a longer shot than you are.
16 [laugh] [background comment] I have a couple of
17 questions which I don't expect answers to today;
18 however, I would like answers on paper sent to my
19 office, I would greatly appreciate that from both
20 of you. My first question, Commissioner Banks --
21 I've known you longer -- can you tell me where
22 people who are entering the shelter system are
23 coming from? We started this conversation at a
24 hearing -- I think it was in the spring or the
25 summer -- and at that point you had indicated to
me that 30 percent were coming from domestic

3 violence situations, 11 percent from evictions,
4 and that still left 59 percent; we never quite
5 finished that, so I would appreciate from your
6 office that information and because we live in an
7 era of fake news and we see tremendous numbers
8 being thrown about without any matter of
9 accountability; I read this morning -- nothing to
10 do with your two agencies -- that we're spending
11 \$230,000 a year for every person that's
12 incarcerated at Rikers Island, which seems to me
13 just mind-blowing; we could send them on cruises
14 around the world for a lot less for a whole year
15 than that and it concerns me, and I'm sure it
16 concerns you as well and the other members of
17 these two committees, that the numbers that we
18 see sometimes, whether it's in the press or on
19 blogs or wherever we may see them, are not
20 accurate. So Commissioner, I would appreciate if
21 you could get me those numbers on where people --
22 assuming that we're not in violation of any
23 state, federal or local regulations -- and
24 telling me that information, and if we are, I
25 would appreciate your letting me know that.

3 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well I can help you
4 now...

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Oh, that's
6 even better... [crosstalk]

7 COMMISSIONER BANKS: But say

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: it will cut
9 into my five minutes though; I don't have...

10 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Okay. But 30
11 percent of the families with children seeking
12 shelter come with a history of domestic violence;
13 that doesn't mean they're coming immediately,
14 fleeing an abuser; it means that they have a
15 history. Currently, as a result of legal
16 services programs and the rent arrears programs
17 of people coming directly out of evictions or
18 within the past year and eviction, is about 11
19 percent. The remainder of the people are coming
20 for the reasons that I testified to earlier,
21 which is the gap between rents and income;
22 they're not coming because they got evicted,
23 they're coming because they can't afford housing;
24 they're coming because of the affordability
25 crisis; they may have been doubled up at some
point in time but can't get housing. I can give

3 you a little bit more granularity, but I wanted
4 for the record to make that point, that the
5 percentage of people coming to us reflects the
6 data that I gave during my testimony about
7 **[inaudible]**... [crosstalk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: That's a huge
9 percentage, 59 percent; I mean it's immense...
10 [crosstalk]

11 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well there have
12 been... there's a lot of people that are not in
13 current apartments; they may have lost their
14 apartments years ago. There was an IBO study not
15 so long ago which talked about a whole range of
16 evictions in Brooklyn that happened a long, long
17 time ago, and we are simply focused on making
18 sure that that doesn't happen to new sets of
19 families, which is the reason why we put in
20 additional **[inaudible]**... [crosstalk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I appreciate
22 that. Can you get, in a response to me on paper
23 [background comment] a bit more granular, because
24 [background comment] we're leaving out almost 60
25 percent of where people have been coming from,
which I think if we knew where they were coming

3 from, at least to my satisfaction; I don't know
4 if everybody else is concerned about that, but to
5 my satisfaction, it might help me to better
6 understand where this is.

7 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Although again, I
8 don't want to put too fine a point on it; there
9 are people that are typically on our caseload and
10 they can't afford housing.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay. I mean
12 that may be one of the numbers that you put down,
13 one of the sets of data.

14 I would also appreciate -- not now,
15 'cause I only have five minutes -- but the exact
16 amount of money the City of New York is spending
17 on homeless services and where that money comes
18 from, whether it's City tax dollars, State tax
19 dollars or Federal tax dollars, because those
20 numbers also seem to wildly -- they go back and
21 forth like a pendulum, depending on who's doing
22 the reporting, so I would appreciate that from
23 you.

24 And Commissioner Torres Springer, I think
25 part of what we're trying to do here today is so
overwhelming; I grew up in NYCHA and my mother

3 was disappointed 'cause she didn't get NYCHA in
4 the Bronx; I'm not disappointed because my life,
5 as I knew it I love it, and I may not have even
6 been born if my parents had stayed in the Bronx;
7 they met at the Pomonok Houses over 60 years ago
8 and while we're no longer there, that lives on in
9 my and my friends to a great deal. So the
10 question I have for you, as I posed to
11 Commissioner Banks, I would appreciate from you
12 and your staff the exact amount of monies,
13 because I know it's not just about spending money
14 on housing, it's about spending money, as you and
15 Commissioner Banks have said in your testimony,
16 for eviction prevention services and all the
17 other kind of services that the City of New York
18 provides to people.

19 The other thing is -- and I don't know
20 how you quantify this, and maybe Mr. Chairman and
21 -- wherever Mr... Mr... oh right behind me -- maybe
22 we need to have, with Mr. Torres, [bell] a three-
23 part hearing including NYCHA, because NYCHA is
24 such a huge part of our fight to provide people
25 with decent, affordable housing -- we're talking
about maybe 600,000 people; that's an estimate

2 I've seen over the years that live in NYCHA. So
3 that's my two cents, but I would greatly
4 appreciate that; you can contact my attorney, who
5 -- I don't think he's here, maybe he's outside;
6 maybe he's sleeping somewhere, but... you here,
7 Steve? No, he's not here. But
8 bgrodenchik@council.nyc.gov; I would appreciate
9 that information. I thank you for your time and
10 I thank you for your great efforts on behalf of
11 the people of the City of New York.

12 [background comment]

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

14 Council Member Salamanca and Council Member
15 Gibson.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you,
17 Mr. Chair. Good afternoon. A few questions in
18 terms of the homeless set-aside. In the City of
19 New York we have over 60,000 homeless families
20 but yet last week in my committee that I'm the
21 chair of, Subcommittee on Planning, Dispositions
22 and Concessions, we were going over the Bedford
23 Armory project; not one unit set aside for
24 homeless families. I know that's an EDC project,
25 but how can you, Commissioner of DHS and HRA, and

3 you, Commissioner of HPD, who are constantly on
4 every project that I do in my council district,
5 telling me that I have to have a homeless set-
6 aside, but in the Bedford Armory project you're
7 allowing million dollar condos in a homeless set-
8 aside? That's my question.

9 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I mean I think as
10 you know, Council Member, I run an agency serving
11 three million people who receive a whole range of
12 benefits; I'm very focused on that and will
13 certainly take back your concerns to the agencies
14 that are doing that project... [crosstalk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: No, but my... So
16 it is very specific, EDC seems that they have
17 their own funding and they don't get any funding
18 HPD; they can just build, and we're talking about
19 a project that's on City land, [background
20 comment] City land, and so I am just... you know, I
21 just don't understand how can the Administration
22 speak about a homeless set-aside, you know again,
23 every project that comes through my council
24 district, you know you're telling us that there
25 has to be a homeless set-aside, but I'm just
hearing now, Commissioner, that that is not

3 mandatory, but yet there's other projects
4 throughout the City of New York, many more
5 affluent communities, and there's no mandate for
6 a homeless set-aside; I just don't understand.

7 Commissioner, in terms of the cluster
8 sites, can you explain where we are with cluster
9 sites? I know that you've been shutting down,
10 closing cluster sites in the City of New York;
11 can you give... do you have numbers; where are we
12 from when you made that announcement; how many
13 cluster sites have you shut down in the City of
14 New York and how many in the borough of the Bronx
15 and how many in my council district?

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I can give you some
17 of that...

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Yeah.

19 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I can't give you all
20 the granularity; we'll follow up with that. At
21 the time of the announcement, there were
22 approximately 3,600 cluster units in use; we have
23 closed, meaning we have gotten out of them
24 entirely more than 1,000, so about 30 percent of
25 them have been vacated; we can get you specific

2 council district information on that as a follow-
3 up to the hearing.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Have you
5 opened up any new cluster sites?

6 COMMISSIONER BANKS: No, we have not.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: You have not?

8 COMMISSIONER BANKS: No, we have not.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: So have you
10 converted buildings where more than 50 percent of
11 the building is occupied as a cluster site; have
12 you converted those buildings into shelters?

13 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Yes. As we said in...
14 [interpose]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: How many of
16 those have you converted?

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I'll explain to you
18 in a moment. As we said in the original
19 announcement in January of 2016, again in April
20 of 2016 and in the plan, the Turning the Tide
21 plan, we said that we would evaluate units to see
22 whether or not we can convert them to permanent
23 housing -- that requires the landlord to be
24 willing to work with us; we would evaluate units
25 to vacate based upon conditions and we would

3 evaluate units to convert to shelters if they
4 could provide high-quality shelter. Out of the
5 3,600 units we found 10 buildings with
6 approximately 300 units that we thought would
7 make appropriate high-quality shelter, and as we
8 transparently said we would do, we have now
9 proceeded to convert **[inaudible]**... [crosstalk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: And what was
11 your notification to the local Council Member and
12 community board when you converted these
13 buildings into permanent shelters?

14 COMMISSIONER BANKS: If I could just
15 finish. So approximately 200 of the units have
16 been converted and we will be doing the fair
17 share notification that we need to do. There was
18 a recent contracts hearing in which a number of
19 the cluster buildings were swept up in a public
20 focus; most of those buildings are cluster close-
21 downs -- we needed to replace the providers that
22 were running those units -- Housing Bridge and
23 others that we thought were not adequate and not
24 appropriate providers and we've consistently -- I
25 think you've been supportive and I appreciate it;
we've eliminated a number of shelter providers,

3 particularly in the cluster area, and as part of
4 that process there were a number of contracts,
5 publicly there, that we're closing down. There
6 are very few other buildings that we would
7 consider to use for shelter; I said out of 3,600
8 units, at it's high point at most 300 that we
9 would use, and we'll continue to evaluate that
10 and communicate with you if there any more that
11 could be in your district for that usage.

12 I wanted to say [bell] one thing about
13 your legislation, which I think I said in my
14 testimony -- I know you were tied up with
15 something else -- we want to work with you on
16 both of these bills; we think that there is a way
17 to do both pieces of legislation; there is some
18 concern about the cluster legislation as
19 currently written that it requires certain data
20 and certain information that we don't have. We
21 do provide a periodic report to the Comptroller's
22 Office about our cluster close-down plans and we
23 are interested in working with you and the
24 Committee to come up with language that would
25 work and be consistent with what we've been doing
for the Comptroller's reporting.

2 The other bill -- look, you and I were in
3 that apartment with the Mayor that night, just a
4 horrible, tragic accident, and you know, you
5 can't be a human being, let alone a parent, as I
6 know you and I are, to have been in that room
7 that night -- we want to work with you on that
8 piece of legislation to make sure that the
9 obligation that is there for us is one that's
10 consistent with some of our State Office of
11 Temporary Assistance and Disability assistance
12 obligations, but I do agree with you to have
13 ultimate codification; this is something that we
14 will work with you on to accomplish.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Is the City
16 still doing business with BEDCO?

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: We've eliminated
18 BEDCO from all the hotels; we prioritized getting
19 them out of clusters; we are still winding down
20 our final clusters with them; they had a handful
21 of freestanding shelters; we have been in the
22 process of transferring their shelters to other
23 operators; we conducted solicitations in order to
24 find replacement providers, and we are continuing
25

3 on that path because we think that's the path
4 that makes sense.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: And how many
6 cluster sites is BEDCO still operating?

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Council Member.

8 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I'll have to get you
9 that information, but they're on a close-down
10 plan; they're not on a continue operation plan,
11 they're on a close-down plan.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Alright, thank
13 you.

14 COMMISSIONER BANKS: And they've already
15 been eliminated from the hotels.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you,
17 Council Member. Council Member Gibson.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Thank you very
19 much, chairs, Chair Levin and Chair Williams.
20 Good afternoon, Commissioners; it's great to see
21 you. And first I want to thank you obviously for
22 the expansion of Homebase, for the tremendous
23 work that we've successfully done on Right to
24 Counsel, ensuring that families living below the
25 federal poverty level are able to access free
legal assistance to prevent evictions, an

3 incredible amount of work and certainly I applaud
4 you for all of efforts both DHS and HPD have been
5 doing, but certainly, while I am complimenting
6 you, I also have to be very critical, and I'm
7 thankful that Council Member Salamanca talked
8 about BEDCO, because as I understand, BEDCO is
9 still in 1055 University in Highbridge, which are
10 clusters, and BEDCO needs to go...

11 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Right.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: so I want to make
13 sure in your phasing out, while we've dealt with
14 BEDCO in the commercial and hotels, getting them
15 out of the cluster units is critically important
16 for us and certainly for me because 1055
17 University has been a problematic building for
18 quite some time.

19 COMMISSIONER BANKS: We'll follow up with
20 you on that. We have eliminated their operation
21 of any of the hotels and we are on a plan to
22 eliminate their operation of clusters, and we
23 will look at that particular building. My
24 recollection is that that's a building that we've
25 already got an alternative in place... [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay.

3 COMMISSIONER BANKS: but I want to make
4 sure and I'll follow up with you on it.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay. And then I
6 want to, while I'm still talking about cluster
7 and phasing out and obviously a large
8 concentration falling within the Bronx, and
9 certainly certain parts of the Bronx -- my
10 district, Fernando, Ralph, the west side of the
11 Bronx, and in the southern part of the borough --
12 as you're looking to place many of these
13 families, I've said before that my primary goal
14 and our goal is to get these cluster families
15 into permanent housing; that should be number
16 one, but I recognize some families at the time
17 may not be ready for permanent housing and so I
18 understand, for those of us that represent areas
19 where we have a high number of clusters, I
20 understand some of those families may transition
21 into a shelter. What I've seen that's been going
22 on and I speak -- because I have an actual
23 example of a new building that I am talking to
24 the developers; they have been speaking and
25 working with HPD for a year now to build a new
building of 159 units of housing, but amazingly,

3 the majority of those units are going to be for
4 shelter families and not permanent housing. So
5 these types of conversations that the agencies
6 are having with developers, it's really important
7 for me to make sure -- number one, I'm happy to
8 work with you because I think my, you know,
9 interjection and my intervention can really make
10 sure that the project is very fruitful. I am not
11 a supporter or a fan of full-fledged shelters,
12 but instead I've worked with both agencies on
13 mixed-use. I take all my shelter families now
14 and I take more that are not coming from my
15 community, but I think it's really disingenuous
16 that communities like mine shoulder the burden of
17 a citywide problem; low-income and communities of
18 color historically have the most shelters in the
19 City of New York, but we don't make up the full
20 population of families in shelters. So I guess
21 my question is: with the number of cluster units
22 situated in certain districts, how are you best
23 putting those families into permanent housing in
24 their home community as best as you can?

25 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well I'll give you...

[crosstalk]

3 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Does that make
4 sense?

5 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Yeah, it does make
6 sense... [crosstalk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay.

8 COMMISSIONER BANKS: and again, I want to
9 compliment you; I appreciate working with you on
10 the mixed-use building where we had a combination
11 of shelter and [inaudible]... [crosstalk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Yes. Absolutely
13 and that's a great example.

14 COMMISSIONER BANKS: that was a model;
15 you were one of... [crosstalk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Uhm-hm.

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: the first to work
18 with us on that; I really appreciate that you did
19 that. I mean all over the city we're moving
20 forward with opening shelter facilities to deal
21 with the fact that people who come into our
22 system come from all over, literally people from
23 every community board. I think you know we're
24 opening... we recently opened a facility in a
25 community board that never had a shelter, up in
the Riverdale area, and we are doing that because

3 we want to give families with children an
4 opportunity to keep their kids in the local
5 schools and people an opportunity to be near
6 their employment, and we're going to keep doing
7 that all around the city; there are places that
8 have a lot of clusters and we are closing down
9 clusters, but we'll need some residual capacity
10 there. We have places where there are hotels
11 that we'll be getting out of, but we'll need some
12 replacement capacity there. And in case you
13 know, we're in Crown Heights; we opened a number
14 of facilities to address the fact that there was
15 a need there. I mean at this point we've got
16 eight facilities that are already open in the
17 last [bell] nine months since we have the plan
18 and another two that have been announced that
19 will be open shortly, so I think we'll keep
20 working with you and other electeds to make sure
21 that we are siting places where we can achieve
22 the goal we want, which is to give families the
23 opportunity to remain in their home communities.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Right and I
25 guess, as I close, Chairs, what my concern is in
moving forward is with any potential

3 opportunities to build new housing and new
4 construction, while we're looking at mixed-use we
5 really need to look at a majority of those units
6 being for permanently affordable housing and not
7 majority for shelter families. That's always
8 going to be met with resistance no matter what
9 community you enter, but I think the message to
10 the local residents says, well if this is 100
11 units, at least 50 percent will go to permanent
12 families and permanent housing and then the other
13 50 could be for shelter families, but what I'm
14 being told -- 70/30; that number doesn't work for
15 me, so I'm more of the half/half because it
16 recognizes that we're doing our part and we're
17 serving both populations, but not giving a full-
18 fledged shelter in a lot of the new construction.
19 So I urge all of you -- certainly, I've been
20 working with you and I will not stop, because
21 this is about making sure that we have
22 permanently affordable housing opportunities for
23 families across the city. So I thank you for
24 your time; my time is up, but certainly looking
25 forward to more work ahead.

2 COMMISSIONER BANKS: We'll follow up with
3 you on that particularly... [crosstalk]

4 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: And on the
5 particular building.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay.

7 COMMISSIONER BANKS: we... we don't... we
8 don't know the facts... [crosstalk]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Your staff knows.

10 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Okay.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: You know I raised
12 the issue already. Thank you... [crosstalk]

13 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Okay.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
15 Council Member Gibson. I just have one more
16 question; then I'll turn it over to my colleague.

17 In April of 2016, Mayor de Blasio
18 announced that the City would create an
19 Interagency Homelessness Accountability Council
20 that would report directly to the Deputy Mayor
21 for Health and Human Services, Herminia Palacio.
22 Has the Interagency Accountability Council
23 actually been created, and if so, when was it
24 created; if not, why was it not created? What
25 does that Interagency Accountability Council do?

3 How often have they been meeting, if they have
4 been impaneled; so on and so forth, because I put
5 some legislation on ice because this has already
6 been announced and is supposed to be existing,
7 so?

8 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Right. It was
9 convened; it has been meeting; we will get you
10 the information about exactly when the first
11 meeting was -- I was at it; I can't recall off
12 the top of my head when it was -- and there have
13 been periodic meetings that I have attended and
14 we will certainly get you the information.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. I would like
16 to know when the meetings were; if there are
17 minutes to those meetings; who the attendees
18 were; all the above. You know, this is..

19 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Agency heads.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sorry; agency heads..?

[crosstalk]

21 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Agency heads.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. We want to
23 know what the outcomes of those meetings were --
24 you know, it's essential that there be
25 streamlined interagency coordination. You know,

3 nothing... people that are going through the system
4 have touch points, you know, any number of ways
5 with the system and if not all of the agencies
6 are on the same page, people's lives can get
7 extremely twisted up in the system and it's no
8 small matter when issues like benefits are on the
9 line and housing, because that has real impact on
10 real people's lives, so I would like to see a
11 report back to this committee as to what that
12 interagency council has been doing and what we
13 can expect them to do in the future. Thank you.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you; I
15 have some questions for you.

16 On the cluster sites, I think you
17 mentioned, and I'm sorry; I missed it; what's the
18 timeframe of closing them and which ones are
19 closing units now?

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: It's a multi-year
21 plan; 2021 is the final year, and as I said,
22 we've closed already about 30 percent of them,
23 eliminated 30 percent of them and we're going to
24 keep on that trajectory.

25 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Alright. I'm
just gonna read this; it's actually from Legal

3 Aid; I think you're familiar with them. Legal

4 Aid has had several clients... [crosstalk]

5 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Yes, passive...

6 passive...

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: [laugh]

8 COMMISSIONER BANKS: passive and

9 familiarity with them.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Legal Aid has

11 had several clients in a cluster of apartments

12 operated by LCG Community Services; they were

13 made aware when it appeared that someone from a

14 company called Apex had gone into Housing Court

15 and signed surrenders for apartments in the

16 cluster -- Apex is the intermediary between LCG

17 and the landlord in this cluster. After the

18 surrender is signed, the DHS client could then be

19 removed without further process. We were also

20 brought in when the electrical service was cut

21 off in several apartments; when we alerted DHS,

22 they seemed unaware. How is DHS ensuring that

23 their clients are being moved seamlessly? How is

24 DHS ensuring that those who have claims to rent

25 stabilization rights are made aware of those

claims?

3 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Well I think we have
4 been eliminating particular providers that used
5 to be cluster providers -- We Always Care,
6 Housing Bridge; BEDCO, and we are continuing to
7 evaluate particular providers; I think it would
8 be best if I left the testimony at that.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, and what
10 about the rent stabilization rights?

11 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I'm sorry?

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: How does DHS
13 ensure that those who have claims to the rent
14 stabilization rights are made aware of those
15 claims?

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think, as you
17 know, the State Division of Homes and Community
18 Renewal is the oversight agency; we've been
19 providing them with information about units that
20 we have been vacating so that they can follow up
21 with the landlords with respect to the status of
22 those units and we thought that it was important,
23 although we don't have oversight authority over
24 those units and neither does HPD, but that we
25 could provide information about units that we're

2 vacating so that they can be brought back into
3 rent stabilization.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: But you can
5 still inform the DHS client of those rights.

6 COMMISSIONER BANKS: These are when we
7 are vacating units; we have now a vacant unit and
8 the issue is whether or not the unit is going to
9 be rented out in rent stabilization rents, and so
10 as we are vacating units..

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay.

12 COMMISSIONER BANKS: we are advising the
13 State agency responsible for oversight there that
14 now a unit is vacant.. [crosstalk]

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I see, so no
16 one..

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: and there's no
18 exemption anymore..

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I see; there's
20 a gap for the people who are coming in after that
21 to make sure..

22 COMMISSIONER BANKS: That's what our
23 concern was and that's why we reached out to the
24 State.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I'm going to
4 have a further conversation about that with HPD;
5 I'm not going to do it now, about how we can do
6 some better stuff for the City and make sure
7 people know their rent stabilization rights, but
8 I'll leave it there for now.

9 How does DHS ensure that essential
10 services are mandated within those units?

11 [background comments] Maintained, I'm sorry.

12 What did I say? [background comment] Oh,
13 maintained.

14 COMMISSIONER BANKS: In all facilities or
15 which facilities...? [crosstalk]

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I said
17 mandated. How does DHS ensure that essential
18 services are maintained?

19 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think, as you
20 know, we've created a shelter repair initiative;
21 it's a collaborative effort with HPD; Department
22 of Buildings, and there are regular inspections;
23 we post the inspections... we post the shelter
24 repair squad report every month; it shows you the
25 conditions -- I think in the shelters when we
started, we closed... we eliminated about 12,000

3 violations and have now brought the violations in
4 the regular shelters down to about 2,000; most of
5 those are capital repairs that are part of our
6 capital funding plan, and then the cluster sites
7 are sites that we are vacating in part because of
8 the conditions in those units.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I have some
10 questions from Picture the Homeless; I'm not
11 going to be able to ask all of the questions, but
12 I have a few.

13 Are most of the City's housing for
14 extremely low-income people **[inaudible]** either
15 supportive or senior housing? What is being made
16 available to households of extremely low-income
17 who are not eligible for either supportive
18 housing or senior housing but who are homeless or
19 at risk of homelessness?

20 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: So the not
21 supportive but not homeless. So we have, as part
22 of the plan, we've financed, as I mentioned
23 earlier, financed to date 30 percent of the units
24 have been for extremely low and very low-income,
25 and so that certainly includes a lot of the units
for formerly homeless households but are also

3 units that are, once they come online, are going
4 to be marketed to extremely low and very low-
5 income families who are not [sic] otherwise part
6 of the shelter system and/or part of the
7 supportive housing programs.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Homeless people
9 with vouchers are struggling to find housing;
10 many are not getting assistance from housing
11 specialists to use the vouchers and it is
12 increasingly difficult to locate housing
13 affordable at current voucher rates. What can
14 HPD/DHS do to increase, improve assistance to
15 voucher holders to keep and find the units?

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: There is a local law
17 that prohibits source of income discrimination;
18 we receive significant numbers of complaints
19 about it; that's why we created a special unit
20 and we're developing steps to address certain of
21 the landlords; we developed a best system of
22 issuing cease and desist communications to
23 landlords and have had success with that, but we
24 want to be able to address the broader problem.
25 I think our partner agency, the Commission on
Human Rights, filed a whole range of actions over

3 the last two years against a whole range of
4 landlords to seek penalties against landlords who
5 are violating local law, and we take the local
6 law seriously, which is the reason why that
7 brought their actions, and why the Mayor gave us
8 funding to create an in-house unit of HRA to
9 prosecute landlords who violate the Source of
Income Discrimination Law.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: There was a
11 question here about that as well; apparently --
12 and I know this from people telling me -- that
13 not enough is being done to enforce that law and
14 we have to do more, and I don't know what we're
15 doing that insufficient [sic], but...

16 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I mean I agree with
17 you; we have to do more, which is the reason why
18 we went out to get the funding to set up a unit
19 to do that.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: And the housing
21 specialists, they said they are not getting
22 enough assistance from the housing specialists.

23 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Well one,
24 to the extent that there are particular areas
25 that anyone is hearing where the process can be

3 improved, we are all ears. We've made a number
4 of improvements over the years to make access to
5 our projects in general better and so I'll name
6 one -- the work that we're doing with Housing
7 Ambassadors, or community-based organizations
8 across the city, so that we can both increase
9 awareness as well as help streamline the process
10 that applicants have to go through in general
11 with Housing Connect, but also in particular to
12 the extent that some are voucher holders; what
13 that means in terms of navigating the process,
14 and so it's both about technology improvements,
15 working with not-for-profit organizations, and to
16 the extent that there continue to be gaps, we're
17 more than happy to look at them.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Have you heard
19 complaints about the housing specialists?

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think you're
21 directing that towards the housing specialists in
22 the shelters and I think that the solution that
23 we've talked about and we put in the budget is to
24 create model budgets for shelters; for years
25 there have been disinvestment in the not-for-
profit sector in terms of providing those

3 services. We have put in at full funding about
4 \$200 million in additional resources for the not-
5 for-profit providers and we think as we put in
6 place the model budgets over the course of this
7 year that that will provide greater loan services
8 for our clients to help them find housing and
9 I've heard a lot of complaints during the 90-day
10 review that we did last year and the model
11 budgeting process to reinvest in the not-for-
12 profit providers is directly responsive to what I
13 thought were very clear concerns that were raised
14 to me by families themselves.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: What is the
16 plan for households with a five-year voucher like
17 LINC who are assigned to a rent-stabilized unit
18 through a set-aside in a Housing New York
19 building; does HPD have a plan for those
20 households after five years?

21 [background comments]

22 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Let me
23 look into that, Chair Williams, to see what the
24 particular contingency plans are, unless Molly
25 has... [crosstalk]

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: We noticed.. In
4 the testimony we did see what happened when the
5 housing program was cut.

6 MOLLY PARK: Right. So let me chime in.
7 Couple of things; I think first of all, we are
8 trying wherever possible actually to underwrite
9 rents to levels that households can afford
10 without a rent subsidy. The Our Space units that
11 is our general strategy these days within our new
12 construction programs are really designed not to
13 be dependant on rent subsidies, either time-
14 limited or things that are coming from the
15 federal government which have a certain level of
16 risk associated with them. The other thing that
17 we are doing is that we always underwrite
18 operating reserves into our buildings and mandate
19 contributions into the operating reserves so that
20 buildings are building up some level of cash
21 cushion so that they can operate even if there is
22 some level of shortfall.

23 One sort of general standard practice
24 that I think also will make our buildings more
25 resilient is that our general assumption is that
we assume in the financing that 5 percent of the

2 units are vacant at any given period of time; in
3 fact, the reality is much lower than that, so
4 that gives some level of cushion so the buildings
5 will be able to survive even when there is some
6 level of uncertainty with income flow.

7 COMMISSIONER BANKS: As to the rental
8 assistance programs themselves, there -- as I
9 think you know and I know the chair knows -- some
10 of the program have no limitations on them and
11 those are the City-based programs; several of the
12 programs are city/state programs where there are
13 limitations on them, and intend to address those
14 issues as part of the streamlining process for
15 the rental assistance programs. But CITYFEPS,
16 the LINC programs for seniors and persons with
17 disabilities, for example, don't have any
18 limitation on them and we're looking at how best
19 to address that as part of moving forward with
20 these programs.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I have a
22 question from Picture the Homeless again and then
23 I have a couple more and then I'm finished.

24 The City recently put \$81 million in
25 capital funding for the Our Space program, an

3 innovative program that subsidizes rental
4 housing, to levels affordable to households that
5 rent equal to the State's shelter allowance; this
6 is a significant investment, but based on current
7 per diem rates and the average daily shelter
8 census, the City will spend over \$81 million on
9 shelters in just over a month. Why don't we
10 invest more into programs like Our Space if that
11 housing would help to reduce our existing shelter
12 census and ultimately save the City money? There
13 were some similar articles today about how much
14 money is being spent on rent arrears in the
15 *Gotham Gazette*, I think and *The Post*. *The Post*
16 is really a rag, so I don't take too much of what
17 they say seriously, but they did point out how
18 much money we're spending, and it's going up in
19 terms of not just shelters, but rent arrears.

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I know you're not
21 suggesting that we should stop paying rent
22 arrears...

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: No, absolutely
24 not.

25 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Okay.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: But I want to
3 make... [crosstalk]

4 COMMISSIONER BANKS: But the reason... the
5 reason why rent arrears are up is because we have
6 been very much focused on making sure that people
7 don't get evicted but for a couple hundred
8 dollars and then have to spend... [interpose]

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Sure.

10 COMMISSIONER BANKS: a couple thousand
11 dollars in shelter, and one of the reasons why
12 there's an increase in the amount of expenditures
13 is rents have gone up so therefore the average
14 grant per person goes up because rents have gone
15 up, and similarly, as the gap between rents and
16 income increase, more people are susceptible for
17 falling into rent arrears; therefore, we are
18 paying... [interpose]

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I just want to
20 make sure the money we're spending is attacking
21 the problem, so I don't want to get rid of rent
22 arrears; I just want to make sure the money we're
23 spending -- obviously, if we're doing more to get
24 housing that people can afford, I think some of
25 that would ease as well.

3 COMMISSIONER BANKS: Right, but it's
4 certainly our day-to-day focus at HRA...
5 [crosstalk]

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Sure.

7 COMMISSIONER BANKS: so when people come
8 to us facing eviction, we want to connect them...
9 [crosstalk]

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Sure.

11 COMMISSIONER BANKS: to a lawyer and we
12 want to pay the rent arrears if we can under
13 state and city law.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: And this one
15 was about \$81 million on the shelters and why
16 we're not spending more... more into programs like
17 Our Space.

18 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Well we
19 have -- to be clear, so the funding for Our
20 Space, as you know, we think is a good
21 investment; the addition of the \$1.9 billion into
22 the City capital budget in the last State of the
23 City we believe is clearly a significant
24 investment to get at ELI/VLI and we have since
25 incorporated homeless units, as we've talked
about at this hearing, into all of our projects,

3 and so Our Space is a good model, but we're
4 creating kind of a more sustainable model in
5 large part because we've added almost \$2 billion
6 in City capital to reach deeper levels of
7 affordability.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

9 There was a question about the Housing Not
10 Warehousing Act, Commissioner Torres Springer. I
11 do believe this act will help get some
12 information that's necessary to deal with some of
13 this crisis; I just want to say on the record,
14 we're waiting for some more... what I've gotten
15 back so far didn't really seem like a reason not
16 to move forward with the bills, and so again, if
17 you have some other reasons in addition to what
18 was sent, I'd love to have that communication
19 [background comments] sooner than later, because
20 I'm ready to move them and I don't want to move
21 them without trying to do it **[inaudible]**, but I'm
22 ready to move them; I just want to make that...

23 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: I got it.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: abundantly
25 clear.

[background comment]

3 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: Message

4 heard.

5 [clapping]

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: We are gonna

7 have some questions by email about Our Space and

8 HomeStretch in particular, so I just want to make

9 sure you're aware and hopefully get us the

10 answers for those. We're going to give last

11 question to Council Member Torres who has joined

12 us and he will five minutes for his questions.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: I actually only

14 have one question regarding collaboration with

15 NYCHA, because it seems to me public housing

16 could be a powerful resource for curbing

17 homelessness. A substantial subset of the public

18 housing population lives in underoccupied units,

19 particularly senior citizens, and so it seems to

20 me if we were to create senior housing for those

21 residents, not only are you providing seniors

22 with brand new housing, but you're freeing up

23 larger units in the public housing portfolio for

24 families that might be languishing in the

25 shelter. Has there ever been any thought given

3 to coordinating NYCHA's right-sizing policy with
4 your development priorities?

5 COMMISSIONER TORRES SPRINGER: I'll
6 answer it a couple of ways and Commissioner Banks
7 can also provide his perspective.

8 As you know, we work very, very closely
9 with NYCHA on a whole range of development
10 initiatives. In particular, for senior housing,
11 one of the new -- part of Housing New York 2.0 --
12 there was an RFP for three sites which will be
13 dedicated to 100 percent senior affordable, and
14 those are the types of projects where we believe
15 we are going to be able to not just serve
16 seniors, but also serve formerly homeless
17 seniors.

18 In terms of the right-sizing and NYCHA
19 residents, as I'm sure you know, there are
20 particular HUD requirements that have to be taken
21 into consideration if the idea is to set aside
22 any of the new units and new developments for
23 NYCHA residents, but all of these are... it's been
24 and will continue to be an ongoing set of
25 conversations with NYCHA to see how we can
jointly accomplish varied mutual goals.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: And I know
4 generally there has been collaboration, but has
5 there been specifically an attempt to align
6 NYCHA's right-sizing policy with senior housing
7 development in order to achieve those two goals?

8 MOLLY PARK: There are preferences for
9 NYCHA residents...

10 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Okay.

11 MOLLY PARK: in the senior housing that
12 we are building on it; we certainly wouldn't
13 prioritize somebody who's in a three-bedroom unit
14 over somebody who's in a one-bedroom unit, you
15 know, so anybody who is in NYCHA housing has that
16 same preference, but I think the goal is there
17 certainly to be able to accomplish that right-
18 sizing where possible without forcing anybody out
19 of their home.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: I know.

21 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think my colleague
22 said it well.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Fair enough.
24 That's all I have.

25 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Alright...

[crosstalk]

3 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Oh, I was gonna
4 ask about -- I know this off topic -- the NYCHA
5 piece of the right to counsel; I don't know if
6 that's off topic or. 'Kay. How's that going?

7 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think all of the
8 issues with respect to implementation of right to
9 counsel are going well considering what a sea
10 change it is for the Housing Court for people to
11 have lawyers. I think that there are some
12 challenges in terms of the ability to hire and
13 train lawyers, so that's an issue with why it's
14 actually a five-year implementation plan to
15 complete the total access process. But we're
16 happy to give you a separate briefing on the
17 NYCHA piece of it as well, but...

18 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Has that piece
19 begun or it has yet to be implemented?

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: There is
21 representation that is already in place for a
22 number of the providers, but I think the
23 challenge that they all have, and I'm very
24 sympathetic to it, having run a legal services
25 program, is in hiring, training, supervising the
influx of new lawyers that are needed to

3 implement a sea change in Housing Court, plus in
4 the NYCHA process. So there are some challenges
5 with implementation that we highlighted all
6 along, which is why we said we needed five years
7 to get it all in place. But there are NYCHA
8 tenants that are getting representation and
9 assistance through various [sic] of the programs
10 now.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: And I remember
12 reading a few years ago -- if I can ask a
13 question about the LINC vouchers; that most of
14 the tenants who have LINC vouchers are struggling
15 to find landlords who accept them; does that
16 remain true?

17 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think, as we
18 testified a little bit earlier, it's one of the
19 reasons why we put resources into a Source of
20 Income Discrimination unit at HRA to be in a
21 position to enforce people's right to be able to
22 rent units free from source of income
23 restrictions [sic]... [crosstalk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: And that's in
25 addition to the Human Rights Commission?

COMMISSIONER BANKS: Correct.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: What's the
4 percentage; do you have numbers on the percentage
5 of residents who have vouchers but cannot find
6 landlords willing to accept them?

7 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I think it's not
8 really divisible that way. If you look at it
9 another way, 71,000 people, most of them using
10 rental assistance, moved out of shelter over the
11 last few years or avoid going in by using rental
12 assistance. On the other hand, if you're
13 somebody that benefited from it, it's great;
14 [bell] if you're somebody that did not, it's a
15 real problem and that's why we're putting the
16 resources into enforcement. Now the Human Rights
17 Commission has also brought a number of
18 enforcement actions also to address landlords. I
19 think that both we and they think that more
20 enforcement will be helpful here; there's been a
21 series of litigations, Legal Aid and the Housing
22 Works, they've brought cases as well and we've
23 been supporting those litigations, and I think
24 that more enforcement here is what's called for,
25 which is the reason why the Mayor gave us funding
to do more enforcement.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you,
4 Council Member. Commissioners, thank you for
5 spending some time with us; you're always
6 welcome, so come on back.

7 I do want to say, as you testified, these
8 are -- even the numbers that we discussed and the
9 numbers I'm pushing are some of the most
10 aggressive in the nation, but part of that's
11 because we have the most aggressive problem in
12 the nation and so we should match that and that
13 shouldn't be an excuse not to push even further.
14 I definitely acknowledge and thank the
15 Administration for making this an important issue
16 and for putting forth a plan, but I think we as a
17 body and the advocates are going to have to
18 continue to push because the crisis is not
19 abating at this moment.

20 COMMISSIONER BANKS: I appreciate that,
21 but just for context, I think it's important to
22 understand what's going on on the west coast...
23 [crosstalk]

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: In San
25 Francisco...

3 COMMISSIONER BANKS: In Los Angeles there
4 are 43,000 human beings living in the streets
5 literally because there is no municipal shelter
6 system there the way we have here and there
7 aren't the kind of programs that you and we have
8 put in place, and so if you look at what's
9 happening in San Francisco; you look at what's
10 happening in Seattle; you look what's happening
11 in LA with 43,000 people in the streets; you see
12 another reality of the challenge of housing in
13 urban areas, but you can see a difference of
14 approach between here and there.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Fair point. We
16 still need to lead from the front and whenever we
17 have tools we don't use, it just doesn't make any
18 sense and so those things I'm pointing out.

19 [background comment] Thank you very much. Do
20 you wanna call the next panel? [background
21 comment] [pause]

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, we're gonna
23 take a five-minute break; right now it is
24 [background comments] 3:59; we'll reconvene at
25 4:05.

[pause]

2 [gavel]

3 [background comments]

4 [pause]

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay folks, so we
6 have a lot of people signed up to testify, which
7 is great, but that does mean that we're going to
8 have to keep, everybody, the time to three
9 minutes per testimony and we'll try to keep folks
10 as close to that as possible, if that's okay.
11 We'll start off with Victoria, I think it's
12 Reing, from the Bronx Borough President's office;
13 Giselle Routhier; Josh Goldfein, Coalition for
14 the Homeless and Legal Aid Society; and Laura
15 Mascuch from the Supportive Housing Network of
16 New York.

17 [pause]

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Who wants to begin?
19 We don't swear in non-agency officials.

20 VICTORIA REING: Good afternoon. I am
21 Victoria Reing, Director of Policy and Deputy
22 Counsel to the Bronx Borough President; I am here
23 to testify on behalf of Bronx Borough President
24 Ruben Diaz, Jr. on the topic of addressing the
25 homelessness crisis.

2 I am here this afternoon to testify in
3 favor of Intro 1524, introduced by Council Member
4 Rafael Salamanca and Intro 1529, introduced by
5 Council Member James Vacca. Both of these bills
6 were introduced at Borough President Diaz's
7 request.

8 The first, Intro 1524, requires that
9 during any inspection conducted or overseen by
10 the Department of Homeless Services related to
11 health, safety or the physical conditions of a
12 shelter, the radiators must also be inspected.

13 This safety measure must be mandated
14 because malfunctioning radiators can cause severe
15 bodily harm or even death. This was clearly
16 demonstrated in the tragedy in December 2016 when
17 a faulty radiator killed two small children in
18 their temporary cluster site housing in the
19 Bronx. The radiator in this apartment was
20 reported broken in 2015 by the previous tenant,
21 yet no action by the landlord was taken. If the
22 inspection of the radiators was part of the
23 regular inspection process, perhaps this tragedy
24 could have been avoided.

3 We must do everything we can to be sure
4 the people who access temporary housing are safe.
5 This measure should therefore be implemented
6 immediately.

7 The second bill, Intro 1529, seeks to
8 regulate and to ensure the reduction and eventual
9 elimination of the cluster site system, which is
10 widely considered to be an important safety and
11 public health goal. The legislation creates an
12 obligation to report to the City Council on the
13 plan for the phase-out of each cluster site,
14 progress made towards the elimination of cluster
15 sites, and on inspections and repairs as well as
16 any new cluster site contracts.

17 The legislation also requires that the
18 City produce a plan to eliminate cluster sites
19 that utilizes metrics to determine how the sites
20 should be used going forward.

21 Efforts should be made to only contract
22 with landlords that cooperate to maintain safe
23 premises. Efforts should also be made to promote
24 the availability of rent-regulated housing.

25 We believe that the reporting mechanisms
outline in the bill would provide the public with

3 the necessary information to monitor the progress
4 that DHS is making on phasing out cluster sites.
5 We believe that this bill will also provide much
6 needed transparency when DHS enters into
7 contracts to provide homeless services in a
8 cluster site. We applaud the City's goal of
9 phasing out these cluster sites for sheltering
10 homeless families. However, there presently is
11 no way for the public to monitor and follow the
12 progress made towards this goal. This
13 legislation would provide a necessary tool to
14 monitor this progress.

15 Finally, the data demonstrates [bell]
16 that HPD violations are endemic to cluster sites
17 and we need to provide safer, better temporary
18 housing options. The City has recognized this in
19 the Turning the Tide plan, and this legislation
20 introduced at Borough President Diaz's request
21 moves the needle in the right direction. On
22 behalf of Borough President Diaz, I urge the City
23 Council to approve these two important pieces of
24 legislation.

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much
for your testimony.

3 GISELLE ROUTHIER: Hi. My name is
4 Giselle Routhier; I'm the Policy Director at the
5 Coalition for the Homeless; we've submitted joint
6 testimony with Legal Aid, and I'm just going to
7 take a few minutes to summarize some of the
8 important points of that.

9 New York City is currently facing an
10 unprecedented homelessness crisis: Currently over
11 62,000 men, women and children sleep each night
12 in the City's shelter system, including over
13 23,000 children. Over the course of FY2017, a
14 record 129,800 unique individual spent some time
15 in a shelter over the course of that year.

16 Mayor de Blasio has taken positive steps
17 in combating homelessness in New York City, and
18 we've commended him for them, but his overall
19 plan for reducing record homelessness is
20 unambitious and plainly fails to solve the
21 underlying problem. His Turning the Tide on
22 Homelessness plan projects a decrease of just
23 2,500 people, not households, in shelters over
24 the next five years. Yet he simultaneously touts
25 an affordable housing plan that will create and
preserve an unprecedented 300,000 units of

3 housing by 2026. These vastly mismatched goals
4 highlight the conspicuously separate tracks the
5 Mayor has laid for dealing with homelessness and
6 creating housing, when the two of course are
7 deeply interconnected.

8 In the Mayor's revised Housing New York
9 plan, he has committed to creating or preserving
10 just 10,000 units of housing for homeless
11 households out of a 300,000-unit goal -- that's a
12 paltry 3 percent. Additionally, only 4,000 of
13 those units will be new construction and
14 available for immediate lease-up to homeless
15 families and individuals. The remainder will be
16 created through preservation of existing
17 currently occupied units which may not be
18 available to existing homeless families for many
19 years.

20 Right now the Mayor's housing plan does
21 not match up with the need, with too few units
22 going to households with the greatest housing
23 needs and too many units going to higher income
24 households with less severe housing need.

25 So we are talking about the solutions
today -- Mayor de Blasio must immediately align

3 his housing goals with the reality of record
4 homelessness and his touted progressive values.
5 Specifically, he must build 10,000 new units of
6 housing for homeless individuals and families
7 over the next five years, a first and achievable
8 step given the scale of his housing plan and more
9 importantly, the scale of the need. To succeed
10 in truly turning the tide, the Mayor must
11 continue this level of homeless housing
12 production throughout the extended life of his
13 housing plan. Additionally, HPD should be
14 utilizing its network providers to streamline the
15 availability of rental units to shelter residents
16 with City-initiated vouchers in hand. Currently,
17 thousands of voucher-holding families are
18 languishing in shelters, while HPD is managing a
19 wide portfolio of suitable units for these
20 families. This mismatch in priorities should be
21 rectified immediately.

22 Only with stable, affordable housing can
23 New York help families get out of the shelter
24 system and remain stably housed. The Mayor has
25 the tools to reduce homelessness substantially

3 for the first time in over a decade and we
4 implore him to use them.

5 Thank you.

6 JOSH GOLDFEIN: I'm Josh Goldfein from
7 The Legal Aid Society; I just want to add a
8 couple points to that.

9 When the Mayor commendably set out to end
10 veteran homelessness, they did a couple of
11 things. One of the things that they did was
12 assign a worker to every client to work
13 tirelessly until that client was housed. At the
14 same time, the Mayor and then HPD Commissioner
15 Vickie Bean called up the developers who the City
16 is subsidizing, who are for-profit developers
17 producing affordable housing and said you must
18 give us some units to solve this problem, and
19 that's how they solved the problem, and that has
20 not happened here. They need to back to those
21 for-profit providers whose profits the City is
22 subsidizing and say to them, you must give us
23 more units to take people out of shelter; the
24 1,200 units that the questioning elicited that
25 they've used so far in the first term are just
not adequate, in the same way that it's not

3 adequate to aspire to reduce the shelter census
4 by 2,500 people, that's just not enough.

5 When the plan that they described is
6 fully in place, they will have financed a lot of
7 units, but as the questioning brought out, a lot
8 of those are preservation units and the
9 preservation units have had very low vacancy rate
10 and they just don't turn over very often, so they
11 are basically aspiring to have about 250 or a
12 little more households move out of shelter into
13 HPD units every year, and that's just not enough.
14 Out of all those numbers that you heard, you know
15 they're preserving those units, but how many
16 become vacant every year; how many households
17 will move out of shelter? When we've asked, it's
18 less than 300; it's closer to 250, and then
19 again, that's just not enough.

20 On the cluster sites, I just want to
21 point out that as Chair Williams was getting at,
22 there are really... there's two groups of people --
23 there are people who are in the clusters and may
24 be able to stay and could stay as rent-regulated
25 tenants -- and those people need to know what
their rights are, and I think what we've seen is

3 that DHS comes to them and says you've got to
4 move and they don't say to them, you know it is
5 possible for you to stay here. When they've gone
6 to landlords and asked, will you keep these folks
7 as tenants, the landlords have not been receptive
8 to that, but the City has many enforcement tools
9 that they could be using to pressure the
10 landlords and to let those tenants know they do
11 have rent regulation rights there and they could
12 stay, and we have been representing some of those
13 tenants, but too often we find that people have
14 just given up and moved out, even before they
15 were aware that maybe they could stay.

16 Then the second question is what happens
17 to that unit after it's vacant, and you know, the
18 bill that's been proposed would go a long way to
19 highlighting what's going on in this area, but we
20 would suggest that perhaps it could also include
21 a provision that would require the new tenant to
22 get a notice -- this is a rent-regulated unit;
23 the person before you may not have been paying...
24 you know may have been a shelter resident;
25 perhaps there's some manipulation that went on
with what the regulated rent was and you should

3 take a look at that, you should assert your
4 rights; you should figure out what the rent may
5 be.

6 And other than that, we comment the
7 Council for those bills. Thank you.

8 [bell]

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And maybe
10 instructions to how to go about doing that too.

11 JOSH GOLDFEIN: Absolutely. I mean the
12 Commissioner testified that they're telling HCR,
13 you know you might wanna keep an eye on these
14 units, but that's relying on the state to do the
15 enforcement and HCR has told us that they're not
16 an enforcement agency, so what can HPD do to
17 reach out to those tenants and say, you know you
18 might wanna do something here to assert your
19 rights and make sure that your rent is legal.

20 LAURA MASCUCH: Good afternoon. My name
21 is Laura Mascuch; I'm the Executive Director of
22 The Supportive Housing Network of New York, a
23 membership organization of over 200 nonprofits
24 that are developers, owners, and providers of
25 supportive housing statewide. As you know,
supportive housing represents a critical tool to

3 end homelessness, offering permanent solutions
4 with wraparound social services for homeless
5 individuals and families with special needs.

6 In order to combat this crisis, as well
7 as to help other New Yorkers facing similar
8 housing insecurity, the Administration has made
9 an historic commitment to invest 15,000 units of
10 supportive housing over the next 15 years. This
11 initiative, NYC 15/15, is funding a proven
12 solution to homelessness, and for that we are
13 extremely grateful to the City, as well as the
14 City Council for their support.

15 HPD's new Rental Assistance Program, a
16 key aspect of the 15/15 plan, is truly historic.
17 This marks the first time that New York City is
18 directly providing operating subsidy, thereby
19 ensuring that no tenant is rent-burdened or
20 housing insecure in these new 15,000 units.
21 Additionally, the service contracts awarded
22 through HRA and DOHMH are appropriately fund the
23 true cost of providing services to chronically
24 homeless individuals and families suffering from
25 serious disabilities and life challenges.

3 Despite the unprecedented level of
4 support from the current administration, our
5 members still face significant challenges in
6 creating supportive housing in New York City. On
7 the federal level, on top of the constant looming
8 threat that HUD will end important housing
9 programs, there is also the threat of Republican-
10 led tax reform. The House bill that passed last
11 week eliminates all Private Activity Bonds, which
12 generate 4 percent Low-Income Housing Tax
13 Credits, and lowers the corporate rate to 20
14 percent, which will greatly decrease the value of
15 the 9 percent Housing Credit. These federal
16 programs provide equity for virtually all new
17 affordable and supportive housing residences in
18 New York City.

19 Success is an ambitious goal in 15/15
20 which requires interagency collaboration. We are
21 working with the City on multiple levels to help
22 facilitate that collaboration.

23 The Council especially plays an
24 invaluable role in helping our providers engage
25 with communities. One of our deepest concerns
about the City's ability to live up to its

3 commitment of 15,000 units is the fracturing of
4 communities that often occurs as debates emerge
5 around the construction of new supportive housing
6 residences. All too often, only a vocal few in
7 the community are able to voice their opinion on
8 a project and thus, despite the unspoken support
9 of many others, a supportive housing project is
10 halted due to fears of loss of property value or
11 decline in their communities. In reality,
12 communities have actually benefited from
13 supportive housing in their neighborhoods: a 2008
14 study found that the values of properties within
15 500 feet of supporting housing showed steady
16 growth relative to other properties in the area.
17 Additionally, study after study has demonstrated
18 the significant cost savings supportive housing
19 yields for taxpayers by reducing the populations
20 in shelters, prisons, and institutions. And
21 while these savings are great, the human benefit
22 is truly immeasurable. Thousands of lives have
23 been improved and saved through the use of
24 supportive housing.

24 [bell]

25 Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, thank you so
4 much to this panel. I think in the interest of
5 time, we'll hold on our questions, but I do want
6 to... you know the offer is there, from both myself
7 and Council Member Williams, to continue working
8 with you all to make sure that the City is doing
9 better and making a greater impact in this coming
10 term. So thank you so much for your testimony.

11 [background comments]

12 Next up: Dinick Martinez; Angela
13 Hernandez; Nathylin Flowers... [background comment]
14 Adesegun -- thank you.

15 [pause]

16 [background comments]

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay. You can
18 begin in the order of your preference; you'll
19 have three minutes to give your testimony.

20 [pause]

21 [background comments]

22 DINICK MARTINEZ: Okay, everybody can
23 hear me? [background comment] Unfortunately,
24 the other people left. But in the shelter system
25 there are a lot of issues. As you can see, this
weekend I just wrote just four grievances, one of

3 the examples that -- then I want to speak about,
4 because I've got three minutes, so I can speak
5 about that.

6 First of all, thank you for giving me the
7 opportunity to speak in front of all of you.

8 Thank you all of you: my peers and the Council
9 Members and the Committee. I wanted to say that

10 I want to give one example that is happening in
11 the shelter. The children where I reside at,
12 there are four floors -- there are handicaps..

13 **[inaudible]** kind of people -- handicaps and
14 disabled. It is really sad that disabled people
15 and handicapped, they have to be on the second
16 floor, third floor and the fourth floor. Just
17 this past weekend a lady from my room, she was
18 transferred; she was moved from the second floor,
19 just out of revenge, to the fourth floor; it's
20 unacceptable. I should give you... previous to
21 that, she was transferred from the fourth floor,
22 out of revenge, to the second; now **[inaudible]**
23 another floor. Anyway, let me begin with my
24 **[inaudible]** 'cause time is running out.

25 Okay. Good afternoon, thank you for your
time today. My name is Dinick Martinez. I am a

3 transgender student. I am.. today, as you know,
4 some of the Council Members, I was at the rally
5 at City Hall; I am observing Transgender day of
6 Remembrance. I have been in the shelter system
7 for over two years.

8 Finding housing is very difficult.
9 Unfortunately, the guy who runs the HRA is not
10 here; he left. Even if you have [background
11 comments]... [crosstalk]

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: There is a
13 representative from HRA here.

14 DINICK MARTINEZ: Finding housing is very
15 difficult, even if you have a voucher. I had a
16 LINC voucher and I was quite excited to have it.
17 However, finding housing that was affordable was
18 not possible. Having people repeatedly tell me
19 that the voucher does not guarantee payment.
20 Once again, the voucher clearly says: does not
21 guarantee payment. Finding any apartment that
22 will accept my voucher is almost impossible.

23 In addition to the limited housing
24 options available, when I do find a listing, the
25 agents and landlords build barriers in accepting
the voucher and demand conditions that the

3 homeless individuals cannot fulfill like a good
4 credit score, working only or applicant fees,
5 which is usually \$65 and up.

6 HPD needs to provide affordable housing
7 without barriers. This is the only solution for
8 the homeless in New York City.

9 Anyway, so like said, but it's... [bell] I
10 want to say more, but time is up... [crosstalk]

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You can finish. You
12 can finish.

13 DINICK MARTINEZ: Okay. Thank you for
14 giving me the opportunity. For example, what the
15 corrupt... once again, the corrupt landlords do --
16 if the voucher says 450, they find a way to say
17 the rate 2,250; the rates **[inaudible]** to 1,300,
18 so they will not accept the voucher and they can
19 be forgiven for the law. So it's always
20 barriers; we need to stop that. And the City
21 Council needs to put a law that they need to say
22 the apartment is this amount; it needs to be this
23 amount so there is no excuse. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much.

25 [background comments, clapping]

3 NATHYLIN FLOWERS ADESEGUN: Hello. Good
4 afternoon. My name is Nathylin Flowers Adesegun.
5 I am a member of VOCAL-NY, Voices of Community
6 Activists and Leaders. I was at the march in
7 Washington with Martin Luther King -- they took
8 me as a kid -- we fought for jobs, justice; fair
9 housing and there was no Fair Housing Act then.
10 [background comments] We still are fighting.

11 We are a grassroots organization working
12 to end AIDS, mass incarceration, the drug war,
13 and homelessness. On behalf of VOCAL-NY, I want
14 to thank the General Welfare Committee Chair
15 Stephen Levin, the Housing Committee Chair
16 Jumaane Williams, and the other member of the
17 Committee for the opportunity to provide
18 testimony, and for calling this very important
19 meeting today.

20 I am from Brooklyn. For 34-and-a-half
21 years, I lived just a block away from what is now
22 the new Kings Loews Theater in Flatbush. That
23 means our neighborhood supported that
24 neighborhood [sic] until they made Loews King and
25 [inaudible] tickets \$80. We can't go.

[background comment].

3 After years of living in my building, my
4 apartment was destabilized and my rent
5 skyrocketed from \$475 a month to \$1,319.16.
6 There is no way I could ever pay that amount, so
7 eventually I was evicted. I am now homeless. I
8 have been living in a women's shelter for two
9 years and eight months. Despite having family,
10 social ties, memories, doctors, my church, and
11 support networks in Flatbush, I don't know if
12 I'll ever live there again. There are thousands
13 more like me who have been displaced from the
14 neighborhoods we built and are not able to
15 return. This is wrong.

16 For years I've watched my neighborhood
17 transform -- new buildings -- there's a new hotel
18 across from that Loews King -- new people have
19 moved in. Just down the street from where I
20 lived in Flatbush, a 24-story building was
21 constructed at 626 Flatbush Avenue in 2015.
22 Check out the webpage; you'll see how big and
23 beautiful the building is, how it overlooks
24 Prospect Park; it has views of Manhattan. How
25 many units of housing do you think were set aside

3 in that building for the homeless? Not a one.

4 None.

5 May de Blasio's affordable housing plan
6 is not for the homeless. We know this because we
7 are largely left out of it. The little housing
8 that has been created for homeless people
9 throughout the Housing NY plan simply does not
10 meet the demand and the scale of the crisis.
11 This is a catastrophe.

12 In the last few weeks, the Mayor unveiled
13 the new pieces of housing. One major piece was a
14 promise to build 300,000 units of housing by 2026
15 -- we need that now. On October 24th, he
16 announced his plan, but there was no mention of
17 how an additional 100,000 units of housing would
18 be used [bell] to solve homelessness. I am not
19 surprised, but I think it highlights the problem.

20 Mayor de Blasio's Housing NY plan is not
21 being used as a tool to reduce the homeless
22 crisis, even though it has the potential to do
23 so. That means the 60,000 plus New Yorkers who
24 are homeless are not a priority in the plan.
25 Even worse, it means that the 25,000 children who
sleep in shelters every night. This is pitiful;

3 they are not a priority either. You need to go
4 to school and come home to the same place every
5 day just to succeed in this life. Imagine what
6 that means to generations of young people; not
7 only do they lack housing; they struggle to get
8 to school and succeed academically. I think of
9 what that means for children and young people
10 from my neighborhood and my heart breaks. This
11 doesn't have to be this way. Aren't we the
12 richest city in the richest country, the greatest
13 nation in the world with the most resources?
14 Don't we have the most brilliant people and minds
15 here? Why can't we come up with a better plan
16 that works this year, not 2026? [background
17 comments]

18 So we, our community; our City Council,
19 have to ask: what needs to happen before City
20 agencies unite [bell] to work on solving
21 homelessness together?

22 HRA has taken some necessary steps to
23 provide the homeless with new rental assistance
24 programs like SEPS and LINC. I have a LINC
25 voucher, for more than a year, it's renewed every
three months. Please one of you take it and read

3 what he says he has, okay. What it says -- you
4 need to know; this is what they gave us,
5 [background comment] alright? I have it and no
6 one will take it; my friends who are in real
7 estate won't take it because the money's not
8 guaranteed [background comments] and I don't want
9 to report them 'cause Banks says he'll arrest
10 them. But you understand the problem; it's a
11 quandary. [background comment] I have the
12 program; I was so excited; I'm gonna get an
13 apartment, yes, that will never be raised the
14 rent. I'm 71 years old; I am part of the part
15 that is supposed to be promised that's not ending
16 in five years, but guess what; nobody's takin'
17 that paper. [background comment] Alright.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I'm sorry; I'm gonna
19 have to ask you to...

20 NATHYLIN FLOWERS ADESEGUN: Okay.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: to wrap it up.

22 NATHYLIN FLOWERS ADESEGUN: We need the
23 City to do more; one way to do more is to focus
24 on the developers and landlords invested in the
25 Mayor's affordable housing plan. How many
vouchers are in use at the building? How is HPD

3 ensuring these developers and landlords are
4 following the law? And lastly, why aren't they
5 mandated to house more people with vouchers if
6 they are the first to be awarded the big
7 projects? No more welfare for the rich; give the
8 money to the poor.

9 Thank you.

10 [background comment]

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

12 [clapping]

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Alright, so
14 we've gotta do this, since clappings are coming
15 more and more, so this is... Alright.

16 NATHYLIN FLOWERS ADESEGUN: Thank you for
17 having me.

18 [background comments]

19 ANGELA HERNANDEZ: Oh, hello. Hi, good
20 afternoon. Thank you for allowing me the chance
21 to speak here today. My name is Angela
22 Hernandez. I'm shelter homeless right now,
23 living in a single women's shelter. I was...
24 [interpose, background comments] I was granted
25 the LINC program four months ago, but
unfortunately, I have had no success at all in

3 finding affordable housing; moreover, just
4 finding a landlord who will accept any housing
5 assistance program is a major hurdle in itself.

6 The only housing that seems to be
7 available to us are these dilapidated buildings
8 offering a slummy closet size room, likely having
9 a mice or roach infestation problem that we are
10 supposed to just accept and be content with.

11 Another problem is the availability. In
12 one day I probably called over 40 realty offices.
13 The collective response was always to either call
14 back next week or they don't take vouchers. Out
15 of all my efforts I've put into searching, I have
16 only come across two businesses that accept
17 housing programs, however, they require for you
18 to have a 650 or higher credit score. I do not
19 know where they come up with that number when
20 most people on government assistance programs
21 have little or no credit at all.

22 Thank you.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you very
24 much for sharing your stories. I want to hold
25 this for a second; I want to make a copy

[inaudible]... [crosstalk]

2 NATHYLIN FLOWERS ADESEGUN: You can keep
3 it.

4 [background comments]

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But no; you need it.

6 NATHYLIN FLOWERS ADESEGUN: No.

7 [background comment] No. If you notice, it's
8 dated November 6...

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: No...

10 NATHYLIN FLOWERS ADESEGUN: it expires
11 every three months and they have... that's the
12 recent one before this...

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: So...

14 NATHYLIN FLOWERS ADESEGUN: and I
15 understand they're paying \$2,000 plus a month to
16 the shelter for me to live there. [background
17 comments]

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Miss Mallory
19 [sic]... [background comment] when they finish
20 their te... I wanted to ask you a question
21 actually; I know most of your responses are gonna
22 be you can't answer, but I want to get them on
23 the record, [background comment]. So thank you
24 so much... you have questions **[inaudible]**?

25

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I just want to thank
4 this panel; what you have spoke about I've seen,
5 and I've seen with constituents that I represent;
6 people that I know, people that I knew before
7 they went into the shelter system, and there
8 needs to be a better job that the City is doing
9 with housing specialists; there should be some
10 way in which -- I mean you have a voucher, you
11 have a voucher, [background comment] there are
12 apartments out there for 1268 or [background
13 comment] 1063; whatever it is, they're out there,
14 they are out there, I mean they're... I look on
15 Craig's List; I know that they're there, I know
16 that they're there; they're in communities
17 throughout New York City. There needs to be an
18 investment and training and housing specialists
19 to make sure that individuals like yourself that
20 have the voucher and are ready to go; that you're
21 able -- I mean there's every reason to make sure
22 that that works.

23 NATHYLIN FLOWERS ADESEGUN: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I found one guy who's
25 really good at it; his name's Tracy Davis, and I
know Tracy Davis is out there -- he's pounding

3 the pavement, like talking to brokers, making
4 sure that he can find apartments for people that
5 he's working with, but not everybody's working
6 with Tracy Davis, so I'm just... I've got your back
7 100 percent, honestly. Reach out to my office;
8 reach out to Council Member Williams' office and
9 we'll do our best to help you also. I mean I'll
10 be on Craig's List myself [background comment].

11 NATHYLIN FLOWERS ADESEGUN: Okay, thank
12 you.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah.

14 [background comments]

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you, Miss
16 Drinkwater.

17 [background comments].

18 DINICK MARTINEZ: Today I have the honor
19 to represent the Coalit... thank you... the Coalition
20 for the Homeless; thank you for giving me the
21 opportunity. But I have to say that the City, I
22 don't know where their mind is, the City, who
23 governs the shelter system; where is their mind,
24 because they are wasting a lot of money in the
25 shelter system [background comments]. Like for
example, you don't need [inaudible] to serve a

3 pre-cooked meal; you need three, only two or
4 three you need. You don't need like a... like four
5 DHS police officers, plus two... two or three or
6 four securities from the place... [crosstalk]

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

8 DINICK MARTINEZ: There is a lot of money
9 being wasted...

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you very
11 much.

12 DINICK MARTINEZ: so think about that.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Appreciate it.

14 [background comments] You wanna end, Miss
15 Mallory, actually; if you can come back up. Both
16 from the Administration; I'm pretty sure what
17 their answers are gonna be, but. So I'm actually
18 disturbed by what I read on the voucher that I
19 was given, so it was a disclaimer; it says: The
20 City of New York is implementing this program in
21 order to provide assistance to eligible
22 individuals, including rental assistance of a
23 specific amount; however, this rental assistance
24 program is subject to and contingent upon funding
25 appropriations. In implementing this new rental
assistance program, the City of New York is not

3 providing a payment guarantee of any kind to any
4 person or entity. The City of New York is not
5 entering into any contract **[inaudible]** nor is it
6 making any promise to tenants, landlords, or
7 other person or entity in connection with this
8 program. That's a very disturbing [background
9 comments] disclaimer. Why would we have that
10 disclaimer on a voucher we're giving to someone
11 to pay for rent?

12 ERIN DRINKWATER: So as you can imagine,
13 I will have to get back to you; however,
14 [background comments] in each agency's budget
15 testimony we provide information on the budget
16 allocations for the various rental assistance
17 programs and the out year funding associated with
18 that.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Alright. I
20 mean this is disturb... I guess this is for legal
21 purposes, but it seems to just contradict exactly
22 what it is supposed to be doing, and so I
23 definitely want an answer.

24 ERIN DRINKWATER: I hear the concern.

25 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: And then for
both, the source of... it came up earlier -- source

3 of income discrimination seems to be a major
4 problem here, so we should be having major stings
5 going on; this seems rampant and seems to be the
6 course of doing business, so it doesn't seem that
7 it would be hard to find owners, landlords, real
8 estate agents who are doing this and so we've
9 gotta figure this out and so if you guys...
[interpose]

10 ERIN DRINKWATER: So I just want to
11 reiterate for folks in the room to please call
12 311, be connected with our Source of Income
13 Discrimination unit; collect names of the
14 realtors that you're using. We need this
15 information, so that way we can go after the
16 folks who are being discriminatory based on the
17 source of income.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Actually, say
19 your name also and agency.

20 ERIN DRINKWATER: Erin Drinkwater from
21 Department of Social Services.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: And Miss
23 Mallory, even though you didn't speak, but...

24 SARAH MALLORY: Yeah, Sarah Mallory, from
25 HPD.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay.

4 SARAH MALLORY: And I'm sure that was
5 submitted for public record, but I would love to
6 have a copy of that, basically just to see the
7 vouchers **[inaudible]**.

8 [background comments]

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Just your
10 standard voucher... [interpose]

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: It's a standard LINC
12 IV voucher.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: We'll get a
14 copy. You'll get a cop... [crosstalk]

15 SARAH MALLORY: Uh which... federally fun...

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Do you want a copy or
17 you can get it?

18 SARAH MALLORY: I can get it, but it's
19 federally funded and yes, we will get back to you
20 with that information.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank
22 you very much. Also get back, 'cause I didn't,
23 or I forgot to mention, but the whole MIH and the
24 set-aside, for some reason the City generally
25 counts when they're putting direct subsidies into
a project; it is a firm belief that if we are

3 rezoning something or there's City land available
4 or something like that, I consider that getting
5 subsidies from the City and so we should be
6 treating it exactly the same way and it's
7 frustrating that we don't, and I forgot to put
8 that on, alright? Thank you.

9 SARAH MALLORY: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, next panel --
11 Jose Luis Rodriguez from Picture the Homeless;
12 Mary Crosby, Picture the Homeless; Douglas G.,
13 Picture the Homeless; and Scott Hutchins, Picture
14 the Homeless.

15 [background comments]

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Sorry, just for
17 the record also, Miss Drinkwater...

18 ERIN DRINKWATER: Yes.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: There's also no
20 information on these about source of income
21 discrimination, [background comment] so while we...
22 while we do have the disclaimer that you're not
23 making any promises of payment, you might want to
24 also have some information of where people can
25 reach out if they have a source of
discrimination...

3 ERIN DRINKWATER: On the voucher?

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: On the voucher
5 itself. [background comment] Thank you.

6 [background comments]

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, whoever wants
8 to begin.

9 SCOTT ANDREW HUTCHINS: My name is Scott
10 Andrew Hutchins and I have been living in the
11 shelter system for five-and-a-half years in spite
12 of a master's degree from CUNY, my most recent
13 jobs paying at or near the minimum wage. I am
14 here representing Picture the Homeless in support
15 of the Housing Not Warehousing Act.

16 In 2012, Picture the Homeless found
17 enough vacant property in only a third of the
18 city to house three times the current shelter
19 population. Bill de Blasio called for a count of
20 vacant property in his Housing New York plan, but
21 he has just won a second term without making any
22 strides toward implementing it. Picture the
23 Homeless has proved this can be done and now it
24 needs to be done citywide.

25 As a resident of the shelter system, I
ferverently oppose the Mayor's plan to build 90 new

3 homeless shelters while failing to create
4 sufficient low-income housing. We cannot even
5 truly address the homeless crisis until we find
6 out how much available housing stock there is,
7 and that is exactly the purpose of the Housing
8 Not Warehousing Act. As long as we depend on
9 different City departments to make their own
10 vacant property lists, we will continue to find
11 their counts wildly inaccurate and inconsistent.

12 The Bedford-Union Armory has been a
13 divisive city issue, particular for those like me
14 who live in the district, 'cause I actually ran
15 for Council in that district. Intro 1039, part
16 of the Housing Not Warehousing Act, would prevent
17 such disastrous uses of public land for private
18 gain in the midst of a housing crisis by creating
19 recommendations for "affordable" housing whenever
20 possible (and I'm saying it in quotes 'cause I
21 don't like that language). We need bills like
22 Intro 1039 for a level of transparency and
23 honesty that we are not currently getting.

24 Finally, we can punish the personal gain
25 at public expense through the use of Intro 1034,
which requires landlords to register their vacant

3 property and penalizes them for failure to
4 register. Landlords should not have a right to
5 profit at the expense of taxpayers as the shelter
6 population skyrockets. With steep enough fines,
7 landlords will be encouraged to either relinquish
8 their property, which is often old enough to fall
9 into rent stabilization, or begin renting to
10 tenants at the current value of their apartments
11 rather than waiting on tenants for higher income,
12 thus significantly alleviating the housing
13 crisis.

14 Picture the Homeless believes that this
15 is an essential first step towards solving the
16 city's homelessness crisis, and one part of the
17 solution.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much.

19 JOSE RODRIGUEZ: My name is Jose
20 Rodriguez; I am a member of Picture the Homeless.
21 While the city's homeless population continues to
22 rise, the City continues to lose extremely low-
23 income apartments at record levels each year.
24 There is a visible increase of new buildings
25 being built throughout the city. However, the
City is building for those who have more housing

3 opportunities than people with less opportunity.

4 The city's poorest of the poor, with AMI under 30
5 percent, have just 15 percent of apartment units
6 being set aside from the Mayor's 300,000 unit
7 housing plan.

8 Existing term sheets set aside very few
9 units for people most at risk of homelessness.

10 And many homeless people do not qualify for
11 supportive housing, which makes up the majority
12 of units built for households below 30 percent
13 AMI since 2014. The City is spending money on
14 new shelters and not spending enough money on
15 making housing more affordable to extremely low-
16 income households, but there is a solution.

17 Experts say that it costs an additional
18 \$40-45,000 of additional money to reduce the AMI
19 by 10 percent or to get housing at the
20 affordability we need. This is the same amount
21 that it costs the City to house a homeless
22 household, on average, for one year. Picture the
23 Homeless recommends that DHS and HPD utilize
24 money accumulated by City taxpayers to invest in
25 truly low-income affordable housing instead of

3 warehousing human beings for years in
4 demoralizing conditions.

5 People in shelters are unable to achieve
6 their dreams and desires that most of us take for
7 granted due to the inhumanity of the system. My
8 experience living in the shelter made me at times
9 be placed in debilitating situations.

10 There is a real feeling of being
11 humiliated due to being stigmatized or even
12 criminalized being in the shelter system. Having
13 housing makes you feel confident and allows
14 people to pursue the things in life that make all
15 New Yorkers unique and special. It is important
16 that the City create housing for people with
17 extremely low income because all people deserve a
18 roof over their heads no matter the income they
19 generate to the state. Not only does providing
20 housing (not shelters) cost less, it is the right
21 thing to do morally. Picture the Homeless is
22 asking the Council to use the powers they have to
23 help the tens of thousands [bell] of truly low-
24 income New Yorkers that are in shelters, on the
25 street, living in their cars, or on the verge of

3 losing their homes and community ties. Thank
4 you.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much.

6 [background comments]

7 MARY CROSBY: Hi, my name is Mary Crosby
8 and I'm with Picture the Homeless; I am also a
9 homeless senior; been in the system for over two
10 years. I want to thank the Committee today for
11 holding this hearing and I particularly liked
12 some of your very commonsense questions; I
13 appreciate that, because I think what we are
14 lacking most of all is commonsense, and those who
15 are in a shelter, we have a lot of commonsense,
16 so I would hope -- this is what Picture the
17 Homeless is -- talk to us, and this is a big
18 problem; at the meeting today I want to confine
19 my remarks to address particularly communication
20 within the system -- 'cause I understand that's
21 the main topic -- there isn't any and that is a
22 big problem and I have had to go around, and
23 everybody else in the shelter system, just trying
24 to look for little bits of information to help me
25 figure out how to work with the system -- you
don't know who is in charge; there is no... when I

3 was in this first shelter, I didn't know who was
4 in charge; I didn't know what the people did; I
5 didn't know who to go to, and I'm someone with a
6 college education, so what happens to somebody
7 who doesn't have that advantage, you know, 'cause
8 you're scrambling.

9 Okay, I want to give some ideas at the
10 end for what's needed, but I'm going to tell you
11 about my experience going with four other senior
12 women to be interviewed for some apartments in a
13 building where we were told there were three
14 units available -- I heard somebody say, one of
15 the people say earlier and some kind of something
16 or other -- nobody knows about that; the people..
17 my housing people at my shelter now don't know
18 anything about this; I had to tell them about
19 some of these programs. But I was at a different
20 shelter, okay, and I was taken out to see these.
21 These so-called interviews consisted of signing a
22 lot of lengthy legal documents giving permission
23 to various City agencies, including HPD, to dig
24 into our tax records, etc., etc. This was before
25 we were allowed to go see the apartments;
naturally, we all signed, we had to sign; no time

3 to read it or anything, just sign. I asked for
4 copies and they had no problem giving them to me,
5 but later I was told that that was too uppity; I
6 shouldn't have done that; I should have displayed
7 more gratitude and you know, been more humble and
8 shuffling to... you know, it signaled that I would
9 be a problem or something.

10 Our civil rights are... when you go into a
11 shelter system you give up your civil rights in
12 order to have a bed, and that's what it really
13 is, [background comments] so we have a little bit
14 of listening here today and I'm very grateful.

15 Okay, only three people were interested
16 in these apartments, so five of us went; only
17 three were interested and there were three
18 apartments, but only one person got to have the
19 apartment. Well maybe I was out because I was
20 evicted and therefore I'm on the blacklist, so
21 please, get rid of the blacklist; that would
22 solve problems [background comment] for a lot of
23 people. Okay, so we were told that if we did not
24 qualify for the apartment we'd be sent a letter
25 and we could appeal the decision, but no letter
[bell] ever arrived and the housing specialist

3 said not a word to me, no communication. So
4 again... and who do I go to at DHS? I don't know.
5 When you go on the system you have just very
6 general kind of things here.

7 If I may take just a little bit; I just
8 want to list some things that may be helpful,
9 'cause I think that's important. I want to
10 recommend that at the shelter level that there be
11 an organization chart and that people wear name
12 tags, and the people who need name tags are the
13 security guards, the PAs and so forth. If you
14 have a problem, you don't know who the person is;
15 you can't get anywhere. I think that's very
16 basic.

17 As far as DHS, I would like to see an org
18 chart there with functions. We're talking about
19 how people communicate; we don't know what these
20 departments are; what do they do? It's all a
21 black fog.

22 The communication with housing reps --
23 now my experience -- and these are broad strokes
24 -- is that the housing reps -- there's nothing
25 general coming out of DHS; the housing reps at
this place were... the other shelter I was at,

3 they're very different; they all seem to have
4 their own specialty, their own go-to people;
5 they're not working for me, they're not looking
6 for something that solves my problem; they're
7 looking to fill units that someone has advised
8 them, so I'm being made, and everybody else,
9 anyone else who's homeless, you have to fit into
10 the system; it's not like you get any kind of
11 client-centered work from anybody. But that's
12 the impression on the outside, so that... and the
13 press needs to change, as this gentleman was
14 indicating; we can't all be painted that we're
15 all mentally ill; we're all criminals; we're all
16 this or that, it's not... that's not the case.
17 Many people work, many people are taxpaying
18 people that live in shelters.

19 I'd urge you to talk with us and I have
20 an idea for that. There is a very simple survey
21 system, technologic -- I think it's very
22 inexpensive; maybe even free, I don't know; it's
23 on the internet; I can give you that information.
24 It would probably take one afternoon to set up a
25 survey, which is then tabulated automatically;
you could have that, ask some questions, and have

3 it go out so homeless people could fill in that
4 little survey on the... you know, it could be
5 anonymous... you know we could talk more about it
6 if you're interested... [crosstalk]

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: So and

8 **[inaudible]**...

9 MARY CROSBY: and I want all reports made
10 public, any report... [crosstalk]

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: In the interest
12 of time; do you... do you have that written; you
13 can submit it to us?

14 MARY CROSBY: I will definitely give you
15 something in writing...

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay.

17 MARY CROSBY: and there are a couple of
18 things I didn't get to mention, but I will give...
19 I apologize for not having something ready today,
20 but I will give you that information, along with
21 the points that I mentioned.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

23 JOSE RODRIGUEZ: Mr. Jumaane... [crosstalk]

24 MARY CROSBY: Thank you very much.

25 JOSE RODRIGUEZ: Picture the Homeless
does have a survey for shelter people to fill

3 out; I can email it to you if you want it. It's
4 a survey we designed specifically to survey
5 residents in shelters.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Sure, you can
7 send it.

8 JOSE RODRIGUEZ: Okay, I will.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.
10 Thank you so much... [interpose]

11 SCOTT ANDREW HUTCHINS: Oh and I wanted
12 to say to Mr. Levin, who just walked out of the
13 room, that if you go on Rentlogic, there are no
14 apartments that are for the amount on the LINC
15 vouchers, at least the ones who are getting above
16 an F on Rentlogic, so if you go to rentlogic.com,
17 look for the apartments that are \$1200 or less,
18 you won't find anything, at least if it's not
19 given an F. Thank you.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

21 MARY CROSBY: And the numbers haven't
22 changed since I got the first LINC voucher in
23 2015, so. [background comments] Yeah, thank
24 you. Thank you. [background comments]

25 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: So in the
interest of time and until my co-chair comes

3 back, I apologize, but I'm gonna ask that we have
4 a two-minute timer for everyone so we can make
5 sure we get everybody in.

6 U. Peter Malvo [sic] from Safety Net;
7 Wendy O'Shields from Safety Net; I think this is
8 Griffin Kinard. Is Griffin Kinard here?
9 [background comment] Alright, and Mark Green
10 from Coalition for the Homeless.

11 And the next panel can just get prepared.
12 After this panel is Diann Mitchell, Sam Winfrey,
13 Stephanie Joseph, and Charmaine Gayle -- if you
14 can get ready to be on the next panel.

15 So we should have U. Peter Malvo..
16 [background comment] one second, sir; I'm sorry;
17 Wendy O'Shields, Griffin Kinard, [background
18 comment] and Mark Green. [background comment]
19 Yeah. You'll each have two minutes and you can
20 begin your testimony in the order of your
21 preference.

22 PETER MALVAN: Hello. My name is Peter
23 Malvan; I am street homeless since 2011; I am a
24 Safety Net Activist, a co-chair of the CoC, New
25 York City's Coalition on Continuum of Care,
Consumer Committee, disabled, age 59, and I

2 worked in social services in New York City with
3 low-income people and homeless people since 1989.

4 My testimony attests to the lack of
5 coordination between HPD, DHS and HRA. I have a
6 SEPS voucher which has been updated, then renewed
7 on the basis that I won a lottery for Maestro
8 West Chelsea from NYC Housing Connect.

9 Processing began for Maestro on 09/02/2016. The
10 voucher was last renewed 09/15/2017 and I was
11 informed that it would not be renewed if I did
12 not have an apartment by 12/15/2017.

13 Over a week ago, Wavecrest management tax
14 credit assistant screener for the Maestro, a
15 project in HPD's NYC Housing Connect, informed me
16 a unit was available, but unfortunately their
17 search must continue since this unit is for a
18 hearing impaired person. I am mobility impaired
19 and have progressive eye problems, impairment. I
20 have been in contact with outreach -- MOC and BRC
21 -- outreach since 2011 trying to become
22 permanently housed.

23 It seems that documentation from outreach
24 would make me eligible for a SEPS voucher
25 according to evidence guidelines, yet somehow

3 this has never been told to SEPS eligibility
4 personnel. Wavecrest indicated it may be an
5 extended period before I am contacted again for a
6 unit. This was reported to the Source of Income
7 Discrimination unit as a possible gimmick to
8 avert taking [bell] voucher and is clearly
9 discriminatory.

10 The fact that HPD, HRA, and DHS are major
11 participants in the CoC and have been very
12 supportive of my efforts to get housed makes a
13 clear case for the lack of coordination and even
14 a clearer picture of how management companies
15 contracted to screen HPD projects discriminate
16 with immunity and how street homeless are left
17 out of accessing housing despite being
18 technically most vulnerable.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you. You
20 can go in the order of your preference.

21 GRIFFIN KINARD: Hello, my name is
22 Griffin Kinard; I'm here on behalf of the
23 Coalition for the Homeless and one of the things
24 that I want to talk about is the ill-equipped and
25 untrained individuals that you actually have that
these people are actually hiring into the

3 shelter. Now you know me being mentally ill, I'm
4 in a micro shelter -- mentally ill; chemically-
5 addicted shelter -- and my needs are not getting
6 met; I am put under more stress than I am
7 relieved of it. I don't think it's fair that
8 I've been in the shelter system for five years
9 and my feet have beat this ground getting
10 everything that is needed so I can get housing.
11 I've had the LINC housing package in five years
12 -- nothing; I've had the 2010E housing package --
13 nothing; I went and found other programs and I've
14 spoken to them; they're telling me what my
15 shelter needs to do and telling me that my
16 shelter needs to do this before they can do this
17 and that these people have got to do this and
18 that they have to do that. But my problem is
19 this: if I always do my half and the half that's
20 left up to the shelter is never done; then it
21 always makes it seem like I'm not doing nothing;
22 that's not fair, it's not fair at all; okay?

23 My baby mother moved my son to another
24 state because she got tired of waiting for me to
25 get my own, which makes it next to impossible to
even see him now, you know, but she did this just

3 this year. I've had housing packages for the
4 past four or five years; now I come to find out
5 that even on the housing package -- and you know
6 silly me, I didn't read anything -- even on the
7 housing package they weren't going to pay anyway;
8 no wonder why, when I was calling these real
9 estate places they wouldn't take my voucher
10 because they knew what I didn't know, that they
11 weren't going to be paid anyway, so why give me
12 anything that I'm looking for... [bell] why give me
13 anything that I'm looking for when what they're
14 looking for is never gonna come, regardless. So
15 you know I think... I think it's... I think it's... no,
16 no, no; I don't think, it's befuddling, you know,
17 to try to understand why I'm suffering like this
18 when I know that I did everything that I was
19 supposed to do, everything that was asked of me,
20 everything that people said that I couldn't do
21 because of my mental illness; I went out there
22 and I did it and I'm still homeless --
23 befuddling.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

25 WENDY O'SHIELDS: Hello, my name is Wendy
O'Shields and I'm testifying as a New York

3 Homeless Rights Advocate and a member of the
4 Urban Justice Safety Net Activists.

5 The City of New York has an epidemic of
6 homeless citizens sleeping in the Department of
7 Homeless Services shelters and in the New York
8 City streets. Accountability of the City of New
9 York's agencies, primarily the Housing
10 Preservation and Development (HPD), Department of
11 Homeless Services (DHS), and the Human Resources
12 Administration (HRA) is paramount.

13 Our New York City homeless crisis should
14 be measured weekly to track HPD, DHS, HRA, and
15 the DHS contracted street outreach teams for
16 their inactivity or their successful independent
17 or supportive housing placements.

18 The City of New York, with the oversight
19 of the Comptroller's office, should adopt a zero
20 tolerance policy of HPD, DHS, and HRA for their
21 clear emphasis on not HUD rapid re-housing
22 homeless citizens instead of warehousing or
23 ignoring their growing numbers.

24 The Mayor and the City Council should
25 require HPD to report weekly how many DHS shelter

3 and street homeless single adults they house.

4 The single adult homeless are the most neglected.

5 HPD controls tens of thousands of
6 affordable apartments citywide and they should
7 drastically increase the amount for the homeless
8 New Yorkers, especially those earning less than
9 \$25,000 per year.

10 In New York Housing Connect, there should
11 be a high priority status for DHS shelter
12 homeless residents to check. There is currently
13 no option to indicate who is shelter or street
14 homeless. Housing homeless is not a priority for
15 HPD. HPD should be fined a [bell] to be
16 determined daily amount for not housing homeless
17 New Yorkers.

18 The City of New York's Comptroller's
19 office should chargeback the Department of
20 Homeless Services a \$1,000 per day for each DHS
21 shelter homeless resident without a completed New
22 York State housing plan, (see Exhibit A). If DHS
23 staff fraudulently subtracts or adds information
24 to the residents housing plan, they should be
25 swiftly terminated and prosecuted by New York
State.

3 HRA housing vouchers should expire yearly
4 with an additional yearly renewal, if income
5 eligible, and no time limits. HRA housing
6 vouchers should be in the recipient's NYC HRA
7 Access online account. Often the DHS caseworker,
8 housing specialist, or other staff withholds the
9 housing voucher from the apartment seeker.

10 I thank you for considering my suggests
11 to assist HPD, DHS, and HRA with their
12 accountability in the City of New York's homeless
13 crisis.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

15 MARK GREEN: Hello Council, my name is
16 Mark Green; I have been a community leader in
17 **[inaudible]** Village Mitchell-Lama; I've been a
18 community leader in East Harlem with Melissa
19 Viverito, who I worked with about eight years ago
20 on Welfare to Work and affordable housing.

21 I just want to say first of all that I
22 became a member of the shelter system because I
23 was on my way to Europe and I got stopped for
24 reasons on the other side, so I had to do some
25 hotels for a minute and then I thought, well let
me just **[inaudible]** myself in the shelter system.

3 That being said, I also worked with Mayor de
4 Blasio on his homeless campaign, along with his
5 wife, Mrs. de Blasio, on her mental health
6 initiative and so forth. The reason why I
7 mention that is because on these issues of
8 homelessness, I reached out to them and nothing
9 seemed to be really happening with them and DHS
10 and moving me out of the system. But in any
11 event, what I'm going to say is that as a member
12 of the shelter system -- excuse me; I'm getting
13 anxiety for some reason -- there are over 61,000
14 people who are homeless in the system, and not to
15 be redundant on the issue; there seems to be an
16 effect that anyone can be put in the same type of
17 situation as a homeless person is; it's not just
18 because you're a low-income person; you can have
19 issues of devastation of the weather, you can be
20 a victim of unemployment, you can be a victim of
21 the gentrification of neighborhoods, and now you
22 find yourself in a situation where you are
23 unavailable to [bell] afford the apartment rent,
24 that's what happened with me.

25 But one thing I noticed is that there was
a time in America when we had built houses; we

3 had Levittown, when that was built; we had the
4 Mitchell-Lamas, which I lived in in Rockville
5 Village; we also have the same type of forecast
6 with the climate change and other issues --
7 gentrification, and unemployment -- which is
8 going to force more people out of work and it's
9 going to cause a housing situation again. So I
10 know about on the vouchers and the LINC and so
11 forth, but my perception is; how are we preparing
12 ourselves for the future; how are we preparing
13 ourselves for the people who will be homeless in
14 the future? Why can't we just take an area and
15 make it like a Levittown, with 6,000 units; why
16 can't we take an area in Far Rockaway or Brooklyn
17 and make it a community that's viable for people
18 who are unemployed to work? It's not the issue
19 of these little vouchers... [crosstalk]

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I'm gonna have
21 to ask you to give a closing sentence.

22 MARK GREEN: Okay. It's not about the
23 vouchers; this is about providing a sustainable
24 community for people who are in need now and in
25 the future instead of just saying well let's just
pass the buck along and so forth. So that's my

3 statement and that's what I want to give to the
4 City Council and I appreciate your time.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you very
7 much for all of your testimony and advocacy, and
8 those of you who shared personal testimony, I
9 greatly appreciate it. [background comment]

10 Mr. Kinard, you may want to just, as
11 mentioned, call 311 and some of the other
12 agencies when the source of income discrimination
13 is happening so that they can at least try to do
14 something about it and we can have at least a
15 record that it's happening. I'm not sure if
16 everybody's calling it in... [background comment]

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I'd just like to add
18 to that; just two weeks ago I had a meeting with
19 the chair of the Human Rights Commission; they
20 are being aggressive about it; they're not
21 holding back on going after landlords when they
22 hear about it, so by all means, I just want to
23 second what Chair Williams said.

24 GRIFFIN KINARD: 311, they know me by
25 name.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: You've called
3 about the income discrimination?

4 [background comments]

5 GRIFFIN KINARD: I've called about any
6 problem I've had...

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah.

8 GRIFFIN KINARD: any problem -- with
9 dirty bathrooms, dirty living situations -- any
10 problem I have, I call 311... [interpose]

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Particularly about
12 income discrimination, call **[inaudible]**...
13 [crosstalk]

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay.

15 GRIFFIN KINARD: Alright, no problem; I
16 will definitely do that.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you very
18 much.

19 GRIFFIN KINARD: Thank you.

20 PETER MALVAN: May I... [background
21 comments] Okay. Okay. Uhm there's going..
22 [crosstalk]

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, so...
24
25

3 PETER MALVAN: to be Source of Income
4 Discrimination training at Bailey House at 6 p.m.
5 on December 12th.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, but call that
7 in... [crosstalk]

8 PETER MALVAN: No, December 4th, I'm
9 sorry, December 4... [crosstalk]

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Call it in. Call it
11 in. Okay. Okay, next panel -- Charmaine Gayle..
12 sorry. Goyle, Charmaine Goyle. Sorry. Diann
13 Mitchell, [background comment], Sam Winfrey,
14 Stephanie Joseph. And I want to thank my Co-
15 Chair; he has to go to a Speaker candidates
16 debate; [background comment] did not necessarily
17 expect this hearing to go for five hours, but..
18 well, little bit over four; it's four now, but
19 I'm kind of exaggerating a little bit. But I
20 want to thank my Co-Chair for doing such a
21 fabulous job today. Thank you very much, Chair
22 Williams. Okay. Hi. [background comment] This
23 will all be on the record and... [background
24 comments] And Jumaane can watch it online or on
25 Channel 74.

3 SAM WINFREY: Good afternoon. Thank you
4 for allowing me to address you today. I will
5 allude very quickly, before I start my fixed
6 statement, to one of the **[inaudible]**... the other
7 lady said about commonsense, and that's something
8 that I've learned in the past few months about
9 New York and we seem to be lacking it in a lot of
10 the systems, through DHS, all the way down HPD,
11 everything; there's no communication. Anyways,
12 my prepared statement.

13 My name is Sam Winfrey; I am soon to be
14 60 years old; I'm a homeless man currently being
15 housed by DHS in the Bronx.

16 I have been homeless since the 2nd of
17 May, 2017. I had been living in Europe for over
18 30 years. I took a medical retirement in France
19 in December of 2014, and just for the record, I
20 have a Ph.D. in economics, so I do experience age
21 discrimination also now if I even try to work.

22 Due to the death of my life partner of
23 over 26 years and issues with the estate, I found
24 myself homeless in New York City. I am grateful
25 for the help that DHS and New York has provided
to me, but dealing with bereavement as well as

3 being homeless and without outside resources,
4 it's very stressful.

5 I've gotten involved in a church and I'm
6 getting support there, but again, biggest thing
7 adding to my stress is housing. I've been
8 looking for housing for several months now and I
9 find the apparent disconnect between DHS and HPD
10 even more stressful.

11 I have yet to receive any vouchers, nor
12 been offered any other options, although I have
13 been told across the board from several areas
14 that I qualify for no less than three vouchers.
15 The housing specialists that are there don't
16 understand about the vouchers; they all say, well
17 you have to wait until your 60th birthday, then
18 we'll think about applying.

19 I applied on my own to NYCHA as well as
20 actively looking for other housing availability
21 and I find the same thing that most of my
22 colleagues find -- there's nothing out there,
23 there's nothing out there, especially if you
24 mention a voucher situation, and when I say I'm
25 in the process of getting a voucher, they don't
even want to talk to me.

3 I find the limited options on NYCHA very
4 puzzling, and as an example, I found an offer in
5 October of studios and one-bedroom in Manhattan
6 at Columbus Circle; while the rent was
7 reasonable, falling within the voucher
8 constraints, the minimum income requirement for
9 the studio was almost \$90,000. That is not
10 affordable housing in any one's circle, as far as
11 I'm concerned.

12 There does not seem to be an abundance of
13 affordable housing [bell] available from HPD and
14 a lack of information about that existing housing
15 that they do have.

16 The only way, in my mind, to reduce
17 homelessness is to provide ample and truly
18 affordable housing and, more importantly,
19 information to the public.

20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. Thank you
22 very much.

23 SAM WINFREY: And I'm gonna excuse
24 myself; I have a... I've just been elected to the
25 board of trustees to my church and I need to go
to a trustees meeting now.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: By all means. Thank
3 you.

4 SAM WINFREY: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Congratulations on
6 that.

7 [background comments, clapping]

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you for your
9 testimony as well.

10 CHARMAINE GAYLE: Distinguished guests;
11 my name is Charmaine Gayle; I'm 45 years old; I
12 lived in a domestic violence shelter from 2008 to
13 2010. Now I live in an adult family shelter with
14 my domestic partner since 2013.

15 My first issue is discrimination that
16 clients with vouchers face while looking for
17 apartments, dealing with brokers. We experience
18 source of income discrimination; we are asked
19 questions, charged fees and still cannot find an
20 apartment.

21 DHS needs to upgrade their website
22 monthly.

23 Travel allowance on the budget is not
24 enough for clients with not enough income.

25

3 I was injured in the shelter where I am
4 right now one day before the Callahan inspection;
5 that's 22nd of June 2017.

6 We need cleaner, safer drinking water in
7 that shelter. My suggestion is a sink on every
8 floor with running water; not drinking from the
9 bathroom. I see people drinking from the
10 bathroom; I get sick drinking from the bathroom.

11 We are back to the old way of doing
12 things; nothing that's being done for us right
13 now is **[inaudible]**; we are just being recycled as
14 homeless New Yorkers -- recycled, recycled.

15 One thing I would like to talk about, if
16 I have enough time, is; you guys give us \$3,000,
17 \$4,000 in the shelter [bell] for rent; you're
18 splitting it up four ways and it's being split up
19 for households like \$1,268 for vouchers. I
20 suggest that if you could pay \$4,000 for rent in
21 all that, doing that, why not... every year income
22 is going up; why not up the voucher a little...

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: A little.

24 CHARMAINE GAYLE: you know.

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: \$300 bucks.

CHARMAINE GAYLE: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That's what I'm
4 saying. Yes. Yes. Yes... [crosstalk]

5 CHARMAINE GAYLE: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I've been say... Yes,
7 we had a hearing back in May where we went and
8 looked...

9 CHARMAINE GAYLE: Yeah.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: compared \$1268 and
11 then we looked for \$1568; a lot more apartments
12 available for \$1568... [crosstalk]

13 CHARMAINE GAYLE: 'Cause every year it's
14 going up. [background comment] Every year...

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Fair market value.

16 CHARMAINE GAYLE: Yeah.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Absolutely.

18 CHARMAINE GAYLE: And I don't want the
19 LINC; I'm glad when they took it.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uhm-hm. Yes, I hear
21 you; your comment, the \$1268 voucher, can only
22 afford to rent in the Bronx. Sometimes you can
23 find something in Brooklyn, but it's... and Queens
24 **[inaudible]**... [crosstalk]

25 CHARMAINE GAYLE: We don't want that; we
want equal spreading around...

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yes.

4 CHARMAINE GAYLE: not discrim... it feels
5 like discrimination also, 'cause we are being
6 pushed into only the Bronx.

7 [background comments]

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I have been

9 **[inaudible]** for... [crosstalk]

10 CHARMAINE GAYLE: We are being shoveled
11 to the Bronx, you go, all you shelter people --
12 I'm looking under my nose -- you go.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So I hear that. I
14 hear you. I hear you.

15 CHARMAINE GAYLE: I'm from Brooklyn; I
16 want to go back.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: If your family is
18 there, if your church is there, if your children
19 go to school there, so on and so forth, it's...
20 people should be able to live in the community...
21 [crosstalk]

22 CHARMAINE GAYLE: You cannot... that
23 income... some people can't afford it, like, you're
24 paying \$3,000; \$4,000, maintenance, **[inaudible]**
25 and wiping everything with it. So I had to do a

3 survey on what's going on, I mean, a petition and
4 I did.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I hear you. I hear
6 you. Thank you. Thank you very much for your
7 testimony... [crosstalk]

8 CHARMAINE GAYLE: You're welcome. Okay,
9 Miss Mitchell.

10 DIANN MITCHELL: Yes. Thank you for
11 hearing me today. I'm here representing myself.
12 My name is Diann Mitchell; I reside at Van Siclen
13 women's shelter in Brooklyn. I've been in the
14 shelter for like 2 years, 4 months and 21 days.

15 I received a LINC voucher on October 19,
16 2015. I was assigned a housing specialist by the
17 name of Mr. Tom who was of no help. In February
18 of 2016, I found my own one-bedroom apartment and
19 I waited four months for renovation of that
20 apartment. Once the apartment passed inspection
21 in June of 2016, Mr. Tom, this housing specialist
22 that I had, he actually lied to me about the
23 apartment, but mind you; I did all the work. I
24 found the landlord, I found the apartment; I
25 waited for renovations; it passed inspection,
then the took the apartment and gave it to

3 another client so that he can get the bonus you
4 know for finding an apartment. I was so
5 devastated, I was so hurt.

6 So all the energy that I had in me for
7 this apartment, knowing that I was going to be
8 out in June of 2016 after getting a voucher in
9 October 2015, I just... I shut down; I was hurt.
10 And I still feel a little emotional behind it.

11 But anyway, moving forward, I've done
12 housing searches, I've been on Housing Connect; I
13 made phone calls to brokers, landlords, but they
14 don't wanna hear nothing about no voucher, and
15 every time I speak to a broker it's like, oh well
16 the landlord doesn't want the LINC 4 voucher. I
17 don't even know what to do.

18 With that being said, I'm 61 years old
19 now; I don't wanna be moved to Brooklyn; I don't
20 wanna be moved to Manhattan; the Bronx, I'm from
21 Queens; that's where my family is; that's where
22 my church... that's where I'm from. And what
23 they're doing in the shelter is that they're
24 pushing rooms, they're pushing rooms on clients;
25 they say just take the room, take the room for
now; it's temporarily till you get your one-

3 bedroom, but if you go into that room, under that
4 lease, contract for a year, you have to stay
5 there. But how the housing specialist explained
6 to me, she said listen, just take the room for
7 now and what we'll do is, if your [bell] one-
8 bedroom comes through, we'll get another client
9 from the shelter to take your place so that you
10 don't break the lease. Didn't sound right.
11 Didn't sound right; I just fell back and like the
12 lady... [crosstalk]

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And when you take the
14 room, you're living with another stranger, right?

15 DIANN MITCHELL: Exactly, then somebody's
16 messing with your food in the refrigerator; you
17 gotta share the bathroom; you're already doing
18 that in a shelter..

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

20 DIANN MITCHELL: which is not clean and
21 tidy. But anyway, thanks for hearing me;
22 [background comment] I'm praying and hoping that
23 something can be done to help us move out into
24 our own place and into our own communities; not
25 be displaced. Thank you so much.

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you both for
4 this testimony. [background comments] Thank...
5 thank... thank you. Thank you for making these
6 issues very clear and concise, [background
7 comments] you know sometimes it's like... we get
8 like two hours of testimony from the
9 Administration and we're like, [background
10 comment] what does any of that mean and then you
11 come up and you testify and it's all very... it's
12 very, very clear...

13 DIANN MITCHELL: It's right there, very
14 clear.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: very clear.

16 DIANN MITCHELL: In the homeless shelter,
17 all of us homeless people are going through the
18 same exact thing but in different locations.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah. Yep.

20 DIANN MITCHELL: It's the same exact
21 thing.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yep.

23 DIANN MITCHELL: And then the staff that
24 they have that they hire, those people are not
25 even qualified to even help us.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yep.

3 DIANN MITCHELL: All they want you to do
4 is sign a IOP; that's it.

5 CHARMAINE GAYLE: They're pushing papers.

6 DIANN MITCHELL: That's all they do is
7 push papers, they don't even ask you how you're
8 doing today, uh did you have a good day, I mean
9 what's goin' on... [crosstalk]

10 CHARMAINE GAYLE: **[inaudible]** get it... I'm
11 doing my job, bam. Bye. Sign this deal
12 **[inaudible]**... [crosstalk]

13 DIANN MITCHELL: I really appreciate it,
14 guys. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank... thank you.

16 DIANN MITCHELL: I can't wait for the
17 next meeting. Please...

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh, you're always
19 welcome.

20 DIANN MITCHELL: everybody that knows
21 anything, let me know, 'cause I wanna be a part
22 of it.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You're always
24 welcome. [background comments] **[inaudible]**...
25 we're gonna be workin' with you guys. Thank you.
Thank you. [background comments]

3 We've got one more panel. [background
4 comments] We're gonna do Rhonda Jackson,
5 [background comment] James Baldwin, Madge
6 Philantropé, [background comments] and Tola
7 Kamatsu [sp?]. Thank you very much. And for the
8 record, there was testimony submitted by New
9 Destiny Housing, Enterprise Community Partners...
10 that's it. Okay. [background comments] Okay,
11 whoever wants to begin.

12 JAMES BALDWIN: I'll start if off.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

14 JAMES BALDWIN: Good evening, my name is
15 James Baldwin; I've been homeless for about four
16 years and when I transitioned I was back and
17 forth staying with family members; I've been to
18 Covenant House, I've been to Safe Horizons, and
19 then I went to Create Young Adult [sic] back in
20 2015. When I went to Create Young Adult, I was
21 in there for two years, so I guess my time, in
22 their words, was coming down to an end, but at
23 Create Young Adult you have five years, until you
24 turn 25, and right now I'm currently 24, about to
25 turn 25. So me and the director got into it,
because I told him I can't take him seriously --

3 he was a new director; the other two directors
4 kinda got fired for funneling with money and
5 stuff -- so he got up set because I told him I
6 couldn't take him seriously, 'cause he was
7 talkin' to a wall, and then ever since then, me
8 and him always had issues; we always had
9 problems. My whole thing is; if... I don't
10 understand the hiring process that you all have
11 to hire these type of workers; that's one, it's
12 like they don't know how to be professional; they
13 take everything personal and then they envy you,
14 they say things -- oh, we're gonna get you out of
15 here, they curse at you; they want you to lash
16 out on them so they can type in the computer
17 something bad that will get you a transfer. So
18 me and him had a big fallout, we had a meeting,
19 and I was working, I had documentation; I had
20 proof that I was working. So I guess he knows
21 somebody in Beaver Street, because... in Beaver
22 Street -- I'm sorry; I'm kinda hungry; I'm kinda
23 angryin' [sic] a little bit -- [background
24 comment] let me breathe. [background comments]
25 So there was a lot of underhanded stuff that was
going on in that meeting, so thank God -- I pray

3 and I meditate -- I ran into the Mayor with my
4 art. So I ran into Mayor Bill de Blasio five
5 months ago; Bill de Blasio told me he was gonna
6 help me get an apartment and get a place and
7 renew my voucher before the summer is over; I
8 don't have to go back to the shelter; he
9 introduced me to Steve Banks and Steve Banks
10 introduced me to Kenneth Charles. This is my
11 whole thing; this is why I'm really mad and upset
12 -- we've been playing phone tag for the past five
13 months; if you were in my shoes, you would be
14 upset -- you are pointing me to people that --
15 excuse my... no foul language, right? [background
16 comment] Okay. You use fudge heads to try to
17 help me, people who get into their feelings. I'm
18 not gonna lie; I was very aggressive, I try to be
19 assertive, but when I'm talkin' to you on the
20 phone with -- this is from the Mayor's people in
21 his office; I think one of the guys' name is
22 Joshua Cortez; I've been tryin' to contact him,
23 have a conversation, tell him what's goin' on;
24 let's work together, [background comment] they
25 on... they... [background comment] no, his name is
Joshua Cortez... only seen two apartments in the

3 summertime; I'm thinkin' I'm gonna get the first
4 apartment that they sent me to, because I'm like
5 oh... what the Mayor say goes. I'm facing a whole
6 bunch'a other people fightin' for that apartment;
7 they picked a female with a kid that was
8 beautiful compared to the ugly other females;
9 that's what the ladies bluntly told me. And then
10 the next apartment that I seen, there was a hole
11 in the wall that just got raided for drugs and
12 stuff and the sign and stuff was still up there,
13 so I'm like, how is that help; I'm not in an
14 apartment? So they tried to transfer me to a
15 mental shelter and I'm not goin' to no mental
16 shelter; I don't have no mental illnesses;
17 there's nothing wrong with me; this is what's
18 gettin' me upset and I just came down from Beaver
19 Street; they say, oh we can't help you; go to the
20 assigned shelter. And then I recently found a
21 hotel that they said they will let me stay there
22 until I find my apartment -- oh, we can't do that
23 for you. That's a lie, because you all told me
24 before when I was in the office if you have a
25 family member or whatever the case may be, we
will pay you to stay there with them, so why

3 can't I do that with a hotel? This is my whole
4 thing; like the woman, her name was Miss
5 Williams, at Beaver Street told me, you're a
6 threat because you're very intelligent and you're
7 smart and they like to play stupid, incompetent
8 fools, like puppets, so they're gonna give you a
9 hard time, Mr. Baldwin; go over their heads, and
10 that's what I've been doin', but to me it's like,
11 what do I have to do, bash the Mayor for him to
12 help me? [background comments]

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Don't do that. Don't
14 do that, that uh...

15 JAMES BALDWIN: Because I made a
16 documentary on the homelessness [bell] situation
17 in New York City. I don't mind redoin' it,
18 reconstructin' it and make it way better and put
19 it online, 'cause I have my doors open to the
20 entertainment industry, but these people don't
21 care about you if you don't have everything on
22 the table and you're not worth investing in yet.
23 So this is why I'm here agitated and I'm
24 frustrated; I have everything that I need to
25 become successful; I just need a place to live,
that's it; I don't need assistance for that long.

3 Like come on. And then on top of that, I did my
4 research and footwork for these apartments, for
5 one; nobody wants \$1200 and some change, the
6 market rate is goin' up; you have to boost up the
7 market with these vouchers. People will take
8 LINC, but you've gotta pay they mon... you've gotta
9 give them their money on time and they need like
10 \$1500 and better for single people and families.
11 And then on top of that, with HPD, what I
12 recently found out, they will help people that's
13 in the shelters and stuff, especially
14 **[inaudible]**, but they don't tell everybody that,
15 and your credit score has to be over 550; I
16 invested almost \$2,000 to fix my credit, so it's
17 like...

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah.

19 JAMES BALDWIN: what's goin' on, I don't
20 understand, it's like you all have these services
21 for these people who actually don't really care;
22 they're goin' home to their nice little apartment
23 or their little hole in the wall, but they got
24 somewhere to call home...

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yep. Yep.

3 JAMES BALDWIN: and I don't like that and
4 it's like I'm not goin' to no mental site, so I
5 need somebody to help me before I leave today,
6 because where I was bouncin' back and forth, they
7 don't even wanna help me, they don't want nothin'
8 to do with me and these... I understand why, but
9 it's like when you ask people to help you out,
10 sometimes it'll be too much for them, definitely
11 when they can't get what they really want from
12 you. I mean if you all was payin' people for us
13 to stay with family members that live in the
14 projects or whatever the case may be; they
15 probably most likely would do it, but they will
16 gettin' tire of you... [crosstalk]

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: They do do that.
18 There is... There is a... There is a program for that
19 that started up last year.

20 JAMES BALDWIN: It did?

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uhm-hm. [background
22 comments] Friends and Family. [background
23 comments]

24 JAMES BALDWIN: Wow. They told me that
25 they can't do that 'cause my [background
comments] aunt lives in the project... [crosstalk]

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Right. Right.

3 JAMES BALDWIN: and she has HRA. Okay.

4 Well I need.. can you all put me in **[inaudible]**
5 information; whatever the case may be; can we
6 work somethin' out, 'cause I'm not goin' to no
7 mental shelter unless I could get **[inaudible]**
8 project new.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I'll give you my
10 contact info at the end and we'll be in touch.

11 JAMES BALDWIN: Alright, thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: By the way, we have
13 one more person that signed up to testify, Junloy
14 [sic] Pacheco. [background comment] Or Junior,
15 I'm sorry. [background comments] No, No, No, I
16 know; we're just having him come up as well.
17 [background comments] You can join this panel.
18 [background comments] That's all; I just wanna...
19 the last person to join this panel.

20 RHONDA JACKSON: You think? [laugh]

21 MADGE PHILANTROPE: My name is Madge
22 Philantrope; I came here when I was 5 with my mom
23 and stepdad. I became a citizen and started
24 working at 16; I am now 32; I am of Afro-European
25 descent, born on the Island Espanola, a Haitian

3 Latina in completion. I've been poor since 8
4 years old; ironically enough, I have earned a
5 master's degree in social work from Stony Brook
6 University of Long Island and have plenty of
7 unpaid debt, like anyone else who's gone to
8 school, and have been street homeless, in and out
9 of shelters since then -- class of '09; I was 23
10 then.

11 Poverty and domestic violence follows
12 you, even when you've literally gone out of your
13 way to do everything accordingly and trying to
14 avoid all sorts of adversity and stereotypes.
15 There are no vouchers, no programs allotted to
16 people like us, since it's ever so seemingly easy
17 to move upward in America. Yes, we can and yet
18 it's been difficult to keep a job in consequence
19 however. By the time I'm allotted to partake in
20 lotteries, affordable housing, I'm out of a job
21 again; with certain employers, when you are well-
22 engaged, you nearly get there; I'm almost there,
23 but you never quite arrive.

24 We need programs catering for
25 commonsense, vouchers that are allotted for
America based on personal needs and time spent in

3 the system. I've spend nearly nine years at this
4 juncture meandering the city impoverished. I've
5 been so poor and have worked so hard in vain that
6 I haven't been able to even dream of creating my
7 very own family, which is why I went to school in
8 the first place, and yet I hold fast; I am still
9 here. Thank you for your time and attention to
10 this matter.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much
12 for your testimony.

13 JAMES BALDWIN: And I'd like to add
14 something with HPD obviously found out -- if your
15 application is over I think 3,000; they don't
16 look at you, they don't look at the application,
17 they just brush past it, and that's what I wanted
18 to add, but you've gotta make sure your credit
19 score is over 600.

20 [background comments]

21 MADGE PHILANTROPE: I just wanted to say
22 that all of your vouchers don't even apply to me,
23 like none of them. I just wanted to...

24 [background comments]

25 JUNIOR PACHECO: Good afternoon. I swear
to say the truth. Okay, uhm my life, when I had

3 25 years age, my age, I came to the United
4 States. In 2001, I got my cool apartment; I
5 think my life is go in the right direction, so
6 year later, in 2002, 2003, I had an accident on
7 my job and I had to quit. By 2002 to 2006, I
8 don't have work because my injury, I cannot do
9 the job I do before; it is a cable company job;
10 has to use the ladder, has to roll wires, all of
11 that. So I start to driving; I say well, when
12 the MTA have a strike, I said well, I think I can
13 start like that, because my brother call me and
14 they tell me, "What you doing?" I said, "I'm
15 asleep." And he told me, "Why? Go outside and
16 you're gonna see a lot of people, they wanna get
17 in the job." I went outside, I make at least
18 \$150 that day; the second day I made like \$200; I
19 make better and better, and after that, I lookin'
20 for someplace to work with a base, a car base.
21 So after that I jumped to black car in the city;
22 2007-2008 everything is down, like me, I have
23 another two accident; went to the hospital for
24 four more; the hospital rehabilitation, [bell]
25 and I spend **[inaudible]** like that. So the rehab
send me to a place they; told me it is like uh

3 the nurse home, but when I get in the front to
4 the door, I don't know what it is, but I go
5 inside, I go into and I realize it is a shelter.
6 So a shelter I'm gonna call Bridge, when shelter
7 case manager PA, public assistance office, and
8 DHS and so on, the Bridge, it doesn't work on
9 those groups. On the shelter, the case manager,
10 they say they working with you but they go to see
11 you when they need to sign for IP, I think it's
12 called... [background comment] ILP, every 15 days.
13 So at this time I have Section 8; the voucher
14 also expired before sign the lease, so between
15 that is a lot of Bridge we cannot go; the new
16 case manager I have, she's doing everything.
17 Also, they tried to collect from me [inaudible].
18 When we spoke, Joanna Taylor on [inaudible]
19 Street, she told us, "No, you don't have to do
20 nothing; your case manager has to do everything."
21 So it's me, so many way they don't work either,
22 so many ones and the principal I think also it is
23 the case manager on the shelter. When I got out
24 of the shelter also, the first time, 2011, they
25 send me to another shelter every 90 days; every
90 days I have to start over. So today they... I

3 got my Section voucher 8, but nothing is
4 complete; they say HPD don't send the checks,
5 **[inaudible]** waiting for the paper is me; between
6 those people is always, always problem. Thank
7 you.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Mr.
9 Pacheco. Thank you.

10 RHONDA JACKSON: Good evening. Thank you
11 for allowing me to speak. Although my name..
12 [background comments] This button? [background
13 comments]

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Red light should be
15 on. [background comment] Oh okay.

16 RHONDA JACKSON: Now it's on again.
17 Okay. So although my name is Rhonda Jackson, I
18 am really actually anonymous, because I am one of
19 many. Currently I am residing in an AFIC
20 shelter, which is adult families with children --
21 my son is 22.

22 You have heard much testimony coming from
23 a diverse population that are living in homeless
24 situations, in every situation imaginable.
25 Shelter life is horrid, it is actually horrid.
The reason I am in shelter -- I'm 57 years old --

3 the reason I am in shelter is because I came back
4 to New York after a traumatic accident --
5 actually, it was 9/11; I lost my mind, I left the
6 state, I left my family; I came back and I had to
7 come into shelter.

8 The ultimate question that I really wanna
9 ask is: once one is in shelter, how does one get
10 out? Must we wait 10 years? We are homeless,
11 but there is an element of despair because those
12 that are in the position to help us are not
13 willing, they are not capable or they don't even
14 care to assist us. You know many are
15 disconnected from the actual services and support
16 that we as a homeless population have.

17 People get lost in the system,
18 **[inaudible]** for years; there is no reason someone
19 should be in a shelter for 2, 5, 16 years; it's
20 ridiculous. Even though it looks good on paper
21 and it seems that people are being housed in
22 services; as you see, we're not. You are our
23 voice; you must talk to us, hear us and see us;
24 let us work with you. The policy should be
25 reassessed and restructured so that we can get
affordable housing.

3 One solution for affordable housing is
4 supportive housing; give us the education,
5 because once we get maybe a unit or something,
6 our credit scores or our background may hold us
7 up from being housed.

8 Okay, so New York is the leader in
9 homeless issues and is the first state for right
10 to shelter; now we need to become [bell] the
11 first state in the right to housing. My daughter
12 died as a direct result to being homeless; my son
13 was dismissed from his job for being homeless,
14 and I have another daughter who has ran from her
15 husband and is in a domestic violence shelter and
16 in jeopardy of her children becoming generational
17 homeless and uneducated because they will move
18 you from shelter to shelter and the children have
19 -- it is very traumatic for children to have to
20 go from school to school to school and they end
21 up just giving up.

22 I'm going to wind it down. And I just
23 wanna say that there is only one difference
24 between you and I; we go to school, we are
25 educated, we sit next to you on the train; as you
can see, not any of us look like we are homeless;

3 if you saw us on the street, you wouldn't think
4 that we were homeless; the only difference
5 between you and I is that you have a place to
6 call home, so when you leave here and you go
7 home, you have a bed that you can lay in; I just
8 have a mattress that's hard as a rock.

9 Thank you for allowing me to speak.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: God bless you. God
11 bless you. Thank you.

12 [background comments]

13 RHONDA JACKSON: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: All I can say is do
15 not despair and there is a light at the end of
16 that tunnel, however dark it may seem at any
17 given time, and that there are support systems
18 that are out there and if they're not in the
19 shelter itself; either friends and family, there
20 are members of your church community. Call your
21 local Council Member's office, tell them I sent
22 you, tell them that you came to the Council
23 hearing and that the chair of the Committee said,
24 call the local Council Member's office. Work
25 with whoever's out there to support you; you have
my support.

3 And I wanna thank everybody that came out
4 to testify to tell your story, because it's
5 incredibly brave to shed that anonymity and to
6 say what needs to be said, and it does need to be
7 said. [background comments] I thank you. Yes.

8 MADGE PHILANTROPE: I'm sorry. She
9 mentioned something that -- I'm the woman who
10 told you that I'm not... you know, I'm not
11 allotted... I'm not eligible for any of the
12 vouchers at all; the beds in the shelters are
13 literally hard as rocks; I don't even know,
14 because I'm very proactive; I went straight
15 through high school to graduate school; I don't
16 even know how long I'm gonna be in the shelter; I
17 don't know what's gonna happen to me, so like
18 we're all stuck sleeping on rocks. You know it's
19 like, this is America; I'm not even allotted
20 dreams, you can't even dream on those beds. I'm
21 like... I'm proactive. Anyway, thank you.

22 [background comments]

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you all. Thank
24 you, thank you, thank you.

25 JAMES BALDWIN: Can I say one more thing?

[background comments] Okay. I think some... I

3 don't know... my whole perspective; I think a lot
4 of people need to come together and like switch
5 the system around because everybody from each
6 entity needs to communicate. I don't understand
7 how come DHS don't talk to HRA; HRA doesn't
8 communicate with HPD; it doesn't matter
9 [background comment] if you're two different
10 entities, you need to have communication, because
11 this is how I feel; a lot of people that work in
12 these types of entities, they -- some people live
13 in the projects and they say how they really
14 feel; people behind the scenes could pull cards
15 for other people, but it seems like when it comes
16 to these workers doing their job, they don't
17 really care; it's like if your name is in there;
18 [background comment] it's like, uh I'm getting
19 brushed off; you get brushed off; there needs to
20 be a better system that's gonna place everybody,
21 because I'm 24; a lot of people my age won't even
22 go through this, they won't even walk in my
23 shoes; they will be like F this; I give up,
24 'cause a lot of them are... my youth, from my 90s
25 generation, a lot of them are not intellectual;
their ignorance blocks their intellect and a lot

3 of people that get into these situations, their
4 confidence gets broken down. The only reason why
5 I kept going this far is because my dream started
6 to come to life by me goin' through this... this
7 hardship. 'Cause you know, it's like right now I
8 know why I'm goin' through this, because I asked
9 God; I'm ready to elevate to the next level and
10 for you to elevate to the next level you have to
11 go through hardships, you have to have some type
12 of spiritual awakening that's gonna to lead you
13 to your destination. I think you guys seen the
14 goal come at these people, but if you want me to
15 come to the meetings and talk, I don't mind; I'll
16 come prepared and all that... [crosstalk]

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: It's important to...
18 It's important to have that...

19 JAMES BALDWIN: my name isn't James
20 Baldwin for nothin' and I'm gonna surpass that
21 man... [crosstalk]

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah.

23 JAMES BALDWIN: 'cause my goal is to help
24 everybody in New York City and to give people
25 information to keep on goin'.

[background comments]

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sure, well... yeah...

4 [background comment] So you have to push the
5 button. [background comment] Right.

6 MARK GREEN: Actually, I had some photos.
7 I just wanted to know, 'cause when the young man
8 mentioned some things that he was in touch with,
9 the powers that be...

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah.

11 MARK GREEN: and he wasn't getting any
12 attention, you know as far as that, I just wanted
13 to add that I have Claudia Sarasita [sp?], who is
14 the assistant for the First Lady -- Jared
15 Andrews, who is the assistant for the Mayor -- I
16 have pictures of the shelter of a camera with
17 these violent acts; I have people with their
18 heads busted open; I have people doing drugs; I
19 have the actual stuff; I contacted NY1 and they
20 have the video to try to improve the situation
21 that I was; Jared Andrews in the Mayor's office
22 had me fax some information. What I'm tryin' to
23 say, along with what he's saying, there haven't
24 been any results, and as he's frustrated, I'm
25 also frustrated as where to take it. The bigger
thing is that I advocate for the Mayor; I'm on

3 the Mayor's side; I'm on the wife's side on the
4 mental health, and they know what's going on, but
5 still we have no results, and they're telling me,
6 well wait until the DHS meeting with the director
7 at Beaver Street, but it is not materializing and
8 nothing's happening. So I have to take
9 everything on the initiative on my own and look
10 for housing now; I'm lookin' to buy a house, you
11 know I have to do it on my own because downtown's
12 not doing anything and I think that is really
13 absurd and I'm just so perturbed with the Mayor
14 as far as I'm workin' with you on these
15 initiatives and I'm lettin' you know what's
16 happening out there, because I have the visual
17 and so forth. So I'll just... yeah I just...

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

19 JAMES BALDWIN: wanted to get that out
20 there.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I hear you.

22 DINICK MARTINEZ: Yes, I just wanna say
23 also that these stories are just a few because I
24 spoke to -- as you know, I am a transgender, so I
25 spoke to my colleagues in my shelter, they wanna
speak up, but they're afraid to..

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah.

4 DINICK MARTINEZ: be embarrassed because
5 they don't want the public to know their
6 business...

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

8 DINICK MARTINEZ: they get embarrassed,
9 so be aware that we're representing thousands of
10 people talking... [crosstalk]

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thou... Thousands of
12 people and you're very brave doing that. Yes...
13 [crosstalk]

14 DINICK MARTINEZ: Thank you. That's what
15 I wanted to say; bear that in mind.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah.

17 JUNIOR PACHECO: Yes, the last I wanna
18 say, because I'm little bit nervous...

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yep.

20 JUNIOR PACHECO: what you have today,
21 take it to your hands, put it in your mind, and
22 live in your heart, and we need to fight for the
23 rights.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. Thank you
25 very much. I wanna thank all of you for your

3 testimony. [background comments] And at 5:50
4 p.m., this hearing is adjourned.

5 [gavel]

6 [background comments]

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Wait... I'm sorry, I'm
8 sorry; before... before we leave, I wanna thank the
9 Committee staff -- Tanya Cyrus; Meagan Chen --
10 thank you so very much [background comment] for
11 all the work that went into this. Thank you all,
12 thank you. [clapping] And... [background
13 comments] And Jose Conde -- sorry, Jose. Okay.
14 Thank you.

15 [background comments]

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date December 8, 2017