

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES
AND INTERNAL GROUP RELATIONS AND SELECT COMMITTEE ON
LIBRARIES

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May 28, 2009
Start: 2:00pm
Recess: 6:00pm

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E:

DAVID I. WEPRIN
Chairperson

DOMENIC M. RECCHIA, JR.
Chair, Libraries

VINCENT J. GENTILE
Chair, Select Committee on
Libraries

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Leroy G. Comrie, Jr.
Elizabeth Crowley
Inez E. Dickens
Lewis A. Fidler
Daniel R. Garodnick

A P P E A R A N C E S

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

James F. Gennaro
Eric N. Gioia
Robert Jackson
Letitia James
G. Oliver Koppell
Diana Reyna
Helen Sears
James Vacca
David Yassky

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

Dionne Mack-Harvin
Executive Director
Brooklyn Public Library

Elizabeth Condant
Student, Adult Literacy
BPL Coney Island Learning Center

Dr. Paul LeClerc
President and Chief Executive Officer
New York Public Library

Sharon Hewitt Watkins
Vice President for Finance
New York Public Library

David Ferriero
Andrew W. Mellon Director
New York Public Libraries

Dave Offensend
Chief Operating Officer
New York Public Library

Tom Galante
Chief Executive Officer
Queens Library

Kate Levin
Commissioner
New York City Department of Cultural Affairs

Eileen Muller
President
Brooklyn Library Guild, Local 1482

Peter Vreeland
President
American Museum of Natural History, Local 1559

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

Carol Thomas
President
New York Public Library Guild, Local 1930 DC37
AFSCOUNCIL MEMBERE

Margalit Susser
President
Queens Library Guild Union, Local 1321

Cuthbert Dickinson

Randy Borscheit

Laurie Combone
Director
Mocada Museum

Norma Munn

Jenny Lalutes

Gibb Serett
Legal Services Staff Association, Local 2320

Edwina Martin
Director of Communications and Government Relations
Legal Services NYC

Arnold Leeman
Director
Brooklyn Museum

Julian Zioata
Brooklyn Museum

John Kaveli
Executive VP for Public Affairs
Wildlife Conservation Society

Holly Blockum
Executive Director
Bronx Museum

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

Jonathan Stafford
Principal Dancer
New York City Ballet

Lana Flores
Volunteer and Patron
Brooklyn Public Library

Rita Meade
Children's Librarian
Brooklyn Public Library

Ingrid Abrams
Children's Librarian
Brooklyn Public Library

Eric Boblin
Young Adult Librarian
Brooklyn Public Library

Marge Lyden
Volunteer Adult Literacy Tutor
Bronx Library Center of the New York Public Library

Audrey Harkins
Library Volunteer
New Amsterdam Branch

Martha Krespil
Library Patron

Joseph Garber
Resident and Resident Leader
New York City Housing Authority

Katherine Tripani
New Destiny Housing Corporation

Lynn Serpy
Patron
Queens Public Library

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

Dee Damusis

Patron

Columbus Branch

Kathy Casey

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Could everyone kindly find their seats, the Cultural Affairs, Library International Intergroup Relations Committee will begin its hearing. Could the Brooklyn Public, Queens Library please find a seat up here at the table.

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. My name is Council Member Domenic M. Recchia, Jr. I am the Chairman of the Libraries, Cultural Affairs, Library International Intergroup Relations Committee and I welcome you to City Hall today and the executive budget. Sitting to my right we have Council Member Gale Brewer from Manhattan, we have Mr. Gennaro from Queens, we have Diana Reyna from Brooklyn, we have Vinny Gentile from Brooklyn and we welcome you.

Today we're going to hear from the three libraries. We're interested in what you have to say on how we become effective and really address the issues. We know we are facing severe cuts and we are finding ways to resolve this and make it so it's not as severe as it appears to be. But the times are tough in the economic crisis and we all must work together for the best interest of

the people of this wonderful City of New York. At this time I turn it over. Who would like to start off?

DIONNE MACK-HARVIN: Good Afternoon. I am Dionne Mack-Harvin the Executive Director for Brooklyn Public Library. On behalf of the libraries board of trustees and staff, I would like to thank Committee Chairman, David Weprin, Domenic Recchia and Vincent Gentile for inviting BPL to testify today concerning the executive budget and the devastating impact it will potentially have on BPL operations and our ability to continue to life skills and life changing services to the people of Brooklyn.

BPL and Brooklyn's 2.5 million residents are thankful for the outstanding support that the Council has demonstrated for the library over the past several years. This support has allowed us to keep our doors open longer. 46 hours a week at each of 58 neighborhood libraries and provide more hours of service than at any time since we began keeping records.

Regrettably the executive budget puts all of these service gains and much more at

1 risk. My testimony today will give an overview of
2 the proposed budget and offer a look at the grim
3 impact reduced library funding would have on BPL's
4 1,100 full time staff and 500 part time employees,
5 days and hours of service and the resources and
6 services we provide. But more importantly, this
7 afternoon we have the opportunity to hear first
8 hand from one of Brooklyn Public Library's Adult
9 Learning Literacy students, Elizabeth Condant from
10 our Coney Island Learning Center.
11

12 Elizabeth is here representing tens
13 of thousands of library customers who won't be
14 able to borrow a book, research a term paper,
15 access a computer or attend a literacy class
16 should the funding proposed in the executive
17 budget be adopted for the 2010 fiscal year. The
18 numbers are disturbing and admittedly very
19 frightening for the future of library service in
20 Brooklyn and for the future we create for the
21 borough's millions of residents.

22 In FY10 BPL faces a potential
23 funding reduction of 21% or \$17.5 million from
24 operations when compared to FY09 adopted budget.
25 If we endure the full \$17.5 million cut we would

be forced to eliminate as many as 272 positions through a combination of lay offs and attrition. That's almost one in four jobs. In addition, we would have to cut our part time workforce by eliminating 250 more positions.

We will reduce library service by nearly half to 25 hours per week. We would only be able to offer six day service at our central library and our soon to be reopened Kings Library, which prior to renovation was our second highest circulated location. Our 58 other libraries would be open from 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm to ensure that children have a safe place after school and complete homework. But with a severely reduced staffing level, we would not be able to offer convenient mornings, late nights or weekend hours.

Against the mission of public libraries we would have to deny service to thousands of Brooklynites who would use their libraries only during these popular hours. This would include senior citizens, parents who home school their children, customers who work 9 to 5, teachers making classroom visits and many more Brooklynites who support our public institutions

as tax paying citizens.

I am honored to be joined today by Elizabeth who is a student at our BPL Coney Island Learning Center at 1901 Mermaid Avenue. Please allow Elizabeth to say a few words.

ELIZABETH CONDANT: Hi, everyone. My name is Elizabeth Condant and I would like to thank you all for this opportunity to speak to you today. The first thing I would like to talk about is the funding cuts of the library learning centers in Brooklyn. If you cut the funds from the learning centers we won't have a place to learn how to read or write.

When I was growing up I had a hard time reading the signs on the subway. When I went to the supermarket, I had a hard time reading the labels. When I was 18 years old, I got pregnant with my son. After giving birth I was alone for four years raising my son by myself. Then at age 25 I met my husband. My life became much easier after that. My husband helped me raise my son. Even though I didn't know how to read or write I managed to help my son graduate from college. I am proud of him.

I moved back to Brooklyn and I found this amazing program here at the Coney Island Learning Center. It took me 42 years to find this amazing program. This program has helped me learn how to read and write and have confidence.

When I first started here I didn't know how to read or write at all. I have been coming to this program for two years and now I am in the advanced class. Nick is my tutor and he is great. I have seen other students in my class progress, too. That's to show you that this program works. Please help us get the funds that we need for this program. If you close the Brooklyn Library Learning Centers...

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Take your time. You're doing very, very good. You're doing excellent.

MRS. CONDANT: People like me won't have a place to come and learn how to read or write. Once again, please help us and thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: All right. Let's hear a round of applause for her. That was great.

[Applause]

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We hear what you have to say and we thank you. Miss Dionne, do you have anything else you would like to add to that. I think she said it all.

MRS. CONDANT: Yes, I think I did but please try to help us because this program works. It worked for me and I'm sure it's going to work for other people.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay. At this time Councilman Gentile would like to say a few words. Mr. Gentile had an opening statement.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Chairman thank you very much for the opportunity and thank you for your leadership on the entire Cultural Affairs Committee as well as the library aspect of it. As Chairman said, tough economic times require tough budgetary decisions. It's not an easy task and tough choices must be made. But the fact remains and it's my duty as Chair of the Select Committee on Libraries to remind everyone concerned that libraries and all they provide and the availability of their resources are more important today than ever. When people have less

money to spend on entertainment and book stores, they turn to libraries as an inexpensive but equally enriching alternative.

As unemployment rates throughout the city rise, people turn to libraries for skill development and help in their job searches. Library services give people a sense of hope and optimism in times that can often seem bleak. A library is a beacon in every neighborhood, in every borough throughout this city. When people visit their local branch, they understand the word library on the front of the building also means help available here.

We can't take that help away from them now. However, if the proposed \$46.5 million in reduction of funding for the libraries is adopted, our libraries will be ranked dead last when compared to 19 other major U.S. cities in library hours when it comes to average weekly number of hours that the branches are open to the public. Baltimore, for example, keeps its public libraries open an average of 36 hours a week. Houston keeps its branches open an average of 72 hours each week.

Yet in our city, under these cuts and I think each system will confirm this, Brooklyn branches are planned to be opened just 25 hours a week down from 46. New York Public Library will be opened an average of 32 hours per week down from 52 hours a week. Queens Library will be down to 27 hours average per week. This truly is a sad state of affairs.

Not only does our city, which is considered to be a literary and cultural mecca have some of the lowest hours of operation among major city library systems in the country, but it means that resources and services will be cut at a time when library usage is on the rise. We at the Council along with the library systems in our communities understand realities of this city's fiscal situation. Nobody is blind to the fiscal situation. But we need to balance that knowledge against the importance of maintaining services that help our community flourish in spite of economic bleakness.

We understand the importance of investing in a resource that has the ability to improve and enrich the life of every single New

York City resident, regardless of income, gender, race or age. No other city funded agency has the local outreach or the physical facilities that our library systems have. We must acknowledge that special role they play in our very own backyards.

Recognizing libraries' special function is not new. In 1901 Andrew Carnegie wrote the letter to the New York Public Library System testifying that branch libraries must "reach the masses of people in every district". Reach the masses that means everybody. He provided \$5.2 million to establish 65 neighborhood branches in 1901 so that everyone would have access to the resources that libraries offer.

He said it would be "a rare privilege to be permitted to furnish the money as needed for the buildings. 65 libraries in one stroke", he said, "probably breaks the record but this is the day of big operations". That's 1901. As the day of, in Carnegie's words, big operations passed us by. I hope not.

Carnegie promised that the funding to New York City would be on the condition that New York City quote in his letter "agrees in

satisfactory form to provide for their maintenance as built." Maintenance in satisfactory form includes keeping the buildings open and available for use. That is directly from the Carnegie letter, agreeing in satisfactory form for their maintenance and use.

Are we going to renege on that promise and that covenant made back in 1901? Or do we instead follow the example of Fiora LaGuardia who understood and revered this covenant and made providing seven day libraries service a priority during this time. Let me just end with this, Andrew Carnegie are previous examples of previous mayors are part of our city's history that provides us with a covenant and framework to guide us in supporting and honoring our public libraries.

I believe that if we adhere to Carnegie's covenant and follow LaGuardia's precedent that I'm hopeful that the tough decisions that must be made will be made in favor of our library systems and not against them. That, I believe, will by far be in the best interest of all New Yorkers. So we'll continue

now.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you Councilman Gentile. Now we'll hear from New York Public Library.

[Applause]

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Before you go, I'd also like to recognize we have been joined by Elizabeth Crowley from Queens, Dan Garodnick from Manhattan and Robert Jackson from Manhattan. Mr. LeClerc.

DR. PAUL LECLERC: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. My name is Paul LeClerc. I'm the President and Chief Executive Officer of the New York Public Library which brings library services to three of the boroughs in the city, Manhattan, the Bronx and Staten Island. I'm joined in this testimony by our Vice President for Finance, Sharon Hewitt Watkins and by David Ferriero who is the Andrew W. Mellon Director of the New York Public Libraries and by Dave Offensend who is our Chief Operating Officer.

It's always great to appear before you. You both as Chairpersons and all the members of the Council speak with such passion and such

eloquence. In addition to the great historic references, about a century of library service to the people of New York that the three library systems here represents in terms of what we do for people today. We're very lucky to have you as our friends. And you've been steadfast friends over the years.

The proposed budget, which we are talking about today is a very, very serious problem for us. The proposed budget cut that the New York Public Library faces today is considerably worse than it was in March when I had the privilege of last testifying before this committee. The executive budget includes an additional 4% reduction to the New York Public Library's funding over what had been slated for us previously, bringing the total FY10 proposed budget reduction to a staggering 21% or \$28.2 million for us.

If enacted, this cut would be greater than the cuts in the mid 1970s when the city was bankrupt by a considerable magnitude. It would be more than twice what the libraries experienced at that time. In this testimony I'd

like to outline the devastating impact of a cut of this magnitude that it would have on the essential services that libraries provide to our communities. Our libraries are a valuable and irreplaceable resource that is in danger.

The cold, hard facts present a grim reaper of the wonderful progress that we've made over the last few years. I would add as a footnote that library usage is not only up across the five boroughs of New York City, it's up nationally. There's been an enormous amount of press attention to this; front page of the New York Times, front page story in the Wall Street Journal. There will be on the morning of June 1st on the Today Show about a three and a half or four minute segment on the same story, how Americans are increasingly turning to libraries for help in all different kinds of ways in their lives.

The New York Public Library, like our sister libraries in Queens and in Brooklyn, continues to experience system wide surges in use of our facilities and of our collections and our services. During these hard economic times, libraries we know are more important than ever.

Every day over 60,000 New Yorkers use the New York Public Library facilities, that is far more than the combined visits to all New York City's other cultural organizations, I'm told.

In the branch libraries, visits are up by approximately 11% system wide from last year. By the end of this fiscal year, we expect in our branches to attract 15.6 million visitors, the highest total in our 110 year history. Our research libraries, the other part of our organization, in addition will attract nearly 2 million people at our four locations, all in Manhattan, during the first 10 months of fiscal '09, up 20% from the year before.

Combined branch and research libraries at the New York Public Library for the past 12 months have had an attendance that will be 17.8 million, almost 18 million people, up 12% from the prior 12 month period. This total is more than double the attendance for both the Yankees and the Mets home games for the entire 2008 baseball season. And the people who come to libraries are New York residents, as we know.

In addition, we circulated 18.3

million items during the first 10 months of this fiscal year, up 13% over last year. And we're projecting a year end circulation of 22 million items, the highest in the New York Public Library's history ever. And in the Bronx, one thing we're very, very pleased of is that circulation is up close to 30%, 26.7% to be exact. In addition we offer 34,140 programs in classes with almost 700,000 people attending them so far this year, also up 26% over the prior year.

People are still coming to the New York Public Library in record numbers for job search assistance. Unemployed New Yorkers are particularly turning to their neighborhood libraries for support in the various following kinds of ways. The percentage of unemployed patrons visiting New York Public Library in February and March was three times higher, 23.1%, than the New York State Department of Labor's New York City February unemployment rate which was 8.4%. So a disproportionate number of our visitors are unemployed.

Attendance at job search related classes in our system are up 82%. The library

anticipates offering 7,600 job related programs this year and in March and April alone we offered job and technology training to 7,200 people. We anticipate now being in a position of helping more than 45,000 people through free career coaching, job related programs and training classes through the rest of this calendar year. The library has enhanced its partnership with the city's Workforce One Community Partners program by establishing relationships with the city at library hubs and branches throughout our three borough system.

In addition, we have trained staff at every single one of our facilities in job search techniques so that anyone who walks into New York Public Library will have expert service in helping to reposition herself or himself in this tough economic time.

Let's talk now about the proposed executive budget and the decline in support that it represents and the impact on our programs and our services. The total FY10 reduction proposed for the New York Public Library is, again, \$28.2 million, a 21% cut which includes reductions of \$20.9 million in addition to the \$7.3 million

fiscal '09 City Council restoration which was not base lined in fiscal '10. Another reduction is a 30% or a \$10.7 million reduction of capital funding in fiscal years 2010 through 2019.

And in addition to the proposed reductions to the executive budget, the New York Public Library is also facing the following reductions. First, a cut of \$1.8 million or approximately 9% in state funding. Second is a reduction of private revenues of approximately \$20 million and an increase in non-reimbursable expenses of approximately \$7 million.

What would the impact of a 28.2% reduction in city operating support be for the New York Public Library? The following, public service hours would be decimated. 52 hours average a week now would be reduced by an average of 20 hours per week at all of our locations to a new low average of 32 hours across the system. Most facilities would operate on a four or five day schedule instead of the six day schedule, which we fought so hard to get. And which is now universally available to our patrons.

In comparison, cities such as San

Diego and Houston and even here in the metropolitan area in Yonkers, which is not a rich community anticipate for the new fiscal year that their branches will be open at least six days per week. In addition, we would lose as many as 435 jobs through layoffs. That's approximately 19% of the New York Public Library workforce, one out of every six of our employees. These reductions would be major in both our branch and our research libraries.

On top of that we're looking at a \$4.5 million or 26% reduction in branch library materials acquisitions and a \$6 million or 35% reduction in research library materials acquisitions. The greatest impact I think would be felt by the four most vulnerable groups served by our libraries, children, seniors, immigrants and the disadvantaged communities including the homebound to whom we deliver books.

Specific impacts include first nearly 5 million fewer library materials would be circulated. Second, 3.5 million fewer visits to our library with 680,000 fewer children and young people using libraries' safe and reliable places

after school. 230,000 fewer young people attending library programs, the place where we all want them to be. 520,000 fewer computer sessions offered across the system to the public for free. 2,000 fewer programs of children such as toddler programs, reading aloud and technology programs. 750 fewer visits to libraries by classes from the neighborhood schools that we service.

Reduced access for seniors who often use our libraries in the morning, which I really prefer because they're quiet then but we would have to cut morning hours because the attendance would be relatively slight. But senior citizens are really, really important to us. The last thing we want to do is to deny them access to libraries when it's comfortable for them to be there.

Conclusion, dramatic increases in attendance and circulation send a clear message that libraries now in New York are more important than they ever have been before. We have never seen the kinds of usage that our libraries are now receiving - never, ever in its history. The millions of people that will use one of our

1
2 libraries this year in the Bronx, Staten Island
3 and Manhattan would all agree, I think, with this
4 statement. As would the 2,300 dedicated employees
5 that day in and day out help hundreds of
6 thousands, millions of New Yorkers come through
7 our doors.

8 We're in the midst of very
9 challenging economic times to be sure. Libraries,
10 I think, are equipped to help people survive this
11 crisis. In the past the Council has recognized,
12 as has its Speaker, how essential the services are
13 that libraries provide to New Yorkers. You
14 champion funding of this city's libraries and the
15 people of New York are grateful for that. The
16 FY10 proposed 21% budget reduction would essential
17 cripple the library's ability to deliver the
18 service that the people of this city are demanding
19 in record numbers.

20 We, again, seek your support in
21 keeping library doors open so that our communities
22 can access this incredibly important resource that
23 they value so much. Thank you for giving us the
24 opportunity to testify. And we all remain
25 available to answer any questions that you may

have now or at a later point in the future. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you Commissioner LeClerc. I want to thank you not only for your testimony but thank you also for breaking down the funding for each borough. We requested that in the past and I'm glad to see that you did it without us having to request it and thank you for doing that. That means a lot so my colleagues can actually see what's going on in their borough. Queens.

[Applause]

TOM GALANTE: Good afternoon. I'm Tom Galante, Chief Executive Officer of the Queens Library. I want to begin by thanking Chairman David Weprin, Domenic Recchia and Vincent Gentile and also the other members that are with us today including our Council Member from Queens, Leroy Comrie and all the members of the Council for your incredible ongoing support, especially in these challenging economic times.

More than ever we seek to protect the critical services that serve as a lifeline to

those most in need and I know that you also share our sentiments. I'd like to just sidebar for a moment and just follow up on a few things that have been mentioned today. The first thing that the Council Member spoke about, Council Member Gentile, regarding the Carnegie agreement, that really is a very important thing to, I think, all three systems in that I know for Queens and I believe it's the same in the other systems. There was an agreement by the city to seven day a week service as part of their agreement within that contract with Andre Carnegie, who was a great lover of libraries. But seven day a week service was the agreement.

[Applause]

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I would ask that you hold and refrain from applauding. Thank you.

MR. GALANTE: The other item on literacy, that is a great program that is citywide that we all do. Ms. Condant showed a great example that really touches the heart of how a person can take and move themselves forward in some of what we would view as basics but are very

important to people's lives, being able to read and write. I know in Queens, we had 6,000 people a year that we teach how to read and write, adults that we teach how to read and write. If our libraries are closed one-third of the time compared to what they're open now, there would be 2,000 less people that would learn how to read and write next year. So I thought that might be worth noting, too.

Also, the New York work on the comparison with other cities. I think it's just so obvious that we shouldn't be spending so much time and effort to just try and stay even. We really should be at a better place already that we could then work towards going forward. Today is doubly significant as it is our last attempt to testify on behalf of the over 2 million people in Queens who need their neighborhood libraries to be open. In addition, today is Library Day at City Hall for Queens library advocates, those are all the folks that were clapping a moment ago.

Joining us in the chamber, almost 200 Queens residents who came to personally tell their respective Council Members how critical

their library is to them and their communities. These are only a handful of our steadfast advocates whose stories of resilience and hope I am privileged to share with you at hearings such as these. Their persistence and their strength continues to encourage me. I hope that seeing their faces and hearing their stories will only strengthen your resolve to restore the severe proposed budget cuts.

It is no secret that we are in a fight of our lives with pending budget cuts that threaten to drastically cut service hours. Particularly eliminating weekend service in every community library and possibly reducing our staff by over 300 full time positions, a staggering 31%. I know that no one in this room wants this to happen. And I want each of you to know that we are fighter hard and smarter than ever before for the full budget restorations.

The executive budget calls for funding to Queens Library to be reduced by \$17 million in fiscal '10 and this is on top of over \$5 million in reductions already sustained. It is unthinkable that the greatest city in the world

would see public library service brought to its knees but that is exactly what we are facing. It is equally tragic that the Saturday and weekend library service that we all fought so hard to bring back is in jeopardy of being eliminated once again.

But the truth is that unless we see significant restorations to our budget this year, we could see some of the lowest service levels on record, with some libraries open only two or three days per week. We must not let this happen. Despite the cuts we have already sustained, looming budget reductions and some anxiety about the future, we continue to go about the business of enriching lives while refusing to sacrifice our exceptional customer service, which is the reason that we have been able to maintain our position as the highest circulating library in the United States.

We continue to offer top quality programming, unparalleled services, all delivered by the finest staff one could wish for. We have already commenced activities and we are vigilantly preparing for our kick-off event of the enormously

popular summer reading program in June. But to continue our life enhancing work our doors must be open. An arduous task lay before us yet we remain focused and determined to achieve the goals set before us and that is to continue to serve the people of Queens, particularly those hit hardest by the current economic crisis. With the unemployment rate rising to 8.9% we know that we need to succeed, that so many depend on us for so much that is good in their lives.

In financially difficult times such as these, it is understandable that library usage has increased dramatically. Circulation has continued to go up and with programs and service also reporting an increase in attendance by 4%. This would be the worse possible time to scale back our hours and services. A reduction of hours and services does not instill hope or equip people looking for a brighter tomorrow.

Queens Library does not have all the answers but we are one of the solutions. Each and every day we are minded by our customers of how essential our 62 libraries have become to the sustainability of communities and families.

People enter our doors with hope in their pockets and we ask for nothing in return. Due to the economic downturn our trained and willing staff assist more and more customers seeking to navigate various job web sites while offering invaluable job placement tips and skills building workshops. Here our staff have become job counselors, often providing a loving touch to a very human reality.

In addition, avid readers search our shelves for the latest novel releases. College students are able to reduce their book budget by borrowing text books and families keep up traditional movie nights by checking out their favorite movie at the library. Our board of trustees along with our senior management staff has worked feverishly to come up with a budget strategy and advocacy plan. We have also employed the assistance of our friends groups as well as over 15 million customers, some of whom have joined us here today.

Our petition drive and postcard campaigns have already gathered over 80,000 signatures in favor of budget restoration. And on Monday, May 18th, almost 300 Queens residents

1
2 joined us on the steps of our Flushing Library
3 along with Council Member Gentile, I might add, to
4 stand up for libraries and also I should say
5 Council Member Crowley. To stand up for
6 libraries, passionately shouting out at the top of
7 their lungs, save our libraries.

8 One parent, who was at the library
9 with their two young children, came over and
10 expressed how much she and her children use the
11 library. She said I'm here every day with my
12 kids, as she and her children meandered their way
13 to the steps to join the rest of the supporters.
14 You can't close this library, you just can't.

15 I know I'm preaching to the choir
16 but let there be no mistake, public library
17 services critical service that must be preserved.
18 People need us and we must continue to be there
19 for them. We will fight every day to save Queens
20 Library this year so that when this economy turns
21 we will be well positioned to expand library
22 service to where it truly needs to be, open seven
23 days a week. Thank you.

24 [Applause]

25 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you

very much. We've also been joined by Leroy Comrie, Inez Dickens and Oliver Koppell. At this time we have questions. Mr. Gentile you have a question?

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Yes. Thank you Mr. Chairman. I just want to ask a few questions because I know it's a long day. We have some other members want to speak also. I'm just curious about this, this whole concept of a day. We use the word day when we talk about six days to four days or three days or two days. I think it's important that we sort of define what a day is in the terms of the library world. Maybe you can speak, each one of you could speak to that. What in your world constitutes a day?

DR. LECLERC: The average is seven, seven and a half hours but that is not universally applied. For example our very great and hugely successful central library in the Bronx is open seven days a week, 12 hours a day from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm. Others of our libraries have extended hours as well. I know that we opened the St. George's branch at 8:00 in the morning so that people on their way to the ferry could stop by and

pick up books and things but on average seven, seven and a half hours.

MR. GALANTE: For Queens, our view of a library day would be 9:00 to 9:00, typically for a library. And I think that's what you find or 10:00 to 9:00. You'll find a 10:00 to 11:00 hour day in most libraries in a lot of those cities where you see 60 hour averages, 70 hour averages a week. That will be six or seven days a week, 10 hours a day.

The difficulty for us to deliver that given the funding we receive is that we can't employ. You need two shifts of staff to be opened longer than a seven hour day, obviously, right, or an eight hour day. So it does involve double shifts of staff which also helps with services for children after school because then you have that double shift that's there in the afternoon when you're very, very busy with kids after school. Our goal and really the standard that you would find in most cities is not a seven hour day as we have become accustomed to but really a 10 to 11 hour day in most every library. So they open up in the morning, they're open in the afternoons and

they're open in the evenings so we can reach all the people.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: I'm just curious because I guess that's what most people would perceive as a day. But isn't it also the case that in at least some branches you might be open on a Wednesday from 1:00 to 5:00 or 1:00 to 6:00 on a Wednesday. That would constitute a day of library service but in the world of most people it's not a day at all because they can't get to the library between 1:00 and 5:00 and 1:00 and 6:00 in the afternoon.

MR. GALANTE: That's why I think and it's in the Mayor's Management Report as well. The city does collect a statistic as to the average number of days the library is open for each borough but also the average hours. That's why each one of us make sure that that's something that we provide on a regular basis because hours is really just as important as days, obviously. When you're open a half a day it really is a half a day.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Let me just go on now, you each individually indicated what

1
2 impact this would have on your employees and the
3 number of your employees. I believe that the
4 total headcount reduction across the three systems
5 would be close to 1,100 employees I believe. Is
6 that correct?

7 DR. LECLERC: Well closer to 1,000.
8 It's 1,011.

9 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: 1,011. Okay.
10 1,011. We were just doing some calculations and
11 it appears if you look at the Mayor's executive
12 budget that represents about 26% of the total
13 headcount reduction of all city agencies. That
14 sounds like a tremendous amount coming from one
15 sector, i.e. the free library system. Am I
16 accurate in saying that you're facing a 26% of the
17 total headcount will be coming from the library
18 systems?

19 DR. LECLERC: Yes.

20 MRS. MACK-HARVIN: I guess another
21 way we discussed it as is it's the equivalent of
22 closing down either Brooklyn or Queens because
23 that's our full time headcount.

24 CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: That's your
25 full time head count so it would be almost as if

1
2 you were to shut down on of those system. That's
3 tremendous. And I think my colleagues need to
4 realize that, that 26% of the total headcount
5 reduction will be coming from the three library
6 systems. That's, I think, quite important.

7 The other thing I wanted to also
8 make a distinction on is the fact that you have a
9 lump sum nature of your subsidy from the city. It
10 makes you a little bit different than other
11 agencies because you don't have any line item
12 reductions. You have less flexibility because
13 you're given a lump sum and there's no line item
14 cutting like other agencies. Am I correct in that
15 regard? I will ask you to explain this, there are
16 costs that you bear that some of the other city
17 agencies don't bear because they either have a
18 line item or they're covered in another way. But
19 because you're given a lump sum you have to absorb
20 all of it. Why don't you explain that?

21 DR. LECLERC: Given the fact that
22 we're non profits and not a city agency we absorb
23 all costs of our operations within the
24 appropriation we receive from the city. As an
25 example, within our operating subsidy from the

city covers the cost of retiree health care, our branch leases, many things that a city agency would not see within their budget but it would be charged to a general city budget. So a cut to the libraries of say 20%, 21% is in fact probably 27% to 30% comparable to a city agency because we have major fixed costs built into our operations that are not included in the city agency budget.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: And that's the same for all three systems, correct? Yeah. Now Mr. Galante, I don't know if it's your testimony or somewhere in the paperwork I've been looking at you've indicated that an actual cost to the city in unemployment costs as a result of the positions that you would lose. You indicated it would be about \$3.5 million of unemployment costs to the city if you suffer these reductions in positions. I'm curious, have the other two systems also estimated what the cost to the city would be in unemployment costs?

DR. LECLERC: I think the unemployment costs would be for us in the area of \$3 to \$3.4 million. However, there are a lot of other costs on top of that that come with

separations. Our present estimate is the total cost for involuntarily separating 435 from the library. It would be \$11 million.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: \$11 million.

DR. LECLERC: \$11 million because that includes accumulated vacation time, sick time and all those other kinds of things that have to be paid out as well as various kinds of legally mandated payments depending on the period of notice that one gives or doesn't give including a couple months salary, so on and so forth. But our present estimate as of an hour ago is \$11 million.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: What would be the cost to the city in unemployment benefits to the group that--

DR. LECLERC: [interposing] Simply unemployment would be \$3 or \$3.4 million.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: \$3.4, okay. But overall to you it would be closer to \$11.

DR. LECLERC: That's the cost to us, not to the city. We would be paying for that; the city wouldn't be paying for that.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: I see, okay. You're right. I'm sorry. That's right.

DR. LECLERC: Subsidy perhaps
but...

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Subsidy,
exactly. Let me just move on and ask you about
the stimulus money. I know that we spoke about
this the last budget hearing. The great financial
staff here on the committee has looked at some of
the stimulus categories and indicated possible
areas where libraries might be able to plug in to
some stimulus money. I'm curious if you agree
with these areas or have looked at them,
particularly economic and workforce development,
health and social support and education is what
the staff tells me are possible areas that might
pertain to library funding in some way. Are those
possibilities?

MR. GALANTE: They all are. We've
done work. I know that each system has. In fact,
we've worked with the administration in a couple
of common areas, too. We see great opportunities
in ERA. The factor that has to be thought out,
though is that if our doors are closed we can't
deliver those programs. Things such as, for one
example, there's considerable funding to expand

access for public computing within that bill.

We're going to seek that funding but if we simultaneously close all of our public computing centers by a third of the time they're presently open, it doesn't really accomplish the goal.

As we talked before about the numbers of hours in a day, the city could make major changes in its access to public computing by having libraries open ten hours a day every day of the with, with facilities and infrastructure that are already in place with computers that are already there, with data networks that are already there. Just by expanding hours instead of decreasing them. So I know we're all aggressively seeking the ERA funding.

We've partnered in Queens with a number of organizations as well through partnerships where we are a partner applicant with them. And we're going to be going at some things directly. Including the administration is also, I know working on the citywide program for public access to public computing workstations.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: What you're saying though is even if you qualify for the

technology money it may be moot if your programs are no longer in existence.

MR. GALANTE: We all would like to upgrade our technology, at least in Queens. I'll speak for Queens, we would love to update our technology, add more workstations. But the gist of it is you got to have your door open or what's the point of having the technology so expanding hours in libraries would accomplish that goal. We all have tens of thousands of people a day that use our computers. We could double that if we were open double the hours. It's that simple.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: I make come back around, too. But I will move on from here. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you. Council Member Leroy Comrie. We've also been-- Diana Reyna.

COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: Tish James, did you mention Tish James?

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Oh, Tish James from Brooklyn.

COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: Thank you Mr. Chair. I just wanted to ask a question on you

1
2 talked about the levels of funding cuts that would
3 be approximately \$22 million over the last year
4 because there was a 5% cut during he year and a
5 \$17 million cut expected for next year. Is that
6 correct or is that the overall number including
7 what was lost in 2008? Isn't the actual
8 percentage cut higher if you look at the 2008
9 numbers compared to the 2010 numbers?

10 MR. GALANTE: That percentage
11 number for Queens reflects the reduction that we
12 took in '09 adopted and the proposed for fiscal
13 '10. It doesn't include the funding lost mid year
14 and the current year as well and it doesn't
15 reflect--I could give you a half a million dollars
16 of cost increases, rent increases and various
17 things, MTA tax that we all need to pay that also
18 adds to that percentage. So that percentage is
19 the base line from the city and we also had state
20 funding reductions that we've dealt with.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: Together
22 with your reductions isn't it closer I guess
23 across the board to almost a 35% cut to all of the
24 library systems at least over the last year and a
25 year and a half. And then with your increased

expenses with the real city, would it be almost 40% of your operating budget that is being lost? Would that be correct?

MR. GALANTE: At least for Queens I think we'd be in the 30s. You take cost increases that we've taken, budget cuts, the impact of other costs we've had to absorb and state cuts we'd probably be nearing 30 or more, yup.

COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: And that would be the same for the other library systems as well? But you're forced to pay the mandated increase, the cost of living increases and everything else but yet that's not be acknowledged by the administration, correct?

MR. GALANTE: Correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: I just want to again re-emphasize that I think that it's ridiculous that especially now when we have the highest rate of unemployment ever that we need the libraries to stand up for. The libraries are doing an excellent job at providing employment assistance. In fact, I was here for the rally and I went to Queens to the Workforce One center where the Queens Library has a presence. I know the Ne

York Library system started working with the Workforce One centers and it's a critical component that you've offered to make sure that people have the ability to find jobs and to restart their careers if they're in a career that they're not making enough money to earn an income and maintain a lifestyle in this environment.

I just want to re-emphasize what I said outside that these cuts are horrendous. It's a bad decision made by the administration. It's a bad decision that will reflect on not just hurting neighborhoods but impacting the quality of life for seniors, impacting the ability of children such as my children that are in public schools to access library services. It's a bad decision for people that are trying to get information that are trying to, as you said earlier the English language learners that are trying to get into the system and for so many reasons that these are bad decisions.

It's just frustrating to me that we have to do this every year. Every year we lose a bigger percentage of monies to the library systems when we should be working to maintain in difficult

times. But the library system at course where you could be at a full seven days. I just want to stress to you again that I want to do everything I can as the head of the Queens delegation, as part of the City Council to put back as much money. And I have to say put back as much money into the library system as possible dealing with an administration that has their head in the sand about the real fiscal impact that the minimal library system costs.

Because then you have more young people in the street that are doing things that are not positive. You have seniors that are forced to do things because they don't have the library to be a support system. It's not positive. It winds up having bigger drains on the city budget. I don't understand why they don't see that. I don't understand why we can't get back to, as you said earlier, the pacts that were made during the Carnegie era where people realized that a library system that was open seven days saved the city money, created a better, positive aura. And made sure that this city had something that we could make sure that all of the people

could benefit from.

And we could make sure also that when people needed a leg out or an opportunity or to re-evaluate their career they can depend on the library. I know that even though I try to refer people to other entities, people want to go to the library for their first stop to find out information. If the libraries are not open then people feel that they don't want to go to private offices. Even if they get the referral from the library to go to Workforce or from the library to go to job training or from the library to find out about immigration services, they depend on their library as a friend. So we need to keep that friend open seven days a week. Thank you Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you very much. Council Member Gale Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I just want to say going to the opening of your job center at the Science Library was unbelievable. Those two databases, oh my gosh. So I would agree with Council Member Comrie that you have the best career services and it should be open seven days a

week.

One of my questions is again if the stimulus money through WEA, broadband, MTIA, whatever comes through, does it help with what I would call administrative fees? Meaning keeping things open or is it just based on the career work that the technology might provide? Do we have any sense of that?

DR. LECLERC: I think the expenditure of those monies has to be limited to the purpose for which they're given not to underwrite basic operations. And just as a footnote to Mr. Galante's testimony. I think all three systems have applications in to the city for every single area in which we could get stimulus money.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right, so the bottom line is you still need the restoration that we've been discussing here today?

DR. LECLERC: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Maybe this got asked earlier but how are the security reductions going to impact the libraries, if at all?

DR. LECLERC: I think everything is going to impact the libraries. For us at least, it's not a single area of our functioning that does not impact it, that will not feel some of the pain. For all the obvious reasons we don't want to have libraries without security personnel in them. We need our staff and our patrons to feel comfortable in the library and not to feel in any way in danger. If we have to give up hours and give up days we will do that and we will bring the security staff down accordingly but we're not going to have the library without security personnel and without custodians.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you very much. Council Member Tish James from Brooklyn.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Excuse me but I don't seem to understand. I thought we announced that they would no longer be a budget dance. I thought that libraries were going to be protected and they were going to be included in all budgets and they would be held harmless. I'm

sitting up here looking at the fact--I'm thinking about 2008 where the City Council, which has been taking a leadership role in protecting the roles of libraries in the City of New York.

We announced six days. We shook hands, big hoorah, a lot of media attention. And here we are and your budgets are being cut by 30% to 40%. The possibility of shutting libraries, particularly in districts where the literacy rate is double digit and in my district where we have high illiteracy rates, I could not imagine going back to the time when the doors of certain libraries were shuttered.

As you know in Brooklyn, I attend all of my libraries. I know that the library on Washington Avenue around the corner from my home is filled with children. The children in the schools in my district pack that place. The central library on Saturdays, on Sundays is packed. There's this burning thirst for knowledge all throughout the City of New York. And this is no time, particularly when so many people are unemployed or looking for opportunities, that we should close your doors or close them at all, one

day, two days, three days. We should maintain six days; it should be a priority of this administration.

I know it is a priority of the City Council. I thank the leadership of Council Member Gentile and Council Member Recchia, they have been in the forefront. I just want to know what impact will this have on your literacy programs, your job training programs, your educational programs, your recreational programs. Will those be the first programs that get cut? If so, then apex to the administration for even cutting you to the bone. It is really, really an indictment that we have gutted the libraries.

I have witnessed it, as you know. I have said it publicly. My mother was in her 70s and went to the library system in Queens and secured her GED. That was one of her proudest days and she wanted all of her children around her. She's very sick now but that GED stands on her mantle. As long as she's alive and as long as I am in the City Council, I will join with my colleagues, the leaders here and seek to restore-- not seek but will restore your funds. So to what

extent, again, on the other programs will they be impacted?

MRS. MACK-HARVIN: I think as Paul mentioned earlier, with severe cuts like this in staffing. With staffing being the primary deliverer of all those programs we will see some significant reductions in just about everything that we can offer across the board. That will not be anything that is held harmless. We will have less books, we will have less programs, we will have less visits, we will have less computer sessions. The library will look radically different come July.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: I know that the city provides you with tax levy dollars for operational also for energy. Is that true? And to what extent as the energy stipend, energy subsidy will that be impacted or is it all lumped into one pot?

MRS. MACK-HARVIN: The energy piece is sort of a pass through for us.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: I see, so you don't get that directly.

MRS. MACK-HARVIN: No.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Well, I think Council Member Comrie and Council Member Brewer and Council Member Gentile and Council Member Recchia have said it all. I think we're going to draw a line in the sand and we know what you do in transforming lives. This is not the time to turn back. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you Council Member James. Inez Dickens.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Thank you so much Mr. Chair. Thank you for coming down to give testimony. It's good to see you Paul.

DR. LECLERC: Good to see you.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: I have some questions concerning the 10 year capital plan. Because of the importance of libraries, particularly during these times and the use of the libraries during these times, by families, by young people and by those who are unemployed. There's a proposed 30% cut, is that cut.

DR. LECLERC: Yes, there is.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: A 30% cut to the 10 year capital plan. Can you tell me which capital projects would be cut or affected

and more importantly the maintenance that would keep our libraries open and free of any problems so that they can be utilized by families? Are you able to tell me that? If not, can you please provide it to the Chair?

DR. LECLERC: Yes, I have quite a long list of all the reductions in capital in the three boroughs.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Can we get a copy of that?

DR. LECLERC: Yes, absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Are there any, please forgive me but I'm very concerned about my district. So I'd like to know on that list what impacts upon my district.

DR. LECLERC: We're working with your office to come up with a new site for McCombs Dam Bridge. The Shomberg we're developing a scope at this point for the \$7 million restoration project.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Which one? Say that again, please.

DR. LECLERC: The Shomberg. And we're holding that number in the next fiscal year

2010 at \$5 million and then \$1 million in 2011 for the Shomberg.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Well the McCombs Bridge would be a new site.

DR. LECLERC: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: But the Shomberg is existing.

DR. LECLERC: Correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Now what about some of the others? Are there any critical maintenance plans that were placed in to the 10 year capital plan or maybe outside of it, that's one. Number two, are there any stimulus funds that are available for libraries or has that been excluded?

DR. LECLERC: I don't see any other in your district, Council Member Dickens, that are impacted in a negative kind of way by these reductions. The stimulus is not the best program for libraries that we would have liked. It would be great if there were stimulus, too, that would really enfranchise libraries both for capital projects and even programs.

We've been talking about broadband,

1 FINANCE AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS, ETC. 59
2 which is in major need in all the libraries
3 because that provides for substantial
4 infrastructure. One of the difficulties we're
5 facing is that we don't have a high enough speed
6 in terms of connectivity so that you can be at a
7 computer in a library and just wait a long time
8 for something to come up on the screen.

9 But the amount of stimulus money
10 that's been provided for the entire nation is \$200
11 million for the whole nation. So we're competing
12 basically for crumbs. We're all in there and it
13 goes to the states, the cities have to make its
14 recommendations to Albany. And then Albany will
15 deliver the money at some point to us. There are
16 some monies in the area of energy conservation
17 which would permit us to purchase more effective
18 heating systems, more effective air conditioning
19 systems, so on and so forth. There is more money
20 in that pot but we've got our application in there
21 as well.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: You said
23 you do have an application.

24 DR. LECLERC: We do have
25 applications in for environmental improvements.

That, in effect, takes the form of capital improvements such as boilers and roofs and air handling systems and so on and so forth.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Which would help to not only preserve our libraries but would provide stimulus for employment.

DR. LECLERC: Indeed.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: What is it that we can do on the City Council level? We know about advocacy, we know about trying to put back the money but what can we do to advocate because that would serve a dual purpose. One would be the upgrading of our systems and the other would be employment. What can we do to try to assist you?

DR. LECLERC: I think the more important thing the Council can do is keep one number in mind. In the last 12 months there have been for our three systems approximately 40 million visits to the 210 libraries that make up the free public library systems, 40 million visits. Those have been visits by New York residents but there are other organizations in town that will have lots of visits. No organization, no entity matches what libraries do

in terms of the gross number of visits.

But the people who are in libraries are New York residents and they're there to improve themselves, to improve their lives, to improve their levels of educational attainment. Basically, what libraries in this town do, I think, is to grow human capital. That's our business to give people everything they need in order to evolve; culturally, educationally, socially, democratically.

When you invest in us and I think overall we represent a very small fraction of \$50 billion plus in the city's budget. When you invest in libraries you're not investing in us, you're really investing in the people in the town itself, in the neighborhoods, in the communities. You are putting information and services, literacy training, story hours for children, you're putting something in to these people's lives that's terribly meaningful for them. They wouldn't be there in the numbers that they're there now were that not the case.

Somehow it's become newsworthy, suddenly, that libraries are relevant. We know.

We're not surprised by that. We've always known the libraries are relevant. We've been the most adept at change and at bringing technology to people and being able to really almost turn on a dime in order to adapt to new circumstances, new ways of information distribution and so on and so forth.

It's great that the news on the front page and as I said earlier on the Today Show on June 1st call attention to the broad public on how essentially important libraries are. But my sense is that there has never been a great city in all of human history without a great library at its center - anywhere, Timbuktu, Athens, Rome, Beijing, Jerusalem. Every great city has had a great library.

Libraries, since Andre Carnegie, gave us these communities libraries has been over par. So we have helped everybody get ahead. We helped the President of the United States get his first job as a community organizer in Chicago. He came to one of our libraries, it happened to be mine or ours of the New York Public Library. We were there for him and we want to be there for you

and for every other person in this room and everybody in New York. That's what I would like you to do, to help us keep that in mind and stay with us.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Paul, you have us. You're preaching to the converted when you talk to all of us. I agree with my colleague Tish because we did have a big celebration last year.

DR. LECLERC: Yes, we did.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: And now today we're here today we're here fighting again. I fear that next year that we will be sitting here again fighting once more. We're the converted but I wanted to know if there were any specifics that we as Council Members could do to assist in helping you to secure or voice what could be done through the stimulus package, either through the energy and the broadband stimulus money. As little as it is, we have to fight on all levels. Unfortunately, yes, we're fighting for crumbs.

DR. LECLERC: I think first and foremost you have to know what's being asked for by the libraries in the stimulus package. I think

that advocacy of not only necessarily within the city but also the state level because it is the governor and his staff that will be playing a critically important role in the distribution of stimulus monies. I think outreach to Governor Patterson and others at that level would be very helpful to us.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Paul, thank you.

DR. LECLERC: Thank you Council Member Dickens.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you Council Member Inez Dickens. We've been joined by Eric Gioia, David Yassky. Does anyone else have any other questions, any quick question? Okay. Before we end this part of the hearing I want to thank all three libraries.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: However, today is a very special day because it's Paul LeClerc's birthday so everybody should join in and sing happy birthday.

[Applause]

[Signs Happy Birthday]

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
very much.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Mr.
Chairman?

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: I'm sure he
would have preferred a present of saving the
libraries.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Mr.
Chairman?

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Oliver
Koppell has a question.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: No, I have
a comment, if I may very briefly.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Just to
say that after many years I'm most pleased to see
the cranes and bulldozers at the new Kingsbridge
branch library in my district. We've been working
on this for well over a decade. My predecessor
June Iceland was involved and it's very exciting
to see it going up. I know the library has
labored very hard on that, had to re-bid the
project and find extra money. We're finally

building and it's a great landmark and very important. If I get re-elected, that's why I'll get re-elected so thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you very much. Thank you for coming here today. Elizabeth, thank you, you were wonderful. Let's give a round of applause for Elizabeth.

[Applause]

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: She testified extremely well. We heard you loud and clear. We're going to fight for you to see that we could restore as much money as possible. Thank you very much. Next we'll ask the Commissioner of Cultural Affairs.

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Can everyone calmly find their seats? The Cultural Affairs Committee will be starting. We have our Commissioner Kate Levin. Can you please take him up to the podium? Everyone kindly find your seat. If you want to wish Paul LeClerc a happy birthday please do it outside in the rotunda or you could send him a birthday card.

Good afternoon, ladies and

gentlemen. I'm Councilman Domenic M. Recchia, Jr. I'm Chairman of the Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations. I welcome you to City Hall chamber. We will continue. We started the first part of our hearing with the libraries and at this we will continue with our Commissioner of Department of Cultural Affairs, Kate Levin. We want to thank you for being here today. Thank you for all you are doing for the cultural and arts organizations and welcome you. Commissioner.

KATE LEVIN: Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I'd just like to introduce my colleagues. We have Diana Reyna, Oliver Koppell, Inez Dickens, Gale Brewer, Councilman Vincent Gentile, Tish James. Okay, we got everybody. Welcome, Commissioner.

MS. LEVIN: Good afternoon. I am Kate Levin, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and I'm here today to testify with regard to the Mayor's FY10 Executive Budget.

First let me discuss our expense budget outlook. As you may recall, DCA's FY09

adopted budget was \$152.5 million, which included one time allocations of \$8.5 million. At that time our budget base line, looking ahead to FY10 was \$144.1 million. As everyone knows the national credit crisis and market downturn have caused the U.S. economy to shrink by its largest rate in decades. The economic downturn will significantly reduce the city's revenues for at least the next two years. And all agencies have been charged with ensuring a balanced budget for FY10.

To review, in November the Mayor asked every city agency to forecast a 5% reduction in its base line bringing DCA's budget to \$136.9 million. In January he asked all agencies to forecast an additional 7% reduction for FY10. This translated to an additional \$9.6 million reduction for DCA in FY10, bringing the budget to \$132.4 million. Most recently an additional 4% PEG was requested. On a cumulative basis, the FY10 reduction will bring the agency's total budget to \$130.5 million.

In applying the reductions at this time we have prorated them between our two expense

funding pools, the CIGs and the program groups, based on the percentage of our budget each pool receives. For fiscal '10 CIGs will receive \$104.4 million, this is a reduction of \$9.8 million from their original FY10 base of \$114.2 million. The budget includes \$3.3 million in increased energy subsidy and an additional \$5 million to cover mandated collective bargaining increases for organizations with union members. Program groups will receive \$21.3 million, this is a reduction of \$4 million from their original FY10 base of \$25.3 million.

Looking first at the CIGs, I'd like to offer some context for the way that we propose to apply the reductions. As you know, city support for the CIGS includes both operating and energy subsidies. It is our policy not to cut the energy payments we make on behalf of the CIGs, which are projected to be \$47.1 million in FY10. Therefore the FY10 reductions of 16% translates to a 26% cut to the operating portion of city support to the CIGs. In allocating this reduction, we looked at a number of options. After much analysis we determined that an across the board

approach would be best.

At the preliminary budget you had a number of questions about this approach in light of concerns which we share, about the vulnerability of smaller institutions. Let me say a few words about that. You may recall that a year ago, for the FY09 executive budget all agencies were asked for a 7.8% reduction to their out year budgets. At that time we applied a tiered reduction to the CIGs. Organizations with larger budgets took a slightly increased reduction, which allowed us to significantly reduce the impact on smaller institutions. This tiered cut is already embedded in our FY10 budget and is therefore already reflected in these additional reductions.

Let me now turn to our program groups. Here again, you've expressed concerns about our proposed across the board reduction of 16%. While we examined the options again we continue to believe that this is the most appropriate approach. The challenge here is that there is no correlation between the diversity of our applicant's operating budgets which range from

\$10,000 to \$150 million and the amount of DCA support they receive, which ranges from \$5,000 to \$250,000.

Organizations with very large budgets may receive small grants. Funding them at lower levels would not necessarily have an impact on the overall distribution of funds to organizations with smaller operating budgets. Of course, it would be counter productive to lower large grant amounts received by smaller organizations. Accordingly we believe that the most responsible approach is to allocate cuts on an across the board basis. The 16% reduction for FY10 will be applied to the 197 multiyear grants currently underway as well as to the pool of funds available to the 914 applicants coming before panels for awards in fiscal '10.

Budget reductions have been asked of every city agency. DCA is not being singled out for cuts and no city agency is being held harmless. At a time when private support and endowments are significantly reduced we know that it will be extremely challenging for our constituents to absorb these cuts. But it is

imperative that the city balance its budget. In a world of difficult choices we have structured the reductions from the field in a way that we believe is responsible and consistent with past practice.

I now would like to turn to DCA's capital budget. Last summer in anticipation of lower tax revenues the Mayor asked city agencies to forecast adjustments to the capital budget that were applied as part of the November plan. The goal was to relieve the pressure on the city's debt service obligations on the expense budget in order to ensure that expense funding would be available to sustain city services.

Since then, based on declining revenue forecasts the Mayor has asked every city agency to further reduce capital commitments by an additional 30% over the next ten years. After conducting an intensive review of DCA's ten year plan, we have adjusted allocations to meet the targets. In doing so we prioritized projects that are in the ground, in advanced design or have meaningful private support.

I know that these reductions will pose challenges to our constituents and we have

worked to minimize the impact where ever possible by breaking projects into phases and helping organizations with multiple projects to prioritize. Where possible we have realigned design and construction funding with actual project starts ensuring that funds will be spent in the year they are allocated. Council staff has been briefed on these difficult decisions. For FY10 through '19 this include a \$32.2 million cut to Council capital allocations and a \$143.9 million cut to expense capital allocations.

Despite the challenges we are strongly committed to working in every way we can to support the field during these very difficult times. For example, we are working with the Mayor's office to help meet the needs of the non profit sector for technical assistance, cash flow and Bridge financing. The Mayor recently announce d a set of initiatives to help non profit organizations during the downturn including Greater New York, a strategic partnership program that pairs business executives with non profit executive directors in an effort to build stronger, even more effective non profits. 25

cultural groups have expressed interest and the first set of matches will be made over the summer.

Expansion of the Returnable Grant Fund from \$8 million to \$20 million, on a 150% increase for the next two fiscal years administered by the Fund for the City of New York, this program allows organizations to obtain Bridge Loan financing at no cost for city expense contracts. Since its inception in 1992, this program has proved a key resource for non profits and the expansion of the fund helps ensure that there's enough capacity to meet the demand for this service.

The city is piloting a program for bulk purchasing of technology and insurance among non profit groups that is estimated to save millions of dollars for the sector. The United Way has expressed interest in partnering with the city to build on the work done by many groups like the Council on Urban Professionals and the Arts and Business Council to explore how we can help pair non profits with talented board members.

Mayor Bloomberg also recently announced the NYC Service initiative, answering

President Obama's nationwide call for public service. This program will not only increase volunteer resources for organizations as needed but will also raise awareness among New Yorkers about the value of the non profit field.

I'm also happy to report that earlier today an announcement by the Mayor Department of Small Business Services Commissioner Rob Walsh and Secretary of Labor Hilda Solace included an innovative pilot job training program for unemployed New Yorkers and underemployed artists as art handlers. The demand for quality art handlers at museums, galleries, corporations and auction houses continues to exceed supply in the New York metropolitan area.

DCA will work with arts organization to enhance the skills of the traditional candidate pool and connect them to employment in the field. The program will also provide credit counseling, financial planning and workshops on legal and tax issues.

Closer to home I want to highlight the success of DCA's Materials for the Arts. Last year MFTA collected more than \$6 million worth of

reusable materials for use by students, teachers and artists at more than 1,800 non profits and schools in New York City. All goods are donated and made available to organizations for free from MFTA's Long Island City facility. The program is especially important during these tough economic times. We've seen an increase of over 13% in the average number of groups served each month compared to last year.

We're expanding our warehouse by 10,000 feet this summer to meet demand. And hope to work with you to ensure that all eligible constituents are registered and informed about MFRA's valuable services. We celebrate MFTA's 30th anniversary this year as the city's largest reuse program and a critical resource for the cultural community.

Let me give you a brief summary of other agency activities. A few weeks ago we wrapped up the seventh annual Poem in Your Pocket Day which gave us a chance to garner press coverage for numerous spoken word and poetry programs taking place across the five boroughs. The initiative has also gone national thanks to

partners like the Academy of American Poets and the Poetry Society of America. We're especially pleased that the Academy just rolled out a new book of poems available in book stores across the country including City Store called, of course, Poem in Your Pocket.

A number of new DCA funded cultural facilities have opened, generating significant attendance and positive media coverage. These include in recent months the iconic new Brooklyn Children's Museum, the renovated Intrepid, the new TKTS booth in Times Square, the new home for the Museum of Arts and Design and the redesigned Alice Tulley Hall. Two weeks ago the First Lady made a New York City organization the platform for her first public address about the importance of the arts at the reopening of the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum.

Currently we are looking forward to the opening of major additions to the Queens Theatre in the Park in Flushing Meadows. And in a few months we'll celebrate the opening of the newly renovated El Museo del Barrio. We are encouraging New Yorkers to attend cultural events

through our online cultural calendar and partnership with NYC and Company. If you've not already please visit the NY Cultural Calendar on our web site in New York Citygo.com and encourage the non profit cultural groups in your districts to submit their events so they can be featured. This service is free.

Since December we featured 130 cultural organizations from every borough in our ongoing PSA campaign with WQXR radio. Earlier this month NYC and Company announced the 9 in '09 campaign to encourage New Yorkers and visitors to explore the extraordinary breadth of diverse cultures in neighborhoods across the city, including Little Sri Lanka, Little Ireland and Korea Town, Flatbush and Jackson Heights.

In closing, I'd like to thank Chairman Recchia, Chairman Weprin and all the members of these committees for your unflagging support of the cultural community. As we work through challenging fiscal times, your partnership becomes even more critical. Happy to answer any questions you have.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you,

Commissioner. We appreciate what you said. All these cuts are devastating to our institutions. What's the impact? Are any institutions or program lines or theatres or museums, could they close because these budget cuts that they're facing?

MS. LEVIN: At the moment to date we are aware of three organizations that have closed. One of them, Amado Opera closed because its owner decided that he wanted to retire and go on to do something else. One group could no longer afford to maintain its space. The third group we actually have not been able to discover whether they were registered as a non profit or if for profit. But it was the Zipper Theatre space that was used by a number of organizations.

Hard to predict what's happening in the future but obviously funding is down from all sources. So this is a very difficult period of time for this community.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Has any of these organizations told you that they might have to close several days a week in order to say alive?

MS. LEVIN: We've heard some organizations are considering closing. We actually have an organization that's considering opening for an additional day. So I think it's a pretty mixed bag. But absolutely organizations are considering reduced hours as one strategy to deal with financial issues.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Could you just go into a little bit more detail about what you did last year? I'm not cutting everybody the say but the tiered, just so my colleagues could understand that and why you're cutting across the board evenly this year?

MS. LEVIN: Sure. Going into last year's executive budget the agency has asked to take a reduction. On the CIG side we decided to do this in a tiered manner. I think, Tim correct me if I'm wrong, there are about 10 organizations that receive the majority of city money and have the largest budgets. They tend to group at the top end of our funding sector.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: So they took the largest cuts?

MS. LEVIN: We cut them

disproportionately in order to be able to spare the remaining groups the full impact of the cuts. So that difference is already embedded in our funding spread for this year. To further increase that difference at this particular point in time when all organizations across the spectrum are in trouble in different kinds of ways did not seem to us to be appropriate.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I could go on and ask you a lot more questions but one big problem that's facing across the city today is for these programs to stay alive, to keep on getting funded but also job recovery. People are losing jobs. Institutions can't stay open, programs can't go on, teaching artists can't be compensated the way they should be. What is your opinion about this and you're working towards addressing this issue?

MS. LEVIN: It is a deeply, deeply difficult situation for all of our organizations. The one bright spot is that across the board attendance is slightly higher at cultural organizations. By our calculations it's up about 5% and that's an average. In some places it's

much higher and some places have seen a diminution of attendance.

Part of the concern is even for organizations experiencing greater attendance, they are experiencing lower revenue so I think everybody's working to try and figure out how to capitalize on the fact that more people want to come to cultural organizations at a moment when it's harder to provide basic services. About some of the strategies we are undertaking taking to make cash available, try to make Bridge financing available for these organizations. I think everybody's out there looking at as many strategies as possible to help people.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I'm going to turn over to my colleagues now. Council Member Gale Brewer, her first question is probably going to be about Lincoln Center. Gale.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Lincoln Center, American Museum, everything. My first question is though arts education. Are you experiencing any cuts in that area? I know that there may be art teachers that the schools can hardly afford the direct art programs that

supplement and make arts what it should be in culture in the schools. Have you had any discussion with DOE? What's the status of the arts in terms of the general arts education?

MS. LEVIN: DOE has just finished this year's round of Arts Count, which is the survey that we do annually to try and figure out what the actual art spend is. The results aren't finalized but the numbers are in. So we are awaiting some of that information. The latest conversation I had with DOE did not show a precipitous drop in arts spend but we are waiting to see the effect of the most recent 5% cut on individual school budgets.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Because when I was at Studio in the School last night it was hundreds of parents loving their wonderful programs. It just seemed to me that there are cuts. That teachers may not cut but the actual programs. Arts Stat or whatever it's called account for that? There is a big difference between a teacher not being cut and a program being cut.

MS. LEVIN: Arts Count does look

both at spend within schools and spend that schools do in partnering with outside organizations. So yes it will pick up on the partner spend.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Last time we liked the report we didn't believe what it said, just so you know. It was too good. Number two, the job cuts for the CIGs could be what? If in fact the budget cuts that you proposed or that you don't want to propose but you're mandated to by OMB go through, what would be your best analysis of the numbers of jobs that would be cut with the CIGs?

MS. LEVIN: We don't have projections going forward for job reductions because every organization is going to handle these cuts in individual ways. To date, across the CIGs there are about 400 positions that have either been cut or are not being filled. So it is certainly a significant loss of jobs.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So that's just to date but you're saying that it could be more but you don't know how many more?

MS. LEVIN: Some of that is in

response. It has already anticipated reduced budgets for next year. Some of it is responding to the current moment so it's hard for us to figure out whether that reflects an absorption of the full dollar amounts. But again, organizations aren't just dealing with cuts from the city. In fact, the 16% cut we are hoping not to administer is less than reductions in foundation and corporate support that we're seeing.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.
Because I've heard that between cuts and furloughs it could be up to 1,000 jobs.

MS. LEVIN: That would not surprise me.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's horrific. Would you also agree that not only do the museums offer--one of the reasons there are such high turn outs now. I heard 11,000 people showed up for the Brooklyn Museum Saturday Night free program in Tish James' district. The record at the American Museum the other day on Memorial Day, the list goes on. And the Metropolitan Museum, free stay in New York is what people are interested in given the economy. So my question

1
2 is isn't this sector, your cultural sector,
3 economic development and how, even though we talk
4 about this in this recession, isn't this the one
5 way that tourism can come into New York? Is that
6 something that gets looked at in terms of the
7 budget?

8 MS. LEVIN: It is absolutely that
9 gets looked at. George Furteda at NYC and Company
10 is rolling out a couple of promotion campaigns to
11 try and not just increase visitation but increase
12 spend at these organizations. Because if all of
13 these folks are going it would be nice if they
14 could spend more money there.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But the
16 issue is if they're not open then I'm not going to
17 be able to spend if they're not there the days of
18 the week, the hours, et cetera.

19 MS. LEVIN: Absolutely, it's a very
20 fine line trying to help keep them open, keep
21 people going, keep people spending at the--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:
23 [interposing] What do you do when you're trying to
24 convince the Mayor and the OMB that we should have
25 much more money for cultural?

MS. LEVIN: You can ask the Mayor how much I irritate him and he will tell you it's a lot.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: All right. I'm just saying the CIGs and the programs, I don't ever want to compete one against the other because they both need funding. But you can be sure that me and many other colleagues here are going to fight like crazy to get rid of the numbers that you proposed and to try to increase the budget for these programs.

Alliance for the Arts is also a group that has produced some of the information regarding what's available. Is that something that you find or is that part of the budget cut?

MS. LEVIN: I'm not sure what your question is because--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:
[interposing] Alliance for the Arts has a wonderful--you mentioned NYC and Company, you mentioned other free programs but you didn't mention Alliance for the Arts as a place for people to get information about what's available.

MS. LEVIN: We do fund Alliance for

the Arts and we fund the production of those brochures that list pre-programming?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Is that being cut or is that being maintained in your budget?

MS. LEVIN: To my knowledge that's being maintained.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you Mr. Chair and thank you for all your work on culturals. We're going to fight like the dickens to restore the funding for culturals in the City of New York.

[Applause]

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I just have to clarify one thing. The funding that comes from the Department of Cultural Affairs is from the Department of Cultural Affairs and the City Council. We always have to stress that; it's from both of us. We've been joined by Helen Sears and Lewis Fidler from Brooklyn. Tish James from Brooklyn.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Commissioner, though you've agitated the Mayor unfortunately the budget that he has proposed does

not reflect that agitation. I would hope that you would continue to agitate and advocate on behalf of these cultural institutions, both the CIGs and the programs.

Let me begin with the CIGs, as you know the three largest CIGs in Brooklyn are located in my district. As you know on average between the three of them they employ about 1,000 residents, most of them from Brooklyn, the vast majority of them live in my district. If these three cultural organizations would have to lay off some of these employees it would have a major, major adverse impact on the local economy.

You know whenever the museums and Bam, whenever they're opened, all of the restaurants benefit. The streets are lively. This cut can not be sustained. It's going to have a devastating impact. As you know cultural institutions are really an economic engine and they should be seen in terms of economic development and in terms of generating revenue in the City of New York. Unfortunately tourism is down somewhat but the reality is that a lot of my constituents, they're not going away on vacation.

They're doing what they call now staycations. So I see them more and more in the cultural organizations and in the institutions.

I guess my question to you is the energy subsidy that you provide to these culturals, which is a pass through. Was all of those funds exhausted last year?

MS. LEVIN: Last year, I believe. Every year the energy is projected and spent down in the course of the year and then it's re-projected for the next year. I believe last year the projections were slightly higher than usage but I haven't seen the final numbers. And for the current year that we're in, we don't know yet because we're still not through June.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So the projections were higher so that means that we did not spend down on any of those funds. This year there is a slight increase in the energy subsidy. What is the likelihood if in fact the projections do not come to fruition in the middle of the fiscal year that we could perhaps divert some of those funds to the CIGs?

MS. LEVIN: We are looking at a

plan to do that. It's complicated in part by the way that energy is projected but that is absolutely what we're looking at if organizations. In particular if we can figure out a way of incentivizing energy conservation, it may be possible to figure out a strategy to channel some of the energy dollars into operating funds.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: All estimates indicate that energy costs these days are down all across the globe. So I would hope that we can divert some of those energy costs to the CIGs.

MS. LEVIN: The one thing I would want to point out Council Member is that as we build additions to these institutions and the aggregate energy costs go up. So we're trying to balance wanting to help facilities improve and dealing with the additional energy costs that are created.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Just changing subjects now to your capital. In your capital budget are there plans for energy conservation efforts in some of the CIGs?

MS. LEVIN: Absolutely. In fact,

1
2 PlaNYC, Cultural Affairs is I think the agency
3 that has received the most number of projects
4 funded through PlaNYC. In general our
5 organizations are extremely innovative when it
6 comes to energy conservation. So we have piloted
7 a number of different kinds of strategies
8 including gray water re-absorption and various
9 other kinds of conservation projects so they are
10 going.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So as a
12 result of your agitation, are the CIGs and
13 cultural institutions a priority in terms of
14 PlaNYC and this energy conservation.

15 MS. LEVIN: PlaNYC, we are
16 certainly one of several. We, again, have been
17 very successful at working with our colleagues to
18 receive funding through PlaNYC.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Again
20 through your agitation and because these
21 institutions are economic development engines, I
22 would hope that again they would be placed in a
23 priority status in terms of New York City efforts
24 towards energy conservation. I will work with you
25 to agitate the Mayor. I do it on a regular basis

and I've been very effective at that.

MS. LEVIN: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So I will join you both off the record or on the record. In terms of, again, the CIG, again explain to me this whole opposition to this tiered approach to the cuts.

MS. LEVIN: It's not an opposition to it. Last year we did tier the cuts. In other words we have a differential spread already embedded in what we are doing going forward. To do an additional tiered approach would further differentiate and would penalize organizations that already were cut at a higher amount last year. So at the moment we think rather than escalating that differential, the best way to go for right now is to do across the board.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: You also know that the cultural institutions also provide educational programming, particularly to after schools and sometimes in school. And as you know, I have been in the forefront of trying to increase arts and culture in our public schools. Some of the organizations in my district do an excellent

1
2 job. Again, these cuts would impact--those
3 programs would be the first to go basically
4 because they're above and beyond their core
5 mission.

6 Again, through your agitation are
7 you getting to the Mayor? Does he understand that
8 because we do not provide arts and culture as a
9 part of DOE that these CIGs have stepped up and
10 have stood in the vacuum, that these programs will
11 be the first to go as a result of these cuts. Do
12 you include that in your agitations?

13 MS. LEVIN: Absolutely. He's
14 appeared at a number of events supporting arts
15 education both within the CIG world and within the
16 program universe.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES:
18 Particularly, obviously, I'm focused on
19 underserved communities. My district you know
20 I've got great wealth and I've got great poverty.
21 What I've attempted to do in my five years in City
22 Council and if the voters vote me back in is
23 attempt to bridge that gap and that divide. The
24 cultural institutions have been providing
25 resources and educational programming and

recreational programming to the residents of the public housing where the needs are great.

Unfortunately they have been in a desert for far too long and their needs have been ignored. I have lobbied the CIGs, some have stepped up and provided programming to these residents. I thank them for that but unfortunately again, that programming will be cut if, in fact these cuts are realized.

I can't tell you, I have been developing a closer and closer relationship with these CIGs. I see what they do in Brooklyn and beyond, Central Brooklyn. If they were to close their doors, shut their lights, not have programs both educational and recreational programming it would have a devastating impact. I just want to add my voice to the choir and I am now part of a team to restore the funds to the CIGs. Again, we'll join you in agitating the Mayor of the City of New York.

I want to now turn to the programs. I know that today and tomorrow they're interviewing some of the programs, the panels. Is that true?

MS. LEVIN: The panels have been ongoing. We are, I think, done with about 12 of 25 different panels so they're ongoing through the month of June.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: How are we doing thus far? Any status report?

MS. LEVIN: 12 down, 13 to go so I think they're going well.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay. A number of organizations, again, that represent emerging communities are part of that. I would, again, hope that we would increase the diversity in funding for cultural programs, not only in Brooklyn but throughout the City of New York. And that we would provide equity in terms of funding in that particular area. I would hope that would be a priority of yours. I know that it is. Again, through your agitation I would hope that it would be a priority of the Mayor of the City of New York.

My last point is capital. I see that one of my wonderful programs, Brooklyn Botanic Gardens. I love them. The Children's Garden Entrance project is cut by \$5.6 million.

Is that true?

MS. LEVIN: The Entrance project is going forward. They had a water garden project that currently has been moved further out in the plan.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So are there any new capital projects that are going forward in my district right now? My position is that as opposed to cutting existing programs that all new capital projects, new programs, new institutions should be put on hold and that we should focus on capital projects in existing programs and existing institutions and not, again, provide public funds to organizations and institutions that would like to be located in downtown Brooklyn. Particularly during these challenging times, these institutions and these organizations definitely need capital funds.

This cut to the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens for this program I would oppose and will be working with the City Council to restore their funds. Speaking of that, how are we doing with Tafana, a theatre for a new audience. How much capital dollars is dedicated towards that project,

which is a new project?

MS. LEVIN: I think at the moment the city has \$34 million. The organization, I think, has raised \$12. They've been actually able to raise dollars over the past six months in an extraordinarily difficult environment. We're making good progress, hoping for a ground breaking early in calendar 2010.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: I hope that we could divert some of that funds to Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, to energy conservation, to the existing CIGs and to all the other capital projects and cultural institutions that desperately need those funds. I do not think that we should be using capital dollars to invest in a new organization at this critical juncture in our economy. So I thank you and I look forward to joining, with my colleagues, to restore these funds. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you Council Member. Council Member Inez Dickens.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Thank you so much Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: One question,

only joking. She was ready to take my head off.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: My one question will have 15 parts.

[Laughter]

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Hello, Commissioner. How are you?

MS. LEVIN: Good, thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: I have a question, a follow up question on the CDF panels and the funding. Is there an appeals process for an organization after receiving a decision from the panel?

MS. LEVIN: Yes, there is.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: And is it a long process? Do you give them assistance, the organization?

MS. LEVIN: There are clear criteria for what may be appealed. We try and make a decision as quickly as possible after getting an organization's appeal. There's a deadline by which appeals must be filed and we try and act as quickly as possible once we received an appeal.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: And that

information is given out to the organizations readily so that they're acutely aware and focused on it?

MS. LEVIN: It is--

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS:

[interposing] Because what I'm afraid of is the organizations in many of our communities after getting a decision are not sure of the appeals process or how to file it, how to go about it and the deadline dates. So I just wanted to be sure that they are noticed.

MS. LEVIN: I believe the information is included in the application form itself. But it is very readily available. It's a very straightforward simple process. We don't put organizations through a huge amount of rigmarole.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Knowing that this is bad times, is it possible that your office could notice them or at least notice our Council offices of any organization that has gotten a turn down so that we can be focused to see that the organizations are aware of the deadline?

MS. LEVIN: Absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: I would appreciate that because sometimes what was in the original application, we may not remember that date so that's very, very--

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: [interposing] Excuse me for one minute. May I interrupt this please, Council Member? Is the appeal process only if you did not receive any funding or is it to let's say to increase your funding? If you think you should have received more money.

MS. LEVIN: Kathy, do you want to talk briefly about the appeals process?

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Because I was under the impression that the appeal process was only for those organizations that did not receive any funding.

KATHY: There are two grounds for appeal. One is misrepresentation of information and the other is non-presentation of information. So if there were something that we withheld from the panel that they did not see about an applicant that we had at the time of the deadline, that would be grounds for appeal. Or if they misrepresented something within the application,

that would be grounds for appeal. Generally organizations do not appeal based on the dollars that they are awarded. Appeals generally have come from organizations that have not been awarded funds, although that's not universal.

The number of appeals that we've had in the past couple of years had been steady in the 10 to 12 range.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Just so I'm clear. The two grounds is one, that you were misrepresented.

KATHY: If we withheld information.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: If you withheld information.

MS. LEVIN: In other words if the notes of what the panel discussed said they didn't have splat as part of their application and you're clear they did--

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: [interposing]
But how am I supposed to find out if I'm program?

KATHY: The other piece is if the panel conversation reflects a misunderstanding of what was actually in the materials. So in other words organizations are offered the chance to look

at the notes about the panel discussion and we do as well. So if it turns out somebody appeals and says the panel conversation said we did this, this and this but you had brochures that we sent you that show that that wasn't the case, that's obviously a grounds for a successful appeal.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: So the groups have the right to come and see your notes.

KATHY: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: You open your notes to everyone?

KATHY: We discuss the panel notes extensively with the applicants, yes.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: And how long after the awards come out could you appeal?

KATHY: Organizations are told that they should appeal within 21 business days of the notice that they receive from DCA. When they receive a notice saying they are not being funded, they also get information on the appeals process at that time as well as in the application materials.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: The problem with that is that it's during the summer and a lot

of times people go away and people don't open up their mail. Because I know a lot of City Council members, people don't find out about the award and the time could lapse. I'll talk to you about

that, about the appeals process. See if we could either extend it or make it a different time limit. Council Member Inez Dickens.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Thank you so much Mr. Chair and your 10 questions don't count towards my 15, by the way. Now, I want to talk about the Museo del Barrio, please. I didn't see them on the list but there is supposed to be some capital work being done there. I'd like to know is there going to be any problems there or is it going to go forth? Are there going to be any shortcuts made to that? Because that's very important and I believe that some of the art work is supposed to be transferred to another museum temporarily in order to ensure the protection of the art.

MS. LEVIN: I would like to think we have had all the problems we're going to have with that project. And we are looking forward to a wonderful opening I believe in September.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: So there should be no further problems?

MS. LEVIN: There should be. I can't anticipate any more problems. We've had several; we've dealt with them all and I think we're done.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Because I only have two SIGs in my district.

MS. LEVIN: Yeah, but you got good ones.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: I have excellent ones and that is the Studio Museum and that is the Museo del Barrio. It's very important to me that they're protected. Now, I was looking at the executive budget here on the Studio Museum, Museum of Harlem and I see that they've got significant cuts. Is this reflective of the 7.4% or is this some additional cuts?

MS. LEVIN: The total cut is 16%, which is the same cut that other organizations are receiving.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: I understand that and I heard your testimony earlier about how it was calculated. I just have some

1
2 concerns about our smaller SIGs because they don't
3 have endowments and foundations that help them nor
4 do they have boards that are able to raise money
5 for them. If the larger ones don't get as much
6 money raised in bad times, the smaller SIGs don't
7 have ability to raise much of any because they
8 don't have the endowments. So I'm very concerned
9 about everyone getting the equal cut. I had
10 discussed that with you before so that you're
11 aware.

12 Our cultural institutions and our
13 programs are leading economic engines of the city,
14 generating billions of dollars in taxable revenue
15 for New York City. When we cut them and they have
16 to cut their hours, then the city at large is
17 losing revenue. We need to look at it and maybe
18 do a little math work. That's what I was sitting
19 here doing, a little math work to see how much a
20 loss that the SIGs receive and how much loss did
21 the city receive comparatively when our SIGs have
22 to close down, shorten their hours, shorten their
23 days, close down programs when the programs are no
24 longer available to our families and our young
25 people and our visitors from outside of the city.

I just wanted to put that on the table because of my concern. Then the last is that they're major employers in the City of New York. The loss of jobs that could come with this is devastating to the economy and to the circulation of the dollar that we all talk about. So I just wanted you to know how concerned the entire City Council is about this.

MS. LEVIN: We share your concern and appreciate it very, very much.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Are you finished Council Member?

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: I reserve the right to come back again.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay. Council Member Helen Sears. I want you to know that Tish James is in front of you.

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: You have to realize I have to catch up because I came late but here we are.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: That's okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Good afternoon. I'm glad to see you. I just really

1
2 have a question with a very short comment. I know
3 that SIGs are cut very hard and I know being on
4 budget negotiating of what we have to do in that
5 process. It's a very painful one. But I would be
6 remiss if I didn't speak about the institutions in
7 Queens because they get hit very, very hard. They
8 get hit not in the fairest of ways. So how is it
9 that we can look at these institutions and somehow
10 review exactly their distribution?

11 For instance if you take the Museum
12 of the Moving Images, it's hit so hard. It might
13 be open two or three days a week. That is a
14 citywide cultural institution. They've got
15 hundreds and hundreds of kids that come in our
16 classes from an entire city. The Museum of the
17 Hall of Science is the only one in the city of its
18 kind - the only one. They get from all over the
19 entire city and there is hardly ever a
20 consideration.

21 I look at the Queens Theater in the
22 Park. It has become a really focal point. These
23 institutions are in Flushing Meadow Park. And in
24 this deep economic crisis that park is used and
25 those institutions are used. They can not

1
2 continue to do what they do if they don't have a
3 fairer distribution of money. I'm really asking
4 how can Queens have a review of exactly how it is
5 determined that they get an allocation that, quite
6 frankly, is not fair for when they really deal
7 with a large part of the city as well?

8 I'm going to bring it up in
9 negotiating because it hits the institutions very
10 hard and the fact is, is that our institutions are
11 very new and they are the first ones to get cut.
12 Remember they came up way after the cultural in
13 Manhattan, the Metropolitan and those in which we
14 love and they are worldwide. But the cultural
15 institutions in Queens are babies in comparison to
16 the others and they're always like the
17 stepchildren.

18 For the borough of Queens in
19 developing that and maintaining it for our
20 schools--that's what they do in the schools, in
21 the Queens Botanical Gardens is throughout for
22 what they do. They win all kinds of awards
23 nationwide. So my question is how do we get to
24 sit down and re-review exactly what that process
25 is and how badly unfairly it affects Queens?

MS. LEVIN: I'd be happy to sit with you at any time that you find convenient to go over the funding basis for Queens organizations.

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: We will do that, thank you.

MS. LEVIN: I will say that in the past few years, we have collectively invested hundreds of millions of dollars in Queens organizations for capital projects as one way of both recognizing their excellence and promoting them.

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: And it's very, very much needed because they were, some of them were huts because they were so young and they really were put together with mud. I can understand why that was done because it was an extreme necessity to do that. I'll be glad to do that.

MS. LEVIN: I look forward to that.

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: I'm going to sit down with our culturals in Queens and our delegation and see exactly how we can help to revise what is happening. Thank you Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Council

Member Tish James, one follow up question.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Just for the benefit of my colleagues, I too was educated.

There's this notion that the cultural institutions are sitting on these massive endowments. What we learned and what I have learned is that they are regulated by state law and that the body of the endowment is often times restricted. A lot of these endowments currently are under the water because most of the institutions invest in funds and they basically live off of or they just take the interest from the endowments. Because these endowments now are under the water, these cultural institutions can not benefit from the endowments.

The second one is that the foundation giving is a thing of the past. Most foundations are not giving to CIGs so they have to depend upon the largess of the city. Which is why the room is packed here today and which is why the City Council under the leadership of Council Member Recchia, we have got to step up and provide funding to the cultural institution.

There's another notion that I want

to disabuse most people of and that is, is that the cultural institutions only cater to the rich and the famous. Having witness what happens at Brooklyn Museum every first Saturday of every month I can tell you it is not the rich and the famous.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: It is my constituents, the constituents in Bedford Stuyvesant, East New York, every corner of the City of New York that goes to Brooklyn Museum. To such an extent that I can not enjoy it anymore because I'm taking notes about every pot hole in my district.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you very much.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So my question to the Commissioner.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I thought you were finished.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Now, that was just a comment...

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: All right. Quick question.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: ...about the notion, sorry.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Because Council Member Inez who has a follow up.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Hurry up.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: So there's another institution that's not in my district but it's literally two blocks out but I incorporate them in my district and that is the Brooklyn Children's Museum, which is now this iconic figure of yellow. There's a possibility, a rumor in the air that they may have to close. After building this wonderful institution--and I took my two nieces. Well I've got more nieces but I took these two last Saturday and I couldn't get them out. It was quite a sight because they wanted to stay and I had to stay and I had to leave.

There's a rumor in the air that Brooklyn Children's Museum, this wonderful institution may have to close its doors. What is DCA doing to address that? First of all is the rumor true? And two, what can DCA do to address that or prevent that?

MS. LEVIN: We have not heard any such rumor. They are an organization that has seen a huge growth. I think it's over 100% increase in visitors since the new building opened. They also have been very hard hit by a downturn in various funding sources. So we are working with them to understand some of the financial pressures they're under but also the various strategies that they want to use to address them. In terms of changing hours, in terms of certain kinds of admission fee policies, helping them to recruit the strongest possible board so that they have the resources that they need to keep functioning because they are an extraordinary institution.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Suggest a meeting with the Brooklyn Children's Museum just to see whether or not the rumor might be true.

MS. LEVIN: Absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you.

Council Member Inez Dickens, this will be the last question.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Just

quickly.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Short.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Chair, please. To piggy back on my colleagues said about the state law that regulates endowments. We maybe need to investigate to see what we can do to help them to advocate the largest SIGs that do have endowments that now need to maybe touch upon that principal and are unable to do so. We need to maybe advocate to see what we can do to help them so that that law can be changed and amended so that they can go in and use the principal and replace it at a later date.

I'm asking would my chair be willing to look into that and work with the SIGs to try to see what we can do to assist in that.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Yes, we definitely can do that. We can have a meeting on that and see what we can do.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Anyone have any further questions? With that, Commissioner I want to thank you for coming today.

MS. LEVIN: Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We will move on. Thank you. Call the next panel please.

COUNSEL: Cuthbert Dickenson, Carol Thomas, Margalit Susser, Eileen Muller and Peter Vreeland.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay. Everyone calmly find their seats. This is not a break. We'll continue on with our hearing. Could everyone calmly find their seats? Whoever would like to go first.

EILEEN MULLER: Hi, good afternoon. I'm Eileen Muller, President of Local 1482, the Brooklyn Library Guild, representing over 1,000 employees at the Brooklyn Public Library. Thank you for giving me this opportunity today to communicate with you again.

I feel, though, that my speeches sometimes are just an echoing of what I've said before. Our problems remain the same in the face of this diminishing financial resources. You have always been very supportive of us in recognizing the importance of the public libraries to the people of New York City. We all understand that we are dealing with a very different time today

than we have in the past. The only thing that has not altered is the library patron who comes to the library as if nothing has changed. That person knowing first hand the effects of the country's economic situation, they feel it definitely at home. But they still need the services of the library more today than ever before.

Today you heard from our director Dionne Mack about the projected service cuts to the hours at all libraries at the Brooklyn Public Library. Right now Brooklyn Public Library is planning on only having 58 of its branches open five days a week, Monday through Friday from 1:00 pm in the afternoon until 6:00 pm in the evening. Although a few branches will be open for evening hours, I believe it's only two. Also Saturday hours will only be a few branches as well. Sunday hours are long gone; the libraries are no longer opened on Sundays.

But the public who will be challenged by these hours will be the school aged children coming to the library for class visits, young preschoolers coming to the library with their mothers or their babysitters, the elderly

people seeking the library to read their newspapers, people who are unemployed coming to the library to use our computers looking for jobs or even the working people who are paying taxes will no longer be able to use the libraries.

I believe that the library has made the choice of their service hours to provide a place for children after school when they need access to books as well as a safe place to go. This is a very valid reason and I can't argue with it but our society is not made up just of school age children. We have people from all walks of life and all age groups that need to use the library.

What I ask of you today is to please consider the funding to the public libraries. And I know you have supported us in the past and I look forward to you supporting us again. We need every penny that you can scrape together to give us because we need to keep the libraries open. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you.
If you could keep your applause down. Thank you,

really appreciate it. Next.

PETER VREELAND: Hi, Pete Vreeland. I'm the President of Local 1559, the American Museum of Natural History. Thank you to Chairs Recchia and Gentile and the members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs for this opportunity.

Numbers kick around and I see again what was proposed and what people talk about. Part of this, I think, the Department of Cultural Affairs was talking about was the fact that the city needs more art handlers. Art handlers are part of my members. Unfortunately when money is cut to the Museum of Natural History, a person that works in my local who makes about \$45,000 is shown the door where meanwhile we have people making in excess of \$350,000 who are still there.

What I'd like to see is when we talk about all these numbers and we kick it around, we try to instill a little bit of money back into the working class people who vote in New York City, pay taxes in New York City, send their kids to public school in New York City, which are my members. So when you talk about cutting monies

back and monies being cut to the culturals my members are going to be shown the door.

I've been in the cultural institutions 19 years. I started at the Brooklyn Children's Museum. I worked there six years. A really good friend of mine who worked there for a long, long time passed away. People work for culturals because their heart and soul is in it. It's not for the money, normally. But the problem being is when you guys cut the Department of Cultural Affairs money, all the city money, my members get sent out the door.

When things were really, really good my members didn't get the same amounts of increases in pay that I've seen happen in upper echelons with the museums and within management. So as things are tough and as things are tight, I want you guys to remember that my members are working class people, blue collar. They send their kids to public schools, they take advantage of the same cultural institutions that they work in. When they get shown the door, that is a major problem.

I'd like to see also, and I know

you guys have been really, really helpful with this, Urban Advantage which is something near and dear to my heart. A major initiative that takes care of eighth grade extra projects within the city. Let's not kill this baby with the bath water. It's a good project. It should be funded. Thank you. Sorry for going over.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: That's okay. I just want to say we're going on the clock, two minutes per person. I just want to correct you on something. We, the City Council, Speaker Christine Quinn and my colleagues, did not cut the budget.

MR. VREELAND: Okay, I know but--

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: [interposing] There's the Mayor that cuts and we fight to restore. Please--

MR. VREELAND: [interposing] Please, please, please fight.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Because there's press here, there's people here and they hear people say we cut the budget and they're looking at us. Then when we go out there to fight, people say why are you cutting the budget.

We heard at the City Council. So we don't cut the budget.

MR. VREELAND: That's good to hear because the guy gets his way a lot. Let's not let him get his way on this one.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay. Next. Plus Urban Advantage is very important to us. It's our program and Rob Jackson, head of the Education Committee. Believe me, we would love to expand that program. We ask the DOE to chip in with us to expand it and we have not been successful in that. Next.

CAROL THOMAS: Chairman Recchia and distinguished Committee members, I am Carol Thomas President of the New York Public Library Guild Local 1930 DC37 AFSCOUNCIL MEMBERE, representing 1,650 frontline library employees in the Bronx, Staten Island and Manhattan.

For all New Yorkers, free access to information is more than a quality of life issue. It is an absolute necessity in the world of today. Libraries are valued by their users and have been the pride of elected officials in the City of New York as they should be. I am sure that everyone

here today wants to maintain high quality public library services that prepare our children to enter a workforce that each day requires greater skills and educations.

As you know, for urban and low income families public libraries provide the only access to computers and the internet, which is crucial in today's job market. The value of a safe haven for children and young adults can not be underestimated. It is unconscionable that the Mayor's executive budget is calling for budget cuts for fiscal year 2010 in the midst of an economic downturn.

This proposed budget includes a 21% or a \$28.2 million cut in the operating funding for the New York Public Library. These cuts translate into a drastic reduction of hours, books and other services and massive layoffs of 415 staff members. The layoffs are the opposite of what President Obama is trying to do in Washington, which is to stimulate the economy by creating and protecting jobs.

Please take a look at the remarkable statistics of the circulation and

attendance that the New York Public Library has provided. These figures can not be overlooked. They prove the high quality of service that has been provided by the staff. And that libraries are crucial today more than ever, especially when we face a deep depression and people are relying more and more on library resources for job searches.

We can not allow the proposed budgets to undo all of your hard work, support and dedication of getting libraries to the point that they are today. Don't let this economic disaster be a disaster for the New York Public Library. Maintaining and keeping all libraries open six and seven days a week with no layoffs must be a priority. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you very much, next.

MARGALIT SUSSEER: I'm Margalit Susser, Queens Library Guild Union President and I'm here with my other colleagues to note the importance of keeping libraries whole. With the proposed budget cuts to the library systems by the Mayor, you notice I said by the Mayor, we will see

reductions that were mentioned by my colleagues Miss Miller and Miss Thompson. I do want to emphasize that it will damage not only today the libraries but in the future.

You'll see the losses of new staff who will provide services in the future. Once the economics get better and the appropriate money is restored, it would mean just restoring the damage that is done this period rather than moving the libraries forward into the future. That's all I have to say. I was less than two minutes.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you very much, next.

CUTHBERT DICKINSON: Good afternoon all, Chairman and members of the City Council. My name is Cuthbert Dickinson and I'd just like to say I echo the sentiments of my library colleagues. May I just add as well, at the library we are told that we can not buy any materials. We have to get approval because of the reductions we have suffered so far. So I'll take my time to speak about the botanical gardens, specifically Queens and Rave Hills, which are small institutions. They have done everything in

their power to save money.

I plead to you because these institutions are so small they can't take anymore cuts. You understand? So I'm asking you to think hard and long and three, four times to restore some of that reduction. It's very hard for them to continue in an environment such as this. Not to say the situation is any less than Brooklyn and Queens and New York Botanical Gardens is any less in the financial situation. But the small institutions is more devastating, the reductions in cuts are to them. So I'm asking you please. I know I'm preaching to the choir so have a good day.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you. I just want you to know that we have a representative from cultural affairs you remained here, Sara. They're over here so they're hearing what you have to say, they'll take it back to the Commissioner. I want to thank you for staying throughout this hearing. Thank you very much, please call the next panel.

COUNSEL: Laurie Combone, Randy Borscheit, Norma Munn and Jenny Lalutes.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: If anybody would like to speak, please sign up. If you would like to just submit your testimony, submitting your testimony is the same as testifying; we read it, it goes into the record. The next panel, Randy Borscheit, call it again.

COUNSEL: Randy Borscheit and Norma Munn, Randy I see.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Norma Munn? Okay. Anybody else? Okay, cool. Jenny Lalutes. Here they come, Norma Munn, Jenny Lalutes. Paging Norma Munn, we don't want to hear that we don't call you. We have to excuse you; you're injured. Jenny Lalutes?

RANDY BORSCHIEIT: Thank you very much Chairman Recchia and your colleagues on the Committee. I'm grateful for this opportunity to talk to you about the proposed cultural affairs budget. We in the cultural community are suffering the same economic pressures as every other sector during this terrible recession. Like businesses, government and non profit organizations active in other fields, we are concerned about maintaining our public service and

at the same time about protecting the job security of the thousands of people employed directly or indirectly in the arts.

We know that the task of planning a responsible budget, which maintains city services, is a great challenge to the City Council and the Mayor. We understand that equity and fairness must apply to all decisions you make about the allocation of limited city funds. But we also want to work with you and the Mayor to consider the positive role that cultural organizations play in the economy, understanding that city funding to the arts does not just provide cultural services to the public but acts as an investment in the health of our communities and the city's economy.

It is in the public interest to keep our cultural institutions strong. We hope that reductions will be planned so as to limit the impact. The rule of thumb that every city dollar invested in the arts is repaid in city taxes works both ways. Reduce the investment; reduce the tax income. I recognize that there is no easy solution to this quandary but I hope we can look to the city's response to an earlier fiscal

crisis, our neat bankruptcy in the mid-1970s for a model on how to mitigate the unavoidable cuts in public funding.

At that time the city took advantage of the federal CIDA program to allocate funds to cultural groups to enable them to protect the jobs of or rehire hundreds of workers who would otherwise have been laid off. There is no CIDA program in 2009 but there is great interest in Washington in maintaining employment. The cultural community is eager to work with our friends in city government to take advantage of any jobs programs that might be available or to encourage Congress to create new jobs programs, which might serve our industry. After all, the arts are as natural to the big apple as apple pie; they are one of our most important home industries.

The facts are well known, the arts contributes \$21 billion in economic activity to the city. They generate 160,000 jobs and \$900,000 million in city taxes. The non profit sector alone has an economic impact of \$6 billion and generates 40,000 jobs. It pays \$170 million in

taxes to the city, considerably more than the cultural affairs budget you are considering today.

Although all city services are important and some are vital to our health and safety and the future of our young people, few areas of city expenditures generate a return on investment as great as the DCA budget. I can go on; I have a longer statement but I will leave it with you and your friends.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Do you want to add anything else?

MR. BORSCHIEIT: Just real quickly I wanted to just add two things. I know we're talking primarily about the cultural affairs budget at this moment but I wanted to put a word in for the public libraries as was just said by the last speakers. They are an extremely important, invaluable and very broadly based community service to the public, both as cultural institutions and as educational institutions.

A 20% increase in use at the New York Public Library since November. This is an indication of just how valuable they and other cultural institutions are to this city. And also,

I'd like to ask the Council to consider maintaining the highest possible level of support to NYC and Company. Tourism is more than ever, an important industry in this city. You and the Mayor have made a commitment to marketing the city to the world, to tourists and to the business community. Hardly anything is more important to the economic regeneration to our city. The cultural institutions are extremely important in attracting tourists. They also will benefit by the increase in tourism.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay, thank you very much.

MR. BORSCHEIT: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Next.

LAURIE COMBONE: Good afternoon. I want to thank you for the--Yes.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Hold on Laurie, before we--we've just been joined by Council Member David Weprin, Chairman of the Finance Committee.

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Mr. Borscheit, I enjoyed your statistics, specifically the one about the \$21 billion in economic activity. Is

that on an annual basis?

MR. BORSCHEIT: That's on an annual basis, yes.

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: I've been making the argument for years about the multiplier effect of the money that we put in to cultural institutions. I've been using a 10:1 multiplier, which is for every dollar that we put in, in government dollars towards the arts we get back about ten fold, \$10 in economic activity. Would that be a close ratio to the \$21 billion you're referring to?

MR. BORSCHEIT: I think it's at least that much. Plus, we get more than dollar for dollar back in city taxes for every dollar in the cultural affairs budget so that's direct income to the city budget.

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Okay, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Go ahead, Laurie.

MS. COMBONE: Thank you. I want to thank you for the invitation today and the reminder. I also want to thank you for the

1
2 opportunity to speak today. I am ultimately a
3 product of the CIGs. My first internship
4 opportunity was at the Metropolitan Museum and
5 then I went on to the Brooklyn Children's Museum,
6 where finally I worked with Arnold Leeman at the
7 Brooklyn Museum of Art. So I am a prime example
8 of what the CIGs can do. I'm happy to say that
9 I'm in support of the CIGs because that's
10 ultimately the community that I come from. But as
11 the Director of the Mocada Museum, which is a
12 smaller museum in downtown Brooklyn with a very
13 large mission, I have to speak on behalf of the
14 cultural equity group as well as on behalf of the
15 museum.

16 I wanted to address today several
17 of the issues that were addressed while the
18 presentation was going on and understanding the
19 CIGs and the cultural equity group and the
20 challenges with the disparities in funding.
21 Talking to my intern that's here today, many of
22 the questions that she asked in terms of why does
23 the city government work this way reminded me very
24 much of how Martin Luther King described to his
25 daughter why she couldn't attend the amusement

1
2 park that she saw so many people enjoying. I feel
3 that that same disparity is felt so much so in the
4 inequities in the funding.

5 Also, the Commissioner mentioned
6 that we talked about these rumors about many of
7 the organizations closing. Many of the smaller
8 organizations as well as the larger organizations
9 are afraid to discuss the well being of the
10 organization with the Department of Cultural
11 Affairs, their funders or their corporate sponsors
12 because of fear that if the organization does not
13 seem viable that it will not be supported in the
14 upcoming year. So we don't really have an
15 accurate snapshot as to how organizations are
16 faring in the current climate because that has not
17 really been encouraged throughout our history to
18 discuss financial matters as well.

19 I also wanted to mention briefly,
20 too, there's an 09 in 09 tourism campaign. The 09
21 in 09 tourism campaign I thought was a wonderful
22 idea but it was also an idea that was orchestrated
23 through the city; it was not necessarily one that
24 came from the community or the people. I would
25 encourage the City Council to start to encourage

more of the ideas from their constituents versus idea that they create themselves within the Council.

The other aspect that I wanted to mention is that the African Diaspora as well as the Latino, Asian, Native American, Asian arts organizations provide invaluable cultural opportunities and educational programming within our schools. Our current curriculum system is not created so that young children can learn about their own history and culture. So when you go into many of the classrooms, many of the children are learning about art but they're learning about art through Saisson, Picasso, Del Ali, Saisson and the others and they're not learning very much about their own culture or history.

The other aspect, too, is that what's very important to understand is that we have words such as underserved and underprivileged. We accept there are underserved communities and underprivileged children and underserved communities but the city as well as the Department of Cultural Affairs currently operates, it doesn't take into account at all that

there is a word called underserved or underprivileged and what exactly it is that we do about that.

Further, we voted in this particular election for change. So far everything that has been directed towards our community has been that there are going to be no new initiatives. Everything for this year and the past year has been based off the fact that there are going to be no new initiatives. These new initiatives keep things currently the way they are currently operating, which is ineffective for our communities.

Finally on the last scale, this in a quality and funding, it certainly creates an unbalance in the world. I think a lot of the challenges that we are experiencing is because of this imbalance that we don't allow equity to flow throughout all of our communities.

On the final point with that, the cultural equity group has definitely been looking in terms of how can we create not just more money and resources for our institutions but there are seven communities in New York City that currently

1 feed the prison industrial complex system. The
2 city and the cultural budget has not looked at
3 those communities in any kind of meaningful way to
4 say that we need to draw more resources into those
5 communities so that we can actually help and
6 assist. We're basically just looking at cutting
7 organizations across the board with no thought,
8 rhyme or reason about the communities that are
9 most in need, the communities that are most
10 feeding this prison industrial complex system. We
11 need to look at that across the board instead of
12 just cutting basically just straight down the line
13 with not rhyme or reason for the communities or
14 those communities in need.

16 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
17 very much. I just want to address that. This
18 City Council has worked extremely hard to do fair
19 funding for everyone, for all ethnicities across
20 the table. We've met with the group and we work
21 very, very extremely hard to make sure everybody
22 gets their fair share of the pie. As far as new
23 initiatives, there's just no money. We would love
24 to have new initiatives, believe me.

25 When we come up with ideas and

1
2 programs, we listen to the community of the people
3 of the City of New York. This is the people's
4 house and we get many of our ideas from different
5 communities across the city. So we do listen to
6 people and their ideas and their initiatives. I
7 just wanted to say that.

8 MS. COMBONE: I respect that but
9 when you look at the borough of Brooklyn and you
10 look at the cultural landscape, building and
11 construction, brick and mortar, the amount of
12 cultural institutions in Brooklyn, New York that
13 are reflective of African American, Latino, Asian,
14 Native American institutions is null. We don't
15 really have anything to necessarily show in our
16 borough for this diverse culture that represents
17 the majority of the Black and Latino communities.
18 The largest in Brooklyn, New York than it is in
19 any of the five boroughs but it's nothing visible
20 to show that.

21 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We fund many
22 groups of ethnicity and many groups that serve the
23 African American community that are run by African
24 Americans. And, again, I'm not going to--we
25 discussed this, we're funding them. We showed you

the statistics and I'll leave it at that. Norma Munn.

MS. COMBONE: Thank you.

NORMA MS. MUNN: My apologies for causing your slight delay.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: That's okay. You're injured.

MS. MUNN: No, I kicked a state assembly. I'm kidding, of course. I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I also want to acknowledge that these are really extraordinary times. I haven't seen pressures and demands on the city budget in over a decade such as this. I know that you as City Council Members are really aware of how much the cultural community as a whole needs your support and you've shown yourself repeatedly over the years responsive to those needs. The question facing you this year is not only how do you restore but how do you to it equitably and how do you even define what equitable means.

I'm going to provide you with a very quick snapshot of a very small survey that I did only within a certain group of the program

category. The CIGs have gotten statistics together so I felt that what you needed was something from the other group. I survey 61 groups covering all the boroughs with budgets ranging from \$100,00 to \$1 million. I did not include any museums in that because for many reasons I only had one or two I could have reached out to and the sample was a little tight for time.

67% of those groups have either laid off workers or not filled a vacant position since last June. 17% had converted full time jobs to part time jobs. 16% are using a combination of furloughs, pay cuts or have an executive director or artistic director or general manager who has foregone salary during the past few months. All, every single one of them expect to have further lay offs, furloughs or pay cuts over the next few months.

This is not easy to translate into jobs lost but when I combine the best guess that I could get of those numbers with what I know of the CIG numbers and larger institutions in the program groups, we're talking about 8% to 9% of current unemployment and at least 1,100 jobs already lost

in this sector since last June. This translates into fewer programs, lesser earned income and a lot of people struggling without a job and a lot of people seeing less programs available to them.

I'd like to spend the rest of my time talking to you a moment about what we just heard in the hearing and some of the concerns that have come out of it and why people are caucusing around the neighborhood, so to speak. The challenge really is how you restore or face these cuts equitable. I just heard a hearing in which I finally started counting and don't misunderstand me, I'm appalled by the cuts to everybody. I'm stunned by the operating level of cash to the CIGs.

The rest of my written testimony is a plea for them to get their energy money when they save money. I'm very relieved to hear that DCA is at least considering that option. We've been talking about it and begging for it for five or six years at least. But we can't go back to the day when the words program groups or cultural development groups is mentioned three times in a City Council hearing aside from the presentation

made by the Chair. That's not acceptable anymore than what Laurie is talking about is acceptable. That is also inequitable in attitude and content.

I would like to see both the CIGs and the program groups restored to the greatest extent possible. I'm begging you, do not pit one against the other. It is not helpful to hear that a program group should not receive capital funding in order to fund a CIG. And no CIG, by the way, would stand up and tell you that. That is not something they would do. I'm putting this on the table because somebody's got to and I'm the only group in the room that doesn't receive any funding from you. I'm the only who is, I think, free to say whatever needs to be said.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: You want funding?

MS. MUNN: Nope. It leaves me free to say. You've always been very fair as a Council, don't revert to ten years ago. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you very much. One more, okay, sorry.

JENNY LALUTES: Last, but not

least.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Never least.

MS. LALUTES: I do get city money.

I get a lot of city money and I'm grateful to all of you for the money that you give to the Alliance of Resident Theatres New York, which serves 350 not for profit theatres, two of them are Cultural Institution Groups. One is the New York Shakespeare Festival, it gets \$2 million and one is Queens Theatre in the Park that gets about \$500,000. So I am aware of the needs of the small and the large CIGs. I also represent 348 programs including the Roundabout Theatre, the Manhattan Theatre Club, Playwrights Arise, Repertory Espanol, Mye Filipino Theatre Company, Carl Clay's Black Spectrum Theatre, Woody Kings New Federal Theatre. The list goes on.

Here's what I'm seeing, senior management is cutting their salaries, voluntarily. Mama Theatre to save money has created a furlough, Mondays they are closed. They can't afford the utilities and they can't afford the salaries. So people are getting paid for a four day week and they keep the theater open for is days because

they have performances on Saturday and Sunday.

They need one day when they don't have heat, hot water or electricity.

I would predict that 100 people in the theatre community are going to lose their jobs. Probably 300 actors are going to lose work because the number of productions are going to be cut. Cut productions mean fewer people going out to dinner, fewer people parking cars.

For the first time since the last recession I'm seeing my organizations putting their organizational expenses on their personal credit cards. This is a ticket to personal bankruptcy and we've seen what's happened with the recent credit crisis. They are doing it. I'm afraid for them.

I'm going to also say, even though I shouldn't, that I too felt very disenfranchised by what was said earlier by my own Council Member Tish James. There is a capital project in her district, mine, South Oxford Space. We're doing a renovation. It's modest but it's creating jobs in Brooklyn. We're hiring people in Brooklyn.

Also Theatre for New Audience is

not a new organization. They have been around for many years. They were invited to be part of the BAM cultural district and anybody who can raise \$12 million in capital funding in this environment, my hat goes off to them.

Last but not least, I don't like being pit against my CIG brothers and sisters. They do get foundation funding. They do have board members who I would kill for so please don't do this. I was with Inez Dickens in the elevator and she told me this was really a CIG hearing. I thought it wasn't. I thought it was a cultural hearing but she told me I had it wrong.

And Mr. Jackson, I'm glad you're here because I want to tell you that what I'm most concerned about is that one of our playwrights who is on a commission said he was going to stop writing his play because it had 18 characters and no theatre would produce it. If our playwrights stop dreaming, there's going to be nobody going to schools to tell our children to dream. Our children, many of them are from other countries and live in other boroughs aside from Manhattan, my son goes to one, have dreams, the American

Dream.

Program groups, CIGs, everything,
the libraries, we're all part of the American
Dream. I ask for an equitable restoration for all
of them. Thank you.

[Applause]

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: That was a
very, very.

MS. LALUTES: You left the room
purposely, right?

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: No, I didn't
leave the room--listen.

MS. LALUTES: You missed both of us
Domenic.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: My wife
called me because I was supposed to go pick up my
daughter and I said I'm stuck here at the City
Council.

MS. LALUTES: I'm stuck here,
thanks.

[Laughter]

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: No, no--
listen. This hearing is for cultural affairs and
we love all of our children the same. We treat

them all the same--

MS. LALUTES: [interposing] Well we weren't referenced the same.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Inez Dickens did not mean it that way. At the time--

MS. LALUTES: [interposing] No, she was pretty clear.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: At the time she was talking about CIGs.

MS. LALUTES: I took her in the elevator. I was late because I was in the elevator with her.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: All right Jenny. I just have to say this City Council and the Speaker, we love all the children the same. We fight evenly. Under this City Council, the programs have never been doing better.

MS. LALUTES: Because you put \$6 million into the theaters before. We know.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We love everybody the same and we work for everybody.

MS. LALUTES: But, we want to make sure that you continue to love us because we have lost so many jobs. I don't have time to see you

all the time.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I know.

Listen, we love you so much we even made sure Laurie was notified today to come.

MS. LALUTES: What?

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Nothing, a private joke.

MS. MUNN: Domenic, since you did leave the room I want to make sure you understand that we did, while you were out, recognize that the Council has been very, very fair. And that's not always been our history. Also, none of us in this field--the CIGs sitting in this room do not want to be pitted against the programs--

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: [interposing]
I know. That's why we are working hard.

MS. MUNN: We heard only three mentions of programs except from what you said early on. That was disconcerting. It was like we were back in Rudy Giuliani territory and--

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: [interposing]
All right. We don't want to talk about that.

MS. MUNN: We don't want it to go forward, no one in this room does.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: This administration, believe me, they really notice all the good work the program lines do and you're on their radar screen and we're working very hard.

MS. LALUTES: But we're suffering too.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Jenny, we hear it. Believe me, we know it and we fight hard. We're going to try to make everyone happy as best we could.

MS. LALUTES: You're not going to be able to make everyone happy, just know that.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I bet that we can make--

MS. LALUTES: [interposing] But you have to do it fairly.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: And that's exactly what we're doing.

MS. LALUTES: That's all I'm asking.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We're going to do it fairly.

MS. LALUTES: Because don't measure us by the ability for us to come to your office

because all my groups can't afford lobbyist. They pay me to speak for them and I pay somebody to help me speak for them. But they can't all afford somebody to help them.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: In this environment today you don't need consultants or lobbyists or whatever. Our doors are open to everyone to come visit us and we make a point of--

MS. LALUTES: [interposing] We're going to be visiting you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: My door's open. We welcome you. I'll supply the coffee. Call the next panel.

MS. LALUTES: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Gibb Serett from UAW and Edwina Martin from Legal Services New York City.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I just want you to know that this is the open public hearing of the executive budget so we take dearly with everyone. So now we're going to deal--welcome.

GIBB SERETT: I'm Gibb Serett from Legal Services Staff Association, it's a unit of the UAW. We're the unionized employees of Legal

Services in local 2320 where the unionized employees of Legal Services NYC, MFY, Housing Conservation Coordinators, Garden Riverside SRO Project and the Citywide Task Force. We do much of the same work as our sisters and brothers in Local 2325, the Civil Division and Legal Aid.

As you know, we do great good and we are cost effective. Yet, last year we were targeted for cuts and as then as now, it was initially at the behest of the Mayor. But those cuts wind up being proportionately and absolutely greater to our programs than to non-unionized programs. You will find the amounts of our losses cataloged in our leaflet, that's the bright yellow one.

Jobs and services were lost when they were most needed. Unionization and everything that goes with it can not be penalized again, even unintentionally. We must not be cut further. Our pogroms losses should be restored. And this is very important, in the same proportions as they occurred up to 2008 funding levels if possible. All this you have heard and understood and we appreciate it. We are very much

your partners and you've treated us that way and you've come to our rescue in the face of an uncaring executive time.

Again, because something else that you recognize is that you work very hard to create standards and rights for tenants, for the protection of tenants and the preservation of housing in the city. But you also recognize that without day to day struggle to enforce those rights, they don't amount to a great deal. So we do thank you for your support. Again, we need restoration, we need it proportional, up to 2008 levels if possible.

Again, I thank you on behalf of our members and I thank you for the sake of the people we serve.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you.

EDWINA MARTIN: Good afternoon Council Members Gentile, Weprin and Jackson. My name is Edwina Martin and I'm the Director of Communications and Government Relations for Legal Services NYC, the largest provider of free civil legal services to low income people in the nation. Our offices, located in every borough of the city,

have provided free legal help to people who have nowhere else to turn for over 45 years.

I am here today with my colleague Gibb Serrett to thank you for the opportunity for allowing us to speak to you at this hearing. To thank you as always for partnering with us to provide civil legal services to the poor and most importantly to ask you to restore the funding for the HPD anti eviction program to its fiscal year 2008 level.

Why is this program important in this difficult fiscal year? For almost 30 years the City Council has put funds into HPD to provide legal services to low and moderate income people faced with illegal eviction and displacement from their homes as well as to provide legal services for low income SRO tenants who face displacement. These programs have helped thousands of working poor, disabled and elderly in all the city's boroughs through direct representation of individuals and households and through counseling and training.

The benefits to the city are twofold. The elderly, disabled and working poor

who get legal help avoid the disasters of eviction and homelessness. And the city benefits financially because the people served stay out of city homeless shelters and out of city funding re-housing and social services programs, thus saving the city millions of dollars a year.

The provision of civil legal services to those that can not afford counsel is crucial to the fair administration of justice. In the past, the Council has stood firm in preserving the precious city funding for access to justice and we thank you for your work. However, in the final fiscal year 2009 adjusted budget funding for the HPD anti-eviction program was reduced by 25% from \$3 million to \$2.25 million. That has reduced our funding to provide legal services to 927 units of services and that includes full case representations, outreach sessions, trainings, tenant association meetings, et cetera.

This program was hit hard last year and on top of it in his proposed fiscal year 2010 budget, the Mayor has once again completely eliminated funding for this vital program. We urge the Council to restore the funding to the

fiscal year 2008 level of \$3 million for the HPD anti-eviction program. We are happy to take any questions from you now.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you very much. That's fine. The next panel consists of Arnold Leeman from the Brooklyn Museum and CIG, John Kaveli from the Wildlife Conservation Society also SIG, Julian Zioata from El Museo Del Barrio, Katherine LeClair from New York Ballet. Whoever wants to start.

ARNOLD LEEMAN: Thank you. Good afternoon Chairman Weprin and Chairman Recchia and to the members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, International and Intergroup Relations and the Finance Committee. I'm Arnold Leeman, Director of the Brooklyn Museum. For today's hearing, specifically as Chair of the cultural institution's group, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today in response to the proposed executive expense budget for fiscal year 2010.

I would also like to thank the members of this committee for your very strong and indeed passionate leadership. And support over

many years for the 33 extraordinary cultural institutions in every borough of the City of New York represented by the Cultural Institution Group and the critical contribution each and every CIG make to their surrounding community and to the city at large.

I'm testifying today on behalf of these 33 cultural institutions which are charged with and which provide exceptional stewardship for many of the most important New York City owned properties throughout the five boroughs. Among the CIGs are many of our city's cultural and neighborhood cornerstones. And proudly, a large number of the most respected arts, science and performing institutions in the world.

Our incredibly diverse programs and services attract 20 million New York residents, families, school children, teachers and international tourists each year. We provide them with a better understanding of the world, our nation and our neighborhoods for outstanding visual and performing arts, science and natural history, our cultural heritage and our shared experiences. Together we share an ongoing and

1
2 increasing obligation every year to the 2.3
3 million school children we serve on an annual
4 basis. To the nearly 11,000 people we employ and
5 to the communities across the city where we are
6 increasingly economic engines and neighborhood
7 stabilizers.

8 According to a 2005 study by the
9 Alliance for the Arts, the not for profit culture
10 sector contributes \$5.8 billion annually to the
11 city's economy. The same study found that the
12 cultural sector contributed \$904 million to the
13 city's revenues via personal taxes, sales and user
14 taxes and business taxes alone. All of us know
15 that the current national and local fiscal
16 challenge requires extremely difficult budgetary
17 decision making.

18 We believe, however, that the
19 fiscal 2010 executive budget unduly burdens a
20 sector of the city's economy, arts and culture,
21 all arts and culture, that is essential to
22 economic recovery. The Mayor's budget proposes an
23 \$18.1 million reduction in the CIG operating
24 budget support. These reductions are in addition
25 to the combined loss of funding in FY2008 and 2009

of nearly \$15 million more, which included Council initiatives, support for increased security and all new needs funding.

We are deeply concerned about the horrific impact these proposed cuts will have on the CIGs ability to provide essential services to students, seniors and communities that depend on us, now more than ever before. In the light of the reductions outlined above, institutions have been left with no choice but to cancel exhibitions, performances, programs, close galleries, reduce open hours, close days, increase entrance fees, reduce salaries and furlough and lay off hundreds and possibly several thousand employees and next.

CIG member institutions have already reported that in FY09 they have had to reduce their workforce by nearly 500 positions. Furloughs have already affected hundreds of CIG staff and there may be as many as 1,000 or more additional staff members that will be furloughed in the new fiscal year. Each of these jobs represents a person that only provided essential high quality services a their institution but who

contribute to the local economy and tax base.

Cultural institutions, not only serve and help people, they are people. We urge the Council to help fiscally stabilize the city's cultural institutions by adopting two following initiatives.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Are you almost finished?

MR. LEEMAN: Two more pages but may I have Julian has seated his time to me.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Oh, okay. No questions for Tish James.

MR. LEEMAN: Thank you. A restoration of the 25% to 26% cut to the CIG operating support, which is \$18 million and the restoration of former Council initiatives to maintain current jobs and restore CIG jobs of \$10 million. A significant investment by the City Council and this committee, in particular, is necessary to preserve the jobs and the countless programs they support.

One of the two critical elements that we propose is this job investment program. These funds were cut in FY09 and are critical to

the survival of the 33 members of the CIGs.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you very much. You finished? Oh, I thought you were finished.

MR. LEEMAN: I was trying to get through this Council Member Recchia.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay, okay.

MR. LEEMAN: The investment in these two programs translates into major economic returns, contributing to jobs, economic development and the vital support of the tourism industry. I believe that many of you already know our contributions as a CIGs to the economy and tax base. We return \$8 in economic activity for every dollar of city support invested. Indeed, the members of the Cultural Institutions Group is now more integral to the economic and social health and welfare of our city more than ever before.

I'm going to make one statement on behalf of the Museo del Barrio. A recent economic impact study conducted by the Harvard Business School for El Museo, located in East Harlem found that El Museo's overall economic impact during FY2005-2008 was in excess of \$120 million. The

city support for El Museo during that same time period was \$2.3 million. I think no clearer statement to the value of this investment by the city can be made and I thank you very much for indulging me in this statement.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: That report from Harvard Business School. I read that report. That is probably one of the best reports I have read that was written for a cultural institution and the impact it has, not only on the city but if you read the report about the impact it has on the surrounding community. It's a phenomenal report.

MR. LEEMAN: Thank you very much. I'm happy to take any questions.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We'll let everybody testify and then we'll take questions.

JOHN KAVELI: Good afternoon and thank you for this opportunity. My name John Kaveli and I am the Executive VP for Public Affairs for the Wildlife Conservation Society.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: You're on the clock.

MR. KALVELI: I'm on the clock and I'll be brief. I just want to run through a

couple of statistics for you to help make the point regarding the important economic impact that we have as an institution.

From our perspective we actually generate \$414 million in economic activity in 2008 alone, creating jobs, purchasing goods and pumping money into the cash registers of local businesses. Let me give you some specific examples of the economic impact of the Bronx Zoo and the Aquarium. We've had more than 4 million visitors at our facilities. The Bronx Zoo and the New York Aquarium are both located in underserved areas. WCS offers free Wednesday admission to all and then free Friday afternoon at the New York Aquarium. We are one of the largest employers of youth in the Bronx and in FY08 we hired 800 seasonal employees at the Bronx Zoo including students and retirees and people on public assistance.

Much of the impact on the local area, though, can not be measured by these quantitative measures alone. The Cultural Institution Group enhances and benefits the local community through its provision of education and

teacher training, its entertainment and recreation facilities and its community outreach programs. These work to improve the quality of life and attractiveness of New York City visitors and residents, particularly in largely underserved groups.

These two statistics shocked me but the Bronx Zoo and New York Aquarium serve 567,765 school and camp groups. And provided free access and community programs to 592,184 individuals in FY08. That's the type of impact of one of our institutions. I am here representing WCS but there are many other institutions within the CIG that can give you such numbers as well.

I will add with one other statistic. Since the economic downturn, we've had a 28% increase in our free day visitation. So people are coming to our parks right now because these are the places that they can go with their families. If I can leave you, though, with one thought I hope you will agree that funding culture is good for business and good for the people of New York. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you

very much.

MR. KAVELI: And I have 50 seconds left.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: That's all right. Arnold used it. Next. The Bronx Museum, how you doing?

HOLLY BLOCKUM: Good, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Good.

MS. BLOCKUM: Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak before the City Council and thank you for your continued support. I'm Holly Blockum, the Executive Director of the Bronx Museum. I worked as a curator at the Bronx Museum from 1985 to 1988. I did grow up on these cultural institutions. I have now been at the Bronx Museum for two and a half years.

We opened a brand new building. And we have a wonderful place to show off however, we very much need your support. I want you to know that the Museum is really seen as a free, safe zone in New York City, particularly in the Bronx. This has been an important challenge for us, a small museum but to work very closely with our partners and our colleagues and CIGs. These

funding cuts are huge and incredibly difficult for us to truly plan. It has an incredible impact.

The most recent outdoor street fair, 1,700 people attended, mostly from the community. First Fridays is a wonderful program similar to the Brooklyn Museum where Friday nights the museum is open late once a month where we can do programs. Citywide, national, international visitors come to visit our community as well as the museum to see the galleries and exhibitions. This is hugely important.

We annually serve 20,000 children, students, community residents, artists, general museum visitors who participate in school day, after school and weekend programs. 5,000 of these are comprised of Bronx K through 12 schools, teens, resident families. Approximately 95% of the museum's education attendance is under the ages of 21. 55% of education audience surveyed is from the Bronx Empowerment Zone. This past year we've seen an increase in visitation, 3% up from last year.

We had a record breaking, various cultural programs including openings. This is a

huge cut for our museum. 198,600, very important. The overall CIGs and colleagues provide a wide array of art, history and science. This is really important.

Then I'm just going to say that with these cuts the Museum is force to retrench, reduce work force this years, measures including instituting a hiring freeze through 2010, senior curator, plant manager, maintenance positions are vacant and not be filled. Cutting three part time security positions, laying off four full time security union positions, all are Bronx residents. Having all staff operate on a four day week schedule in order to save 20% of payroll.

The Museum is not operating thin, bare boned staff of 24. Existing staff are absorbing the responsibility of all of these positions and programs. We are now closed on Mondays with fewer days to serve the public, cancelling summer education programs.

I'm just going to end by hope that you will restore the projected 25% cut to the CIGs. Restore \$10 million in City Council initiatives to support jobs. Lastly, I do not

want to return to the 1970s with the economic crisis. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: New York City Ballet.

JONATHAN STAFFORD: Good afternoon Chairman Weprin, Chairman Recchia and distinguished committee members. My name is Jonathan Stafford. I'm a principal dancer with the New York City Ballet. I'm going to speak on their behalf today.

I have been employed full time by the company for the last 10 years. I am one of 100 dancers who are full time employees of the company, though next year our numbers will be down by 11 dancers. These dancers layoffs have been really tough on all of us because of our close knit community. Also because collectively we work 165 performances every year in New York City alone for 365,000 audience members, that is 23 weeks of 7 performances a week between November and June.

To put that into perspective, we perform as many times as our beloved Mets and Yankees play in the regular season. Plus we go out on tour when we're not dancing in New York.

Just like New York sports teams are among the top teams in the country, NYCB is one of the premier places to dance and to see dance in the country, some would even say the world.

In fact, I was just speaking to a gentleman the other night after one of our performances who lives and works in London and flies over here on a regular basis just to see the New York City Ballet perform. I have come across numerous people like this during my career who are proud to say that they schedule long trips to New York City just to come see the ballet and to experience New York City's diverse arts culture.

New York City Ballet also employs 63 musicians who play for every performance. Live music is especially important for a dance company to put on a truly exciting and dynamic performance. I have danced to taped music before and I always feel that something is missing because the energy that is created by a live orchestra really is what drives our performance. Just like professional athletes, our work demands a lot of our bodies. At NYCB we have physical therapists, a company doctor and other health

professionals who help take care of us.

My years at New York City Ballet have honestly been a dream come true. I came from a small town. I wasn't really sure if I wanted to be a professional dancer until I saw NYCB perform live for the first time. I can still remember the name of the ballet and the dancers that were performing it 13 years later. My experience has been even more special since my younger sister Abby also joined New York City Ballet. Now my parents get to come up to the big city and see their kids up there on that stage. It has been really special to share that with them.

We have made a point of reaching out to the local children in the city. New York City Ballet performs an extra few shows a year strictly for children from the local school system. Attendance is free and during the 2008 and 2009 school year 5,000 students from grade K through 12 and from all five boroughs were able to attend.

I have actually sat in the audience during a couple of these school shows and it's really fun to hear the gasps from the kids after

an impressive turn or jump. And to hear the ooo's and ahhh's when they see the girls in their beautiful costumes. It actually sounds a bit like a rock concert at the end of the show with all the children screaming and clapping. In some ways it's our favorite performance of the year because the audience really gives it to us. The company also puts on several productions a year like George Valentine's The Nutcracker and Capalia that include local children who get to perform alongside all of us, which is really exciting for them.

At New York City Ballet we understand there are many competing needs in difficult budget times. But the high quality and consistency of New York City Ballet's work and how it represents our home here in New York remains constant. Restoring support for our efforts will have a residual and long term effect on making possible the high standard we all expect of our longstanding cultural institutions. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you, any Council Members have any questions? Yes, com

Tish James from Brooklyn.

COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES: Just a comment. Obviously we recognize; you're preaching to the choir. We will stand up for cultural institutions because we recognize all of the benefits that you provide to the general public. We thank you for your service to the residents of the City of New York. It's now time for us to do our job. I'm confident that the members who are present here and those who were here earlier will do just that. I thank you. Mr. Leeman, my proposal to you still stands. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you very much. At this time we have a public address announcement. We will be moving the rest of this hearing into the committee room. There is an activity going on in the chamber so we will move into the committee room. Sorry.

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay, we'll continue the hearing. Call the next panel please. Sorry for the inconvenience.

COUNSEL: Marge Lyden, Lana Flores, Rita Meade, Ingrid Abrams.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Good

afternoon. For those of you who never testified before the City Council before, we ask that you state your name, if you're from an organization or you're here on behalf of an organization, state that organization that you're here on. Whoever would like to go first.

LANA FLORES: My name is Lana

Flores and I'm here on behalf of all the libraries, especially Brooklyn Public Library. As you see my daughter, the public library has a lot of impact on the children. So that's my plea. I volunteer at the Brooklyn Public Library where I conduct a story time session for children from birth to 5 years old. I'm also a library patron as I use the library as a source of reading material for me and my family. I'm sorry, I'm speaking through here because I have to get out.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: You're doing great. Don't worry about it.

MS. FLORES: I would like to

discuss my observation as a volunteer and a patron on what parents think and how the library is used. I hope you factored that when you considering on

the library funding decision. I have had many conversations with parents that attend my story time. Every one of them is grateful for the program and gets a tremendous amount of joy of attending the story time session with their children.

Many of the families that attend have only one parent working so the story time program provides a welcome relief as a free source of kid friendly entertainment. This will be especially important in the summer when kids are not in school. In addition, the Reading is Fundamental program has always been a great source of free books, which helps libraries promote the importance of early reading.

In addition, many children do not have a safe place to go after school because their parent works. As a result the parents or guardian directs the children to go to the library where the children will be in a safe environment and be able to get help with their school assignments. Libraries have become a safe haven for children who do not have anywhere else to go after school.

About a month ago I came across one

such child. I met her outside the branch that closed early because their heating system went down. I asked her why she did not go home and she told me that her mother works and didn't have a key for the home. During the day I noticed how the usage among adults has increased. Some people tell me that they were recently laid off and they use the library resources to aid them as they search for work. The library offers training in computer literacy, GED programs and many other valuable job search resources.

My own experience with the library began with me brining my daughter, Marielle, that's her name, there for story time. With the help of the librarians I learned how to teach my daughter pre-literacy skills. I found various story time program because it helped my daughter learned the alphabets, numbers, colors, shapes and the name of the animals.

I decided to volunteer about a year ago when I noticed that the cut backs were leaving some libraries understaffed and unable to conduct story time. The Librarian was supportive and encouraged me to further develop the story time

program. On library in particular, Ms. Kristine mentioned to me and encouraged me to pursue a graduate degree in library science. With her support I enrolled into graduate school of Library and Information Studies over at Queens College.

As you can see the librarians at Brooklyn Public Library are very valuable assets to the community and I urge you to reconsider cutting funding. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you very much. Next. We're going on the clock so everybody will have two minutes. Are we ready with the clock? If you would like to submit your written testimony, is that a copy?

RITA MEADE: Thank you. Yes.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Go ahead.

MS. MEADE: We're a bunch of librarians up here. I don't think we could say it any better than that. So I'll try to keep it brief. My name is Rita Meade. I'm a children's librarian for Brooklyn Public Library at the Pattigat Branch in Canarsie. I'm also a Bay Ridge resident so I like to thank Council Member Gentile for his tireless support of the library.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: He's the library king in New York City.

MS. MEADE: I know. I couldn't be happier to live in Bay Ridge.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: He goes all over. You will find him everywhere you go.

MS. MEADE: I just want to read a letter that a nine year old patron wrote when I was speaking to him and he heard about the library cuts and he was very upset. I didn't help him with this at all, no one else did. He wrote it right in front of me. He was very inspired. I did help him with spelling because we mailed it out.

This is to Mayor Bloomberg. Dear Mayor Bloomberg. I don't want you to close down the library. This is where I come to read books and get information. Library teachers mean a lot. A lot of nice people work here. They help me find books and do homework. The library is a quiet place to read and do homework. I would be really sad if you close the libraries of Brooklyn. Please don't close the libraries. I love it and so do other people. From Ethan age 9.

It is my sincere hope that Mayor Bloomberg gets this message. We've heard a lot today about what the cuts are going to do in terms of library services and programs. We know how detrimental it will be to the city. So for the sake of New York City residents young and old, I just want you to keep fighting the good fight for libraries. Thank you. Rita Meade.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Rita, did you speak recently at the community board also?

MS. MEADE: Yes, I spoke right before you got there.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: That's right. Great, good work.

MS. MEADE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you very much. Next.

INGRID ABRAMS: My name is Ingrid Abrams. I am a children's librarian. First at the Midwood Branch but now I'm at the Greenpoint Branch. It's hard for me to explain how important libraries are to the community since the library is such a huge part of my life. But for anyone who doesn't understand how important libraries

are, I invite them to come to my branch in Greenpoint. I invite them to come early in the morning when I see the stroller parade coming for our free programs for toddlers, babies, parents and their caregivers.

Sometimes we have so many children that we have to turn some of them away. Sometimes we have so many children that we do two classes back to back. Before New York City school system sees children in their first five years, the public library is there to see children in the first five years. It's so developmentally crucial.

Our programs help encourage a love of reading. We also spark a lifelong intellectual curiosity. We increase their vocabularies. We build social skills and we even help them with their growth and fine motor development. We are there getting them ready for schools, preparing them to be better students.

When the schools were closed, when the snow was coming down, BPL was open with our doors open for children who had no other place to go. When schools were closed because of the swine

flu, we were there with antibacterial soap and tissues, waiting for them. We're also there for schools who don't have libraries of their own.

Libraries are so much more than shelves of books and rows of computers. It's the dedicated staff that breathes the life into the library. A library is also the programs that we provide and the care and dedication we have for our communities and their needs. If anyone thinks libraries are a luxury, I invite them to our branch at Greenpoint and you'll see that we're a necessity. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you.

ERIC BOBLIN: Hi, my name is Eric Boblin and I'm a young adult librarian for the Brooklyn Public Library. It has been my pleasure to work in the Ocean Hill neighborhood of Bedford Stuyvesant for the last year and a half. I'm fortunate enough to have some nice things being said about the library today that I don't need to reproduce those statistics and all that information. So I think I will be able to keep it short.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We'd love

that.

MR. BOBLIN: It's not my usual style but I'll do it here. I just want to provide you with a little extra fire for the fight that you have ahead of you in securing a more equitable budget for us. I just want to say, and I think you know it, that for the economically depressed areas such as the one where I work at Saratoga, the library is really the only place for a lot of people to go, especially teenagers which is the group I work with most but for job seekers and for anyone, for seniors, for the homeless who end up spending large portions of the day at the library but more than that the library is a space.

I don't know the best way to phrase it but the library is the answer to the unformed question in the minds of a great many citizens of this city. We not only form that question for them but we help them find ways to answer it. I know that the budget for this city is under fire this year but a great bit of what has been accomplished in the city and what will remain to be done in this city will be inaccessible if the libraries aren't preserved at the present level

because it becomes so hard just to navigate within the city towards a great many resources that are available.

From personal experience and just reflecting again on the hours of operation, I had a family come in right before we closed or actually right as we were closing at 8:00 pm on our late night. It was two parents and their child and they've just been evicted from their apartment. They showed up on our doorstep and were looking for a shelter to go to. I imagine you're all familiar with how you have to actually go through central booking in order to get into a shelter. But it's actually a fairly complicated process and you need to know how to do it.

I was fortunate enough to have gone through that with patrons in the past that I was able to dispense that information to them. That's basically the point that I wanted to make in closing is that--

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Time's up.
Say one last thing.

MR. BOBLIN: Okay. Is that it's
just we are the place they go when they have the

questions and we have to be open in order to do that.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you very much. Next.

MARGE LYDEN: Good afternoon. My name is Marge Lyden and I'm a volunteer adult literacy tutor at the Bronx Library Center of the New York Public Library. I appreciate having this opportunity to speak before the Council on behalf of my students and fellow volunteers.

I recently came across a quote from Emily Brookwald, a children's book publisher. She stated, children are made readers on the laps of their parents. I thought but what about those children whose parents can't read. Roughly half of my students have told me that reading to and helping their children was their main goal and reason for coming to our center. One teary eyed father asked me if I could imagine what he felt when his three year old son placed a book in his lap and asked him to read a story. He had to tell his child, go ask your mother. Now this father proudly read Green Eggs and Ham.

Other students come to us with

different immediate goals. These include getting a better job and completing applications for bank accounts, apartments and jobs. Some want to be able to read letters from family or notices from their children's schools. They need help deciphering signs on streets and buildings and in airports. Some want to obtain drivers licenses or citizen papers. Others express difficulty communicating with doctors, reading prescription and food labels, understanding insurance forms and interpreting health consumer information.

As you can see the impact of functional illiteracy on the day to day lives of adults is wide reaching, limiting and sometimes dangerous. As a former health care professional I find the deficiencies in health literacy to be particularly troublesome. At the Bronx Library Centre the goals, interests and lives of our students and are reflected in the materials we use.

Volunteers are facilitators, providing literacy instruction to small groups of adult learners. Although class time is limited we often touch base with each student individually to

1
2 assess progress and to revise approaches and
3 techniques. Individual instruction via computer
4 phonics and language programs also enhances
5 independent learning. Our student population is
6 culturally diverse, a mixture of native and
7 foreign born. They bring with them a wealth of
8 experience and knowledge but sometimes lack the
9 necessary literacy skills to reach their goals.

10 Because of the high demands, some
11 of our students have had to wait up to six months
12 to gain a coveted seat at our center. Many
13 students tell me that if they could choose to live
14 anywhere in the world they would choose New York
15 City. I agree. They are amazed at the
16 opportunity the city affords their children and no
17 opportunity is more valued than the education of
18 literacy services.

19 Many of the students, especially
20 the women, have never had the opportunity to
21 attend school in their native lands. I believe
22 that the individual with newly acquired solid
23 literacy skills is not the only one who accrues
24 benefits. Literacy is a paid forward asset. The
25 parent who has learned to read as an adult has

modeled for his or her child the value of an education.

The community also benefits as these men and women acquire better jobs and learn to navigate more wisely the health and financial systems. I am so pleased with my experience in the reading and writing center. It's gratifying to see someone make measurable progress in their journey to literacy. And the students are pleased with their own progress and see reason for hope and change in their lives.

I told my students that I was coming here today and asked them if there was anything they wanted me to tell you. Besides detailing their individual achievements they had two comments. They hope the city will find a way in these challenging financial times to continue its commitment and financial support to their literacy program. And they wanted to say thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you very much. Thank you all for coming out.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Thank you for taking the time to come down. Call the next

panel.

COUNSEL: Martha Krespil, Frederick Bloom, Edward Plummer, Audrey Harkins.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Ms. Harkins do you want to start?

AUDREY HARKINS: Good afternoon and I know you're tired right now but thank you very much for having us here today. My name is Audrey Harkins. I am a volunteer at the New Amsterdam Branch of the public library at Number 9 Murray Street. Normally I'd be putting books on shelves today or talking to our clients but I'm sitting for the library.

Reading is one of the most important acts that any of us will ever accomplish. It is the key to our survival. Reading is enjoying a good book. Reading is trying to get through the instructions for the do it yourself kit that you bought that said if you can read this you can put it together in ten minutes. Reading is filling out an application for a job and we have many clients who come in to our library now and ask us for all kinds of help.

We are user friendly and we give

you all of our time and attention. We are basically your top, bottom and all the lines in between. Now I know that you people aren't the ones that cut the budget but we urge you to urge the Mayor to keep the library budget intact and thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: We can be the ones that stop them from cutting the budget.

MS. HARKINS: Beg your pardon.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: I said,

MS. HARKINS: Well, please do so.

{Chuckles} Thank you very much.

FREDERICK BLOOM: Good evening, my name is Rick Bloom, no relation although I am from New England and I did think New England was the cultural capital of the world until I moved here. And I'm not leaving. I'm not here today to protest, provoke any negative feelings on the said proposals but to speak out on the advantages of keeping the libraries at their current schedules.

I am currently a product of what most Americans are fearing most, unemployed, an ex-Wall Streeter. However, I was in administrative support so I bear no involvement

and why we are where we are today. I created revenue. If I may quote Star Trek, the public library is the final frontier for free learning. It's no longer an electronic warehouse for books. It's an electronic free learning center.

In these troubling economic times, records of numbers of New Yorkers are going to the library more than ever, unemployed people, children, et cetera. At some point in February at the end of a fruitless job search, at the end of the rope I volunteered at my public library. Worlds have been opened up for me. Originally I was put on as two days a week. I am now four days a week, hedging on five. Maybe I have a good back, I don't know.

But I feel very passionate about what I do. It gives me a reason to get up in the morning, to practice my working skills, to learn new skills until I do secure employment. In closing I implore you to think about what's at stake here. New York City has a population of close to 9 million. We can not close free public learning institutions at this time. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you

very much.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: I appreciate it, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Next.

MARTHA KRESPIL: My name is Martha Krespil. I go to the Bronx in Kingsbridge to read and write. I'm a little nervous. I hope you keep on. This is my second time I come here. The library helped me a lot to read and write. I come for other students that could not come today, all different people who come to learn and write.

I'm very proud to be here for the library. I hope you keep on helping us because we take our books out to learn how to read more and we write a little better and our tutors help us a lot. That's all I have to say.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Thank you. This is your second time so you're experienced now, right?

MARTHA KRESPIL: I still get a little bit nervous.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Great job. I'm just so impressed about the number of people who took their own time to come here today to talk

about libraries on their own time. Mr. Chairman, thank you. New panel?

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: We have a new panel. Joseph Garber, Virginia Franco, Katherine Tripani and Roxanne Rios. We'll read the rest also. Some people may have left. Lynn Serpy, Eric Boblin, if I screw up the name I'm having trouble with some of the handwriting, Kathleen Casey, Dee Damusis, Patricia Deans. Is there anybody else that hasn't filled out a slip that wants to testify? Speak now or forever hold your peace. Okay, Mr. Garber.

JOSEPH GARBER: Good afternoon Chair Weprin, Chair Gentile, Chair Jackson, members of the Council staff and members of the public. My name is Joseph Garber. I'm a resident and a resident leader in the New York City Housing Authority and I will confine my remarks regarding the first hearing of this morning, the New York City Housing Authority.

I'd like to first want to echo everybody's praise of Chairman Ricardo Elias Morales for his stellar, superb performance as the interim Chair for December 15th through 24:00 May

31st. He was a hands on take charge administrator who took decisive action on numerous fronts, his interrogation of directors of NYCHA at the board meeting to ensure that they were completely familiar with all the items which they were presenting. I'd like to discuss various concepts now.

On page one of the Chairman's testimony it states that NYCHA has a portfolio of 178,400 apartments. However, on page 13 of the draft annual plan released by NYCHA on May 4th it states 180,244 and in the Council briefing it states 181,000. So I definitely think everybody has to get their figures straight. It also states that NYCHA now has 338 developments. I don't know where this figure came from because in the annual plan release on May 4th it stated 340 and last year's annual plan, which was filed to HUD on October 17, 2008 it stated 343. So I really think this has to be looked at.

There are 403,000 legal residents. This has to be pointed out. The unknown number of residents that are not legal is infinite item and therefore we're losing a lot of money from not

collecting proper rents. On page four of the draft annual plan that was as of April 27th it stated that 1,206 Section 8 transitions took place from city and state developments to the federal government.

There was a lot of discussion this morning regarding the Section 3. I attend board meetings regularly and Section 3 is covered very strongly by the board. They interrogate the respective directors in capital to ensure how many Section 3 residents are being hired. And the board has stated they're not happy with the results.

Now this morning Commissioner Lopez testified on use and on proper designation regarding resident employment. She said the employment department. There's no such a thing in the NYCHA organizational structure as employment department. It's called Resident Employment Services, which are located at 350 Livingston Street. On page 3 of the testimony it states reassign provisional managers to non-managerial positions. As a Director of the Civil Service Merit Council, I am concerned if there were

provisionals over the mandatory nine month
provisional status, were any civil service--

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: [interposing]
Mr. Garber, can you sum up because--okay.

MR. GARBER: I just want to finish.
Nobody else has spoken about the Housing Authority
so I just want to. On page six it states that all
meetings--the town hall meetings. Please be
advised that so far we've had two town hall
meetings. There are three town hall meetings
scheduled and there's also the public hearing.

It also should be noted that
there's a new document called the revised cost of
location plan. Now Councilwoman Brewer was
concerned on how many employees are in information
and technology. The total is 256 and the total
number of NYCHA employees is 11,644. I suggest
that the Finance Committee and the sub committee
on Public Housing do an analysis where are these
11,644 employees assigned. Because I still feel
it's top heavy and duplicative units and I just
want to illustrate.

For instance you have a group of
units, you have GDM in charge of administration.

Then you have Facility Planning and Administration. You have a unit called Budget and Financial Plan, then you have a unit called Accounting of Fiscal Services, then you have a unit called Risk Finance and Analysis, then you--

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: [interposing]
Can you sum up, please? We understand there's a lot of duplication.

MR. GARBER: Yes, that's what I want to highlight. I don't believe that NYCHA has really eliminated all the redundant, bureaucratic functions.

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Okay, thank you.

MR. GARBER: Thank you.

KATHERINE TRIPANI: Good afternoon.
My name is Katherine Tripani and I'm from New Destiny Housing Corporation. I'll also be making some remarks about the Housing portion of this morning's hearings. I've prepared some written testimony but I do want to make some brief points today with respect to some time limits.

NYCHA does have a domestic violence priority available to applicants that can prove

their status as DV victims. However, only 2% of households exiting the domestic violence emergency shelter system left a shelter for NYCHA Section 8 or NYCHA public housing apartment, even though 38% have the required documentation for that priority. That low placement rate is due to the long processing times with these applications coupled with the short maximum length of stay in the emergency shelters. We would like to see resources dedicated to the processing of applications specifically from domestic violence shelters to better align the processing time with the length of stay to improve outcomes.

Also, HPD has a smaller Section 8 program designed to help re-house those living in homeless shelters. In October of 2007 the domestic violence shelter system was awarded 10% share of the homeless housing resources and used up the entire allocation by December of 2008. Since exhausting those resources in December, no new HPD resources have been available to the domestic violence shelters, leaving many families who don't qualify for other permanent housing programs with no resources to safely move on from

shelter. We therefore do request that DV shelters once again be given a 10% share of any new homeless housing resources from HPD.

Such housing programs are of vital importance at this time in New York City's history. The demand for domestic violence shelters has increases since last year. But while the number of those who need domestic violence shelter has increased, the fact remains that during calendar year 2008 only 14% of households exited the emergency domestic violence shelter system with permanent housing.

If efficiencies could be found in the application process for NYCHA public housing and NYCHA Section 8 and if HPD's resources were made available to domestic violence shelters, we believe that outcomes could be markedly improved, thus reducing homelessness and offering life saving stability to survivors of domestic violence, who if allowed to remain homeless as so many do at the end of their shelter stays could be forced back into dangerous situations. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you.

LYNN SERPY: hello, my name is Lynn Serpy and I live in Astoria, Queens. I want to thank Council Member Gentile in particular because when I called your staff asking for the library section on the executive budget he emailed it to me within three minutes. But I want to thank the other Council Members who are still here as well. I know it's a long day.

I am a regular library user and read almost a book a day. I often go there to check the internet and to use the printing services as well. My community garden uses the library to hold our community garden meetings. We've heard today about a lot of the different uses of the library so I don't want to go too much in detail. I actually want to talk about the numbers on the page.

I was initially really shocked to see that the adult literacy was down \$1.3 million but then I noticed that was in the non-city funding column. So I decided not to focus too much on that. Instead I wanted to focus on the two and a half times increase in the energy costs, which I just don't understand. You're going from

a \$700,000 energy cost to a \$1.7 million energy cost and yet you're reducing hours and service. How can you have a two and a half times increase in your energy costs when you have decreased open hours? It makes no sense to me.

So I came here more with a question. At a time when the city is talking about greater, greener buildings, why is it that our libraries, our municipal buildings are having such a drastic increase in energy costs? For me, libraries are the ultimate in reuse, particularly libraries are all about reuse of books and materials.

To me, they can be a model of sustainability. What better place than our public library to teach those lessons about conservation, which is not just a good green idea than economic reality for so many of us. What better place than libraries to teach those lessons to New Yorkers of all ages?

But I would very much like to know why there is such a drastic increase in energy sources. So I'm very happy that you're here Council Member Gentile. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: That's a good point and I don't have an answer.

MS. SERPY: It's \$1 million increase.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: Okay, we'll check that out.

MS. SERPY: Great.

DEE DAMUSIS: Hi, my name is Dee Damusis and I am speaking for Mr. Ed Palmer who had to leave. We're in a little library in Hell's Kitchen called the Columbus Branch. For me, I'm a senior. I got terminated from my job three years ago. That library is as much for my body as it is for my soul. It gives me a purpose to get out every day. I'm going to be 68 in September but I'll be damned if I'm ready for the grave or the rocking chair.

I go in to use internet services, printing. I live in an SRO on the corner of Eighth Avenue and 46th Street. What Columbus does for me can not be described in words Mr. Gentile; I can not. All I can say is please in the name of God and all that's good and holy, don't cut us off. Seniors use it. Mothers with little babies

use it. Teenagers use it.

If I didn't have that library branch--where I live I have a laptop in my house that has wireless but I can't get any reception. That library connects me with people around the world. It gets me necessary resources that I need for my English classes because I teach at the Brooklyn Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. The materials that are available to me at my little local branch can not--they're just wonderful.

I can't afford to buy anything myself. If I'm cut off from my library branch I don't know what I am going to do personally and I'm just one person. So I'm just giving you a basically little short, impassioned speech. Don't cut the budget.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: I just want to make it clear that we're considering here the Mayor's proposed cuts to the budget. We, as the City Council, negotiate that. We want to hear from the public as to what you feel will be the impact of the Mayor's cuts. So just to characterize it the right way; this is the Mayor's proposed cuts.

MR. DAMUSIS: Please pass the word up the pipeline because without you, we can't do it.

PATRICIA DEANS: Good evening. My name is Patricia Deans. I live in Brownsville, which for me for the duration of my tenure it makes me wonder if it's politics of inclusion or if it's politics of exclusion. I'm amazed at what happens in my community. I'm here on behalf of the library because I think it's one of the only institutions that's in the community that's functioning up to par. When I got downsized in 1993 after working 30 years in healthcare I was devastated at what was happening in our schools. I don't see the new system in terms of education being an improvement over what it was. I think that across the board we need to think more in terms of equity for all people, not just some people.

Sometimes I feel like you give people your all, you give them beauty but they in turn give you ashes. I think that to live in an area at one time in 1993 when I was downsized Brownsville looked like a forgotten city. It

1
2 looked like the city dump. Across the street from
3 every school you had nothing but garbage. Now
4 you're starting to clear that up but then the
5 people are at risk. I come from North Carolina
6 where I had a dad who built a house, brick, cement
7 blocks, steel case windows. Nothing had to be
8 improved in 50 years except the roof. I don't
9 understand for \$4,700 he built that.

10 Why do we have our people living in
11 shelters. Why is it that we can't get equity when
12 it comes to the basic services, across the board
13 for all people? You have less than, you have
14 greater than, but at least have than. We have to
15 have something for the next generation of
16 children. That freedom is not a conquest, it's a
17 bequest. By virtue of being we all have a right
18 to be and that's an exercise in whatever direction
19 people want to pursue in their life, they should
20 have the opportunity.

21 So I'm here today on behalf of
22 Brownsville and Stone Avenue Library because I
23 think it's very important that they remain as they
24 are. Thank you.

25 [Applause]

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: You make good points, good points.

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you all for coming. The Finance Committee is going to be adorned until Monday morning at 10:00.

KATHY CASEY: Excuse me. I'm one of the people, I didn't get my chance to testify yet.

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Oh, you didn't get a chance to testify.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: I'm sorry.

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Okay, you got it in at the last minute then, go ahead.

MS. CASEY: No, I signed up at 1:25.

CHAIRPERSON GENTILE: I'm sorry about that.

MS. CASEY: I was called but there wasn't enough room at the table.

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: No problem, no problem. Go ahead. The roll is still open.

MS. CASEY: I'm Kathy Casey. As always I'm in favor of keeping all public libraries open seven days a week, 12 hours a day.

However, not all of our public libraries truly are public. The NYPL branch libraries are controlled by a self perpetuating, multi millionaire board of trustees who know and care nothing about the people who use those branch libraries.

I'm confident that sufficient number of Council Members who will refuse to go back to the - - drill of the library budget dance. I'm here today to talk about the elephant in the living room though I may be the only person who mentions it as I was the only person during this budget hearing last May. From now on my remarks relate to the closing of the Donnell Library and the billion dollar so called one library plan using taxpayer dollars but with no public input or even knowledge.

The unique world languages collection has been largely destroyed with the large majority of the books irreplaceably removed from the collection. This is a criminal harm and a tragic loss to our city's immigrants and to many other people. Teenagers are deprived of any central library for them in Manhattan for most of the school year and will continue to be deprived

of most of teen central indefinitely if not forever. Children, families and teachers were deprived of any central children's room for most of the fall semester.

Gentile and Recchia have shamelessly evaded their responsibilities to stop the profligate waste, wrong doing and incompetence with taxpayer money and public assets by the New York Public Library board and overpaid executives. Council Members of intelligence and integrity must take the lead, one to investigate and publicize what was done to destroy the Donnell Library.

Two, to renew the World Languages Collection, three to replace teen central fully in a Midtown location, four to restore a branch library for the tens of thousands of people who live, work and visit near the Donnell Library building every day, many of them commuting from Brooklyn and Queens on the E Train. And five to retain and fully use for cultural programs the outstanding well equipped auditorium that was part of the Donnell Library.

City Council should use its power to make the NYPL board of trustees accountable to the taxpayers who mainly fund the branch

libraries. The Council should do so by refusing to vote a single dollar for the NYPL budget for the 2010 to 2011 fiscal year unless NYPL agrees to sell the Donnell Landing building back to the city for \$1 each. If the Orient Express Hotel purchase contract is not fulfilled by full payment on the start of construction in calendar 2009--I'll summarize.

Then legislation should be put in place to form a citizen and immigrant task force to study and advise on the desirability of replacing the three, actually, private and unaccountable public library systems with a single city department, parallel to the Department of Parks, the Department of Cultural Affairs or the larger Department of Education.

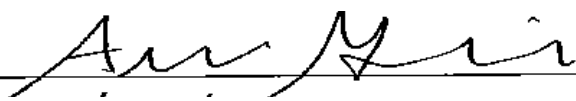
PlaNYC includes the goal of having a city park within 10 blocks of every residential building. The word library appears nowhere in PlaNYC. All New York City residents need truly public libraries just as much as we need truly public parks.

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you.
The Finance Committee is now going to adjourn

until Monday morning at 10:00 when we're going to
hear from the Department of Finance.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Amber Gibson, certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature 

Date June 29, 2009