

**Testimony before the  
New York City Council  
Committees on Criminal Justice and Finance  
Chair Sandy Nurse  
Chair Justin Brannan**

**By  
Lynelle Maginley-Liddie, Commissioner  
NYC Department of Correction**

**May 17, 2024**

Good morning, Chair Nurse and members of the Committee on Criminal Justice. I am Lynelle Maginley-Liddie, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Correction (“Department” or “DOC”). My colleagues and I are here to discuss the Department’s Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2025 and what lies ahead for the agency in the coming fiscal year.

I have spoken often in the past five months about the importance of leading with empathy and respect, so that both staff and people in custody feel seen and supported. My commitment to these principles has not waived, and our dedicated workforce remains actively engaged in the difficult work of change. All uniformed and non-uniformed leadership continue to tour the jails on a regular basis, myself included. Focus groups with both staff and people in custody have provided us the opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue and feedback to address concerns and inefficiencies. We have begun the important process of auditing our compliance with minimum standards, to ensure people in our care have what they are entitled to and what they

deserve. I am confident that the insight and recommendations born of this audit process will inform measurable change and contribute to safer and more humane jails.

Though admissions continue to increase, important violence indicators continue to trend in the right direction. Our court production rate remains at 98 percent, and we continue to work with stakeholders throughout the criminal justice system to address case processing, to ensure people can move through the justice process expediently and do not linger in our jails. We remain focused on recruiting and promoting staff to do this important work. Two new classes of Captains began training since we appeared at our Fiscal Year 2025 Preliminary Budget Hearing, and 50 Captains are expected to graduate on the same day as the 78 recruits in our current new recruit Correction Officer class. We are proud to welcome our new members of service to the Boldest family, and to support their growth in the Department, and we are committed to mentoring and guiding those ascending in ranks. Last week was National Correction Officers and Employee Week, during which we honored uniformed and non-uniformed staff and celebrated our collective work and achievements. Together, with humility and compassion, the men and women of DOC are showing up every day to serve the people in our care and to build safer and more humane jails. They deserve to be recognized and celebrated.

Finally, before turning to the budget, I would like to highlight an exciting project that we recently completed at the Rose M. Singer Center ("RMSC"). Just last week, we opened a family friendly, interactive visitation space in RMSC, designed in collaboration with the Children's Museum of Manhattan ("CMOM"). CMOM has been a long-time partner in providing innovative, family friendly visitation opportunities for individuals in custody and their loved ones. We are very grateful for their ongoing support in this work. The interactive installations in the visit area

were designed by CMOM and based on exhibits currently at the museum. They are research-based and support preschool learning while providing fun and engaging bonding activities for mothers and their children. Incarceration can leave lasting scars on families, and my team and I are committed to lessening the impacts of incarceration wherever we can. Visitation areas like the ones provided by CMOM support parents and children in maintaining a pivotal bond and provide elements of normalcy during a challenging time. This partnership is a shining example of what we can achieve when we work together for the benefit of those in our care.

### **The Department's Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget**

Now I will turn to the fiscal year 2025 Executive Budget. The Department's FY25 budget is \$1.05 billion, which is a \$116.5 million dollar decrease from the FY24 Adopted Budget. The vast majority of our budget – 84 percent – is allocated for Personal Services ("PS"), and 16 percent for Other than Personal Services. This budget decrease was achieved through various PS PEGs the Department realized in the November and Preliminary budgets. Several items of note from this Executive Budget:

- 1) An addition of \$358 thousand in FY25 to purchase specialized transport vehicles for the Bellevue Therapeutic Outpost Unit;
- 2) An increase of \$5.0 million in FY24 for the Department's Nutritional Services Division food budget;
- 3) An additional \$40.0 million in FY24 to cover anticipated PS expenses;

### ***Capital Funding***

The FY25 Executive Capital Budget and Commitment Plan totals \$13.7 billion, which covers Fiscal Years 2024 through 2033. This reflects a \$2.8 billion increase from the Preliminary

Plan. As of the FY25 Executive Budget, the majority of capital funding is tied to the borough-based jails program which totals \$12.7 billion over the ten-year plan and is allocated as follows:

- Brooklyn Facility - \$2.8 billion
- Manhattan Facility - \$2.0 billion
- Bronx Facility - \$3.3 billion
- Queens Facility - \$4.4 billion

### ***Headcount***

We continue to work diligently to attract and retain non-uniformed and uniformed staff. The Department's authorized headcount remains effectively unchanged from the Adopted Budget totaling 8,787; 7,060 uniformed positions and 1,727 civilian positions. Our actual staffing levels continue to remain well below our authorized headcount and the Department intends to remain aggressive with advertising and marketing strategies to promote recruitment.

### **Conclusion**

I will continue to champion our staff, to uplift and serve those in our care, and drive the change that is so deeply needed. The Executive Budget gives us the resources to continue to work towards our shared priorities and reforms, and I look forward to the year ahead. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My team and I are available to answer your questions.



**STATEMENT OF JUANITA N. HOLMES,  
COMMISSIONER OF THE NYC DEPARTMENT OF  
PROBATION**

**BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEES ON  
FINANCE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

**May 17, 2024**

Good morning Speaker Adams, Chair Brannan, Chair Nurse and members of the Council. I am Juanita N. Holmes, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Probation (DOP). Accompanying me today are Deputy Commissioners Bridget Hamblin and Andrea McGill, as well as other members of our executive team. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to discuss the important work undertaken by the Department of Probation and our executive budget for fiscal year 2025.

The New York City Department of Probation stands in the forefront of community corrections. Committed to a transformative mission, we are dedicated to integrating accountability with a robust support system that enhances community and family ties for those under probation supervision. By providing tailored educational and employment opportunities, we aim to improve our clients' life skills. Our Probation Officers craft personalized interventions and supervision plans, deeply informed by an understanding of each client's unique circumstances and support networks. By cultivating trust and fostering positive relationships, it is DOP's responsibility to ensure effective supervision that significantly contributes to the safety and well-being of our city.

For Fiscal Year 2025, the Department of Probation has an Executive Budget of \$110.6 million dollars as compared to our Fiscal Year 2024 Adopted Budget of \$119.9 million dollars. This is an 8.4% or \$9.3 million

reduction. Of the Executive Budget, \$72.6 million is for Personal Services and \$37.9 million is for Other-Than-Personal Services. \$86.2 million are City tax levy funds, \$14.9 million are state funds, \$6.3 million are intra-city funds and \$3.15 million are grant funds.

The Department of Probation has a total budgeted headcount of 1,081 individuals, of which 611 are in the title of Probation Officer and 183 are in the title of Supervising Probation Officer, however DOP's total actual headcount is at 832, down 23% or 249. In the title of Probation Officer, our actual headcount is 389, down 36% or 222, and in the title of Supervising Probation Officer, our actual headcount is 169, down 8% or 14. As it stands, workforce attrition presents a challenge to the Department, however we are steadfastly prepared to overcome it.

In contrast, in FYTD2024, DOP has provided supervision to 3,378 new adult clients, which is a 17% increase from the 2,828 in FYTD2023. Fiscal year to date 2024, DOP has provided supervision to 955 juveniles, which is a 28% increase from the 688 in FYTD2023. Despite these hurdles, we continue to prioritize our mission and our clients through effective case management and programming.

Our Probation Officers overseeing adult clients, typically, handle around 50 cases, on average. Each of these cases are unique – requiring different court mandated conditions and supervision levels. Consequently, our Probation Officers are required to continually evaluate and prioritize their cases. For this reason, DOP has placed an emphasis on strengthening case management within our agency. We have created branches within our Operations Divisions specifically for individuals who were sentenced to probation as a result of a firearm or sex offense charge and require intense engagement supervision. Additionally, we have integrated our ICM program across every borough, expanding our ability to handle more cases. Assigning cases to specific branches and highlighting their priority level assists in streamlining the management of our caseloads. DOP is also intent on upgrading our case management systems to reflect the information and data that is helpful in determining resources allocation,

compliance and outcomes. These efforts aid DOP in managing internal efficiencies and promote effective supervision.

Notably, DOP has secured approval to hire an additional 100 Probation Officers and has recently submitted a PAR for an additional 150 more. To enhance probation officer recruitment, DOP is engaging in ongoing discussions with DCAS to increase the frequency of the probation officer exam. Additionally, DOP plans to refine the notice of exam to establish clearer and more constructive requirements. Our recruitment strategy has also become more focused, with efforts including attendance at hiring halls, schools and career fairs. We are also modernizing recruitment methods by integrating approaches such as the use of QR codes and using tablets, allowing for DOP to assist individuals wanting to apply on site.

We are also strengthening the skills of our Probation Officers by revolutionizing the training our Probation Officers receive in our academy. This new curriculum, crafted with insights from feedback from DOP employee focus groups, emphasizes case management, compliance with our code of conduct, and technical proficiency along with other state required peace officer courses. Each recruit is now provided with a laptop to facilitate access to the Department's Caseload Explorer training site, where they gain insight into case management protocols and are receiving firsthand experience of an officer's daily operations, all while still learning and training at our academy. By integrating laptops into our training curriculum, we now have the ability to replicate every technical function and standard of an officer's task and are strengthening recruits with the tools and resources necessary to excel in their future roles. Recruits are also learning chain of command, accountability, integrity and structure, all of which are essential to our Department's mission. Our new training curriculum will produce a more well-rounded probation officer by enhancing their technical skills and nurturing the mindset and character traits vital to supporting our clients and the Department. We recently swore in a class of Probation Officers who are the first to receive our enhanced 5-month training curriculum.

DOP is also focusing on the professional development of our current workforce. Particularly, we have created promotional opportunities that have not been presented to our current employees in over a decade. This month, our Probation Officers will be able to take the Administrative Probation Officer exam, which creates a highly sought after path to promotion. This is in addition to adding in-service training for our existing Probation Officers. This training will be offered through the academy and will present a strong correlation to the job duties and functions of a Probation Officer.

DOP is also committed to ensuring that the best services are provided to our clients. Two months ago, we discussed our role in NeON Expansion. Our live RFP went unanswered and after many discussions with our approved list of vendors, unfortunately the RFP remains unanswered. However, DOP has and continues to provide assistance and support in obtaining any and all government services. DOP also offers and is exploring many other vocational programs for our clients such as CDL licensing courses, welding courses, drone operation and specialty certifications. We have also developed a yearly schedule where we will be able to offer various programming at multiple locations, several times throughout the year. Increased programming and services ensures our allocated budget will be used to support our clients through programming and the offering of educational and employment opportunities, thereby improving public safety.

DOP is pleased to announce that we have soft-launched our new program locator, which can be found on our DOP website. This locator will allow clients and community members to locate programs and resources in and around their neighborhood or current location. This function also provides users the opportunity to sign up for programs as well. Our program locator offers individuals, anywhere in the city, the opportunity to find services or discover programs in their area with the click of a button.



Our Program and Evaluation Team continues to engage in communication and collaboration with our program partners, which in turn has elevated performance and increased community engagement. Over the last fiscal year, our Arches program has seen an increase in new enrollees from 221 in FY23 to 281 in FY24. We have also seen an increase in the total number of individuals served by Arches, from 299 in FY23 to 343 in FY24, placing the program at 75% of its max capacity.

Through innovative partnerships with individuals and organizations across the City, DOP is committed to revolutionizing the support system for those on probation, providing not just services, but transformative support that positively impacts their lives. Credible messengers are at the heart of this revolutionary approach, forming unique relationships with individuals under probation supervision and inspiring them to change their thinking, attitudes and actions. Since the preliminary budget hearing, DOP has taken groundbreaking steps by hiring two credible messengers as community coordinators. This title reflects the essential qualifications and skills needed to elevate their roles within our agency. Our credible messengers are drafting and delivering powerful, scripted messages to our clients about the services, programs and support available under DOP's supervision. They also collaborate closely with our probation officers and violence interrupters to foster lasting positive change within our communities. This collaborative effort is a testament to our belief that working together makes us stronger and more effective.

We recognize the importance of focusing our efforts on education, employment and restorative programs as they play a pivotal role in reducing recidivism and promoting long-term success. Therefore, creating programs, experiences and using innovations that will generate enthusiasm and capture the interest of our youth plays an important role in their engagement with DOP programs, while further reducing recidivism and leading to a safer city. This is one of the many reasons why we will be introducing virtual reality into our array of resources. We anticipate that virtual reality will offer multifaceted benefits as we further our mission. Virtual reality will serve as an interactive tool to assist our

clients in developing communication, anger management and conflict-resolution skills. By incorporating themes of personal responsibility, teamwork and resilience, the virtual reality experience aims to work to develop their decision-making skills by presenting them with an opportunity to explore options in real-time scenarios and equipping them with essential life skills - making our clients less vulnerable to circumstance when faced with similar situations throughout their daily lives. Virtual reality will help promote positive values for our clients and help them build stronger community relationships, in a way we are all excited about.

In addition, we are excited to report that our NeON Photography program will be expanding as well. NeON Photography offers vocational training in classes modeled after college-level courses. Participants receive work-readiness training, technical photography skills and access to professional photography equipment in preparation to work as professional photographers. Some of our graduates have been hired for events such as the Met Gala, Tribeca Film Festival, New York Fashion Week, John McEnroe tennis tournaments and Carnegie Hall. We have just hired a new videographer to join our team and we are eager to expand the program from six locations with 100 participants to 10 locations servicing 200 participants across all boroughs this summer. We would like to thank Council Member Powers and Council Member Holden for your continued support of this initiative, as well as invite you to NeON Photography's latest solo exhibition opening at the Kente Royal Gallery in Harlem this July.

With summer right around the corner, I would be remiss if I did not highlight the impressive work being done by DOP for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). Our Probation Officers are extremely active in supporting every young person who is eligible for SYEP by assisting them in gathering documents, applying for the program and guiding them throughout the process. This calendar year, DOP has helped submit 1008 "Emerging Leader" SYEP applications. This is over 200 more than the 798 we helped submit in CY2023. Our Probation Officers

involvement does not end once the application is submitted. We are in constant communication with DYCD throughout the summer about each of our youths and use the information garnered to build on conversations with young people under supervision to ensure they are meeting program expectations as well as goals of their own.

Our Probation Officers are dedicated to building trust and creating connections with our clients and the community. Our unwavering commitment to enhance the quality of services and support provided to our clients are a testament towards positive change within the Department. Speaking of positive change, DOP has recently eliminated the process that causes clients to change Probation Officers every time their risk level changes. This protocol was not beneficial to the client or the Probation Officer establishing a meaningful relationship. DOP will always be guided by our mission to divert individuals away from the criminal justice system and towards the path of positive change. We are fostering individual growth while simultaneously promoting public safety throughout our city.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.



## UNITED PROBATION OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

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Testimony of  
Dalvanie K. Powell  
President  
United Probation Officers Association  
NYC Council Committee on Criminal Justice  
May 17, 2024

Good day Chairperson Nurse, and members of the Committee.

My name is Dalvanie K. Powell, and I am the President of the United Probation Officers Association. I want to thank the Committee for affording me, on behalf of the members of the UPOA, the opportunity to testify on important issues impacting the future of criminal justice in the city of New York and considering the need of NEW York City 's Probation Officers when preparing your recommendations or the FY 2025.

Probation Officers work every day to keep our city safe, while giving New Yorkers involved in the criminal justice system a second chance. UPOA members have bachelor's and master's degrees, and education and work experience in social work, which we use to help our clients begin to live productive and lawful lives.

We are charged by the city to oversee approximately 15,000 men, women, and youth who have been convicted of crimes and sentenced to probation instead of jail, prison, and placement. When we are successful, we save the city and state millions of dollars by diverting people from being sentenced and incarcerated. We made sure they did not violate the terms of their probation and worked with them to turn their lives around.

Our members are Peace Officers. They serve on task forces with other agencies, such as the U.S. Marshals, Drug Enforcement Agency, and the NYPD. We carry firearms, make arrests, execute search warrants, and arrest warrants. Despite the important role we play in law enforcement, our members are classified as civilians, rather than law enforcement officers, which impacts our salary and benefits.

I have been before this committee on several occasions to discuss issues impacting on our members, including pay disparities and unsafe staffing levels.

Years of staff cuts have chipped away at the workforce. Under Mayor Bloomberg, there were close to 1500 probation officers. Today there are less than seven hundred probation Officers.

City payroll records show 524 probation officers left the agency from 2020 through 2023 – 77% more than the 296 who left in the three years from 2016 through 2019.

According to the comptroller's office" the department of probation saw a 128.6 percent increase in departures during the first seven months for FY 2024 compared to during the same period in fiscal years 2016 through 2019."

As staffing levels have plummeted, our workload has continued to increase and, in some cases, tripled. Our family court services over the years have been reduced by approximately forty percent. This is, in part, due to bail reform and Raise the Age which have increased the number of the clients DOP. This cannot continue. To be able to perform our duties and responsibilities, we need more support -and we desperately need your help.

DCAS classified Probation as an agency that is hard to hire for. On April 8, the department a slated to hire twenty- five recruits. They were only able to hire seventeen. Eventually, two more people were

added, but since then one has left the agency, leaving the agency at eighteen recruits. We do not have any knowledge of any new classes coming soon, which is very concerning.

To say The Department of Probation has issues with retention and recruitment would be an understatement. Our members are leaving for higher -paying positions in the criminal justice system. This included other law enforcement agencies in New York City, as well probation departments in neighboring counties (See attached)

Our compensation lags far behind other law enforcement agencies, even though we work with the same populations and face the same dangers. For example, based on our last contract (which expired in November 2020), the hiring rate for a Probation Officer is \$45,834, which is far lower than the starting salary at NYPD, DOC and other agencies which include civilians.

I have attached a salary comparison for Probation Officers, Correction Officers, and Deputy Sheriffs. I would like to add that a Supervising Probation Officers equivalent to a captain in the Police Department and the Correction department, but the salary is significantly lower.

Although there is a salary range for our title, most of our members are suppressed at the lower end of the range with almost no opportunity to earn more. Our members rarely, if ever reach the top salary for their titles, unlike other peace officers and civilians. In addition, dozens of our members are even earning below contractual wage rates, something we asked the city to address immediately.

Compared to other probation departments, our salaries are the lowest in the metropolitan area including Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester Counties. We do the same work as the Probation Officers in nearby jurisdictions and deserve the same pay.

This has gone on for far too long. Our Contract negotiations continue. Until our salaries are restructured to be in parity with other law enforcement agencies within the City of New York and the neighboring counties there will continue to be a revolving door of officers coming and leaving after a few years to better pay and opportunities.

I am concerned about the future of the Department of Probation and the well- being of our members who are committed to keeping our community safe and changing the lives of those under our supervision. If we are forced to continue to do far more than less, it will lead to burnout and more resignations.

Probation Officers are on the frontlines as an alternative to sentencing at a time when we are striving to lower the population of those who are incarcerated. We will need the Council's support to ensure that members of Probation feel respected and are properly compensated for the work we do. This impacts not only the members of our union, but the safety of our neighborhoods and the New Yorkers under our supervision.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this with you further.

Thank you  
Dalvanie Powell

I stand ready to answer any questions you may have.



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

# Jumaane D. Williams

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**STATEMENT OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS  
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
MAY 17, 2024**

Good morning,

My name is Jumaane D. Williams and I am the Public Advocate for the City of New York. I would like to thank Chairs Nurse and Brannan and the members of the Committees on Criminal Justice and Finance for holding this hearing.

First and foremost, any Department of Correction budget must include funding for a comprehensive plan to close the jail on Rikers Island by 2027. Rikers does not make anyone—the people incarcerated there, the people who work there, and residents of New York City—safer. I am very concerned about the violence inside our city’s jails, both against incarcerated people and against correction officers and staff, and it is alarming to see that the Correction Officers' Benevolent Association (COBA) continues to push for policies that undermine safety in the jails. Unlimited sick leave has clearly opened the door for exploitation and abuse, as evidenced by prosecutions of former officers who, for example, attended parties while out on sick leave. In 2014, an investigation found that allowing officers to wear cargo pants with multiple pockets made it easier for officers to smuggle in contraband, including drugs and weapons.<sup>1</sup> Despite this, COBA has pushed for and succeeded in securing permission for officers to once again wear cargo pants in the jails. While this may seem minor, this reversal occurred during a year when drug-related deaths increased in the jails.<sup>2</sup> It is clear that COBA is part of the problematic culture of Rikers Island—as the federal monitor, Steve J. Martin, has said: “[Officers] know they can beat the system more often than not. That’s how you develop these cultures where you have frequent instances of excessive force.”<sup>3</sup> Alarming, Rikers Island has had one of the highest rates of staff-on-detainee sexual assault,<sup>4</sup> underscoring the urgency of transforming these cultures.

New York City is not on track to close Rikers Island by 2027. At the preliminary budget hearing, DOC testified that the average daily population at Rikers is 6,135 per day, and the city forecasted that the jail population would increase to 7,000 this year—but the four proposed borough-based replacement jails together cannot house more than 3,300 people.<sup>5</sup> These proposed borough-based jails would allow people to remain closer to their communities, increasing incarcerated people’s contact with loved ones and their attorneys, as well as giving them greater access to treatment and rehabilitative programming. I hear community concerns that the presence of a jail will increase

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doi/reports/pdf/2014/2014-11-06-Pr26rikers.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/public-safety/2022/10/06/ny1-investigation--fatal-drug-overdoses-rise-on-rikers-island>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2023/05/19/new-york-prison-corrections-officer-abuse-prisoners>

<sup>4</sup> <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/svpjri1112.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.vitalcitynyc.org/articles/the-citys-new-rikers-math#:~:text=Building%20on%20the%20mayor's%20assertions,nothing%20else%20changes%20with%20the>

crime in the surrounding neighborhood, but we already have other, smaller correctional facilities around our city, and there is no evidence that these facilities increase crime in the neighborhoods in which they are located. In fact, some residents have reported that they barely notice their presence.<sup>6</sup>

Recidivism is a challenge for correction systems across the country, but with NYC's high cost of living and competitive job market, it is especially difficult for those who have been justice-involved to stay out of jail. Despite this, last year Mayor Adams eliminated programs that would help those who are incarcerated get jobs, find housing, receive mental health and substance use treatment, and reconnect with their families after their release, just to save \$17 million—which is only 0.015 percent of the total city budget for FY25. Subsequently, despite a promise from DOC that programming would not be lessened in either quality or frequency after being moved in-house, during the first four months of FY24, the number of group-based programming offered dropped by 29 percent and one-on-one sessions dropped by over 30 percent when compared to the first four months of FY23.<sup>7</sup> While I am heartened to see that Mayor Adams just announced \$14 million in funding for DOC to increase programming initiatives for people in custody—including trauma-informed programming, transition planning, and transportation and supplemental education services—I still have concerns about DOC's ability to deliver that programming. Still, it is a step in the right direction, and I look forward to working with the administration and the City Council to ensure that the city delivers high-quality programming to people in custody and complies with all city laws.

The city should also be investing in pre-trial non-incarceral services and alternatives to incarceration, so fewer people enter Rikers Island in the first place. Court backlogs and slow processing of cases also contributes to the rising population—detainees spent an average of 115 days in the jails last year, four times the national average.<sup>8</sup> This fact is outrageous. Across the city's jails, 86.6 percent of people are just waiting for their cases to conclude,<sup>9</sup> and their sentences ultimately may require less jail time than what they served waiting for their cases to resolve. We must ensure that cases and trials are being processed in a timely manner.

In 2021, it cost \$1 million for every two people incarcerated at Rikers Island—one of the most expensive jail systems in the country—yet the conditions in the jails remain abysmal. Being incarcerated takes a significant toll on a person's physical and mental health, and many people on Rikers Island have complex health needs that require specialized care. There is a significant shortage of health staff, often with only one healthcare professional making rounds in multiple units. This harms not only the health of the people incarcerated, as the stress of trying to provide quality care to so many people with little support and inadequate pay is directly leading to staff burnout and turnover, as well as recruitment issues. Rikers Island is the largest mental health services provider in NYC, and one of the largest in the country. More than half of the population

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<sup>6</sup> <https://citylimits.org/2018/07/17/the-jail-next-door-a-look-at-the-14-correctional-facilities-in-new-yorks-neighborhoods/>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2024/2024\\_pmmr.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2024/2024_pmmr.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://gothamist.com/news/detainees-spend-an-average-of-115-days-at-rikers-4-times-the-national-average>

<sup>9</sup> <https://greaterjusticenyc.vera.org/nycjail/>

at Rikers has a mental health diagnosis, with 16 percent having a serious mental illness.<sup>10</sup> In March, Mayor Adams announced that the city will construct outposted therapeutic housing units at NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull and North Central Bronx, and that it has started constructing a 104-bed unit at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue, so that incarcerated people in need of care would not be forced to travel back and forth for treatment. These units are for people with medical, mental health, and substance-use needs, and I applaud this investment in care for some of our most vulnerable New Yorkers.

It is critical that the city ensures that all incarcerated people in its jails are able to communicate with their loved ones. There is ample research connecting family contact and positive post-release outcomes,<sup>11</sup> yet prisons and jails frequently make such contact difficult and even expensive. While people detained on Rikers are not charged to make phone calls or write letters, in 2022 the DOC proposed scanning all mail and sending it digitally to incarcerated recipients, citing concerns that drugs were entering the jail through the mail. This proposal was denied even a vote by the BOC last year. The city must oppose any moves to digitize mail, as it diminishes the quality of the mail and delays the receipt of letters and photos, and has cost other jurisdictions millions of dollars in contracts with private companies. Digitizing mail does not prevent drugs from entering jail facilities—we should instead focus on implementing body scanning for correction officers and staff, who we unfortunately know bring contraband into our city’s jails.<sup>121314</sup>

The city should increase the headcount for the Board of Correction, a nine-person, non-judicial oversight board that carries out independent oversight and enacts regulations to support safer, fairer, smaller, and more humane NYC jails. At a time when the administration is decreasing transparency, it is more important than ever that the BOC has enough staff to do its job. At the preliminary budget hearing, BOC asked for funding for 20 new positions across the agency. Ensuring that BOC is adequately staffed is especially important for the safety of those in our jails, as BOC drafts the rules and minimum standards that must be followed to comply with the law—including Local Law 42, a ban on solitary confinement, which must be implemented starting July 30, 2024.

Further, last month, an analysis published by Gothamist found that of the 1,256 lawsuits filed under the Adult Survivors Act, 719—or almost 60 percent—were filed against the NYC Department of Correction.<sup>15</sup> The allegations span decades, from 1976 to just last year, and are appalling and shocking, but, sadly, unsurprising. Just this week, the city agreed to pay a \$1.6 million settlement to a person who was sexually abused by a physical therapist inside a jail clinic.<sup>16</sup> At present, BOC does not currently have any staff monitoring the standards on the elimination of

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<sup>10</sup> [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2022/2022\\_mmr.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2022/2022_mmr.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/12/21/family\\_contact/](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/12/21/family_contact/)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.corrections1.com/contraband/rikers-island-corrections-officer-suspended-after-jail-search-finds-contraband-cache>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/pr/former-new-york-city-correction-officer-sentenced-29-months-prison-smuggling>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/pr/former-new-york-city-correction-officer-sentenced-prison-accepting-bribes-exchange>

<sup>15</sup> <https://gothamist.com/news/late-night-sex-assaults-invasive-searches-the-700-women-alleging-abuse-at-rikers>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.thecity.nyc/2024/05/13/rikers-settlement-therapist-sex-assault/>



sexual abuse and harassment under the Prison Rape Elimination Act. We must end the city's cycle of failure to protect those in its custody from harm and abuse - a robust oversight body of our jails is an integral part of that.

Thank you.



**TESTIMONY**

Presented by

**Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez  
Commissioner**

on

**FY 2025 Executive Budget**

before the

**New York City Council  
Committee on Aging**

on

**Friday, May 17, 2025  
12:30 p.m.**

Good afternoon, Chair Hudson, Chair Brannan, and members of the Aging and Finance Committees. I am Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, Commissioner of the New York City Department for the Aging (NYC Aging). I am joined this morning by Jose Mercado our Chief Financial Officer. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss NYC Aging's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2025 (FY 25). We are proud to be talking to you today in May, which is Older Americans Month, an opportunity to celebrate the contributions of older adults and the dynamic role they play in our society.

In addition to working to eliminate ageism and ensuring the dignity and quality of life of older New Yorkers, providing high quality services and resources are among our top priorities at NYC Aging. We have common cause in our commitment to serving this rapidly growing population of older adults through services such as older adult centers (OACs), home delivered meals (HDMs), case management (CMA), homemaker services, transportation services, caregiver services, mental health, workforce development programs, and an array of other programs. Uplifting and supporting our city's growing older adult population is a key priority for this administration.

To support this important work, our FY 25 Executive Budget projects \$494 million in funding, of which \$356 million is in City funds; including allocations of \$223 million to support Older Adult Centers (OACs), \$59.6 million for home delivered meals (HDM), \$44.4 million for case management (CMA), \$39.5 million to support home care for homebound older adults who are not Medicaid eligible, \$14.7 million for NORC programs, \$8.2 million for caregiver services, and \$5.1 million for transportation services.

As I mentioned during our Preliminary Budget Hearing, the past fiscal year has been challenging for the City financially, and NYC Aging has worked to ensure we are prioritizing the needs of older adults and our core aging services while limiting the impacts of these challenges like the various Programs to Eliminate the Gap (PEGs). In FY 25, there are no cuts to services or future closures of centers currently serving older adults. We were pleased to see that there was no mandatory savings exercise for NYC Aging under this Executive Budget, and the FY25 PEGs prior to the release of the Exec Budget were implemented without negatively affecting services to older adults. Nonetheless, we are still keenly aware of the need for aging services, particularly in core services that are aligned with the Community Care approach, especially as the number of older New Yorkers continues to grow. Because of that, we are working to ensure our state and federal partners share this financial responsibility to aging services in New York City. We are pleased to acknowledge that the budget for FY 25 provides funding for three years of 3% COLA increases for the existing provider network.

Despite these past challenges including insufficient state and federal funding, we are proud of our work done along with the work of our non-profit partners in addressing some notable recent successes and items we are looking forward to in the near future:

- In mid-April, we were proud to launch the Service Needs Assessment survey of older adults to better understand their needs which reflect the quality of life they deserve. The data we collect from this Service Needs Assessment will inform better policy in the future and inform how current programs and services can best serve the future needs of New York City's older adults. This is a great opportunity for New York City's older adults aged 60 and over as well as their caregivers, to have their voices heard. When older adults complete the survey it ensures that our city's diverse communities are being heard. I would like to ask each one of you to partner with us in promoting this Service Needs Assessment through your networks

and potentially even hosting events in your communities or district offices where older New Yorkers can come to complete the survey.

- I was pleased to join Chair Hudson for one of her Spring Senior Series “learn to bike” events where older adults re-learned to ride a bike after 60. I have long promoted the inclusive nature of tricycles for older adults and want to thank the Chair for her continued commitment to micromobility options for older adults. Our communities need to be age inclusive. It is not enough to be “age friendly,” we must design our neighborhoods and services around physical infrastructure that benefits people of all ages. Bicycles and tricycles should be included in that discussion for older adults. While I was proud to have also *attempted* to bike that day at Commodore Barry Park, I can see where a tricycle also would be useful and want to continue to work to including that as a viable option in New York City.
- Just this week, I attended the 2024 AARP-United Nations Briefing Series on Global Aging panel discussion on the Global Longevity Economy Outlook. This was an incredible discussion about the longevity economy and the immense positive economic impact to our cities when leveraging the experience and talent of older adults in the workforce. Similar to our efforts with the Service Needs Assessment, we are continually looking for innovative approaches to meet the needs of older New Yorkers while also addressing the overall challenges of this city. The Baby Boomers will soon all be past the retirement age which will necessitate a greater need for meaningful and impactful workforce opportunities for older adults.
- We are looking forward to upcoming opportunities to showcase our work and include the dynamic talents of older New Yorkers. On May 29<sup>th</sup>, we will host *Intergenerational Groove*, in recognition of the 31<sup>st</sup> Older Adult Health and Fitness Day at Foley Square Park. More than 1,000 older adults across the five boroughs will come together to learn dance moves and showcase their talents alongside young people from NYC Public Schools which is aligned with the goals set out by the city’s HealthyNYC plan. I would like to invite you all to join us and many of your constituents as we dance to the music that morning. In the words of Madonna, let’s all “get into the groove!” Additionally, NYC Aging has been convening a series of *Age-Inclusive Working Group* meetings this spring as part of our work with the US Conference of Mayors. Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) across the US have been joining these discussions to come up with a definition for “age inclusive” and develop a workbook which cities across the US can use to develop aging policies and work for older adults. This is another example of how NYC Aging—and really New York City—is leading the United States in policy development and social services work.
- Finally, we are proud of the strides made since the establishment of the Older Americans Act surrounding food and nutrition, which created Area Agencies on Aging like NYC Aging to combat older adult hunger, has now evolved to meet future needs of older adults. We are constantly innovating and that is especially true in area of food provision. We have opened five Commissary Kitchens which allow programs to cook healthier and culturally appropriate food while also providing meals for other programs within a provider’s network. Additionally, we have piloted the opening of Pop-Up Cafes to serve meals to older adults outside of center settings which is an effort to look at food insecurity from a broad and innovative perspective.

We're also incredibly grateful for the ongoing support of the City Council, which in FY 24 awarded NYC Aging with over \$41.3 million in discretionary funding, allowing us to make even greater investments in often unserved or underserved communities.

### **Home Delivered Meals**

Our Home Delivered Meals (HDM) program is a central vital component in NYC Aging's network of services. Not only does the HDM program provide meals to homebound older New Yorkers, the interaction with the delivery person—which for many of our clients may be the only direct human interaction for the day—support our ongoing effort to combat social isolation, again a critical aspect of our Community Care approach. This program continues to follow the strict guidance set by the state and is open to those who meet those criteria.

Because financial insecurity remains among the most critical needs of older adults it is highly correlated to food insecurity, NYC Aging is continually evaluating our efforts and exploring areas for improvement. This includes enhancing meal options for recipients, embracing the diversity of our city by increasing the availability of culturally aligned meals, and promoting uniformly high-quality and nutritious meals. The current HDM RFP included requirements for Halal meals, which is indicative of our goals to further expand NYC Aging's commitment to cultural competency. In FY 23, our network of HDM providers delivered 4,011,119 meals to 27,574 clients.

I would like to also raise again an ongoing issue which we have spoken about in our Preliminary Budget Hearing in March. In 2023, we were informed by NYSOFA that Managed Long-Term Care (MLTC) clients should receive meals through their MLTC provider. This was surprising, as NYC Aging has been providing HDM services to Medicaid eligible clients for the past more than a decade. As Medicaid is a means tested program, MLTC clients should be receiving meals through those providers rather than HDM. Since we learned of the issue, we have identified the number of MLTC clients which enrolled in the HDM program totaling 7,000. We were very clear with NYSOFA that we were not going to remove the 7,000 from HDM service but rather grandfather them in and ask for their guidance moving forward for HDM clients who are also under MLTC providers.

Currently, NYC Aging has identified 2,523 older adults in MLTC programs who have been deemed ineligible for the HDM program. Again, we are still waiting for state guidance from NYSOFA on how to proceed with these cases. NYSOFA did respond regarding our request, however, their letter was unclear as to how we should address these older adults. As a result, we have written to NYSOFA seeking further clarity on these state guidelines. We implore the Council's partnership as we seek guidance and clarity from the state on this issue. Your voice amplifies the needs of older adults in all items, and food provision for some of the most vulnerable older adults is critical.

### **Homecare & Caregiver Services**

As the number of older adults in New York City continues to grow, it is imperative that we continue to grow the community care support systems which allow older New Yorkers to remain in the communities they built and truly age in place. We do this through Homecare and Caregiver services which greatly serve those who are homebound or in need of additional supports. Homecare services are provided through Medicaid reimbursement and for those who do not qualify for Medicaid programs, through the Expanded In-Home Services for Elderly Persons (EISEP) program where case management hours are reimbursed to providers.

Currently, we are advocating to New York State for the inclusion of a \$1.15 per hour wage match for EISEP Homecare workers which would bring them into parity with Medicaid Homecare workers who have already received raises. This leaves EISEP clients at a disadvantage when Medicaid Homecare workers are incentivized to take on those clients because the pay is higher. There is no distinction between EISEP and Medicaid Homecare workers, they are primarily women of color, and this exacerbating inequity because of the salary. Currently, the Homecare program at NYC Aging is funded at \$38,774,509 for FY 25, but this does not include the wage increases to match Medicaid workers. This occurred in previous years and was resolved in part with help from advocates on the Council to ensure that aging services workers, who are frequently women or women of color, are not left out of the needed pay increases for critical aging services.

The pandemic was challenging for everyone, and the strain on unpaid caregivers has been significant. NYC Aging's caregiver support program offers support groups, counseling, trainings, outreach, and information services to unpaid caregivers. Many older adults are caretakers for their aging parent. Many are caregivers who also have full time jobs. The caregiver program offers options for respite care through home care or participation in social adult day care. In 2017, we estimated that there are 1.3 million New Yorkers who function as a caregiver. Without the support for care of daily living activities and respite care, many of these caretakers would not have the financial means or ability to leave the care receiver in someone else's care while they take a needed break from their caregiving responsibilities.

In FY 25, funding for the caregiver program is currently projected to be \$8.2 million. Caregiver supports positively impact the health and wellbeing of older adults while aligning with the cultural background of the individual. These integrated services for home assistance which is care for daily living needs such as bathing, cleaning, food prep, shopping, transportation, and meal provision can keep all older adults in their communities longer which is their desire and is a shared goal between this Administration and Council. As I have stated before, I have personal experience with this, as do several members of these committees. My own 94-year-old mother wants to remain in her home, go to church with her community, and needs additional care benefits which are greater when they come from her family or surrounding community and posse. This is why Community Care is so incredibly important to the future of older New Yorkers.

### **Conclusion**

I continue to be proud of the great work that NYC Aging and network providers accomplish with these resources. We are continually implementing new approaches through our provider network and testing innovative ideas to best serve the growing population of older adults who are central to all we do today and in the future. Once again, the Service Needs Assessment will inform better policy in the future and inform how current programs and services can best serve the future needs of New York City's older adults.

This past year has shown where NYC Aging as a whole can look to efficiencies and improvements in our programs that truly meet the needs of older New Yorkers. This mindset has allowed us to weather cost-savings exercises which every agency has had to complete and while the financial outlook is improving, we are continuing to be good stewards of public dollars. While the needs of older adults often outpace resources in aging services, I look forward to continuing to explore ways to match our programs to the increased demands.

As always, we are grateful to the Chairs and Committee members for your ongoing advocacy and continued partnership to support older New Yorkers. Thank you.



**New York City Council  
Finance Committee  
AARP-NY  
May 17, 2024**

Good afternoon, Chair Brannan and members of the City Council Finance Committee, Committee on Criminal Justice, and the Committee on Aging.

My name is Beth Finkel, and I am the State Director of AARP New York. I am here today on behalf of our 750,000 members in New York City and the 1.3 million older adults living in the five boroughs.

We are deeply concerned about the Mayor's proposed Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2025, which is ageist and will harm older adults. Specifically, we are alarmed by the projected fiscal cliff in next year's Department for the Aging (DFTA) budget.

Currently, DFTA receives less than 1 percent of the city budget, despite 20 percent of New York City residents being 65 or older. By FY26, DFTA's budget will be \$87 million less than in FY24 and \$73 million less than in FY25, despite the city's Independent Budget Office projecting an additional \$2.2 billion in available funds this fiscal year and next, compared to what the Mayor predicted.

These cuts couldn't come at a worse time. The city's 65-and-over population grew 36 percent between 2011 and 2021 – faster than any age group. It is disappointing that funding for older adults is considered an expense rather than an investment in our community. Older New Yorkers deserve better.

The proposed budget cuts could result in the closure of up to 60 adult centers in New York City. Older adult centers are vital community hubs that provide essential services, resources, and social connections for our aging population. They offer necessary meals and access to critical support services.

The number of older New Yorkers living below the poverty line increased by 37.4 percent over the past decade. This is an estimated 21 percent of older adults in New York City living in poverty who must make tough choices, like paying rent or buying food.

Older Adult Centers are a lifeline, serving and delivering meals to homebound older adults and grab-and-go meals that are essential to many residents. 48 percent of those using older adult centers and home-delivered meal programs reported food insecurity in the past 12 months, and nearly 90 percent say that receiving meals helped them stay in their own homes.

We must invest in our older adult centers to keep pace with inflation and demographic shifts, and to meet infrastructure needs. Not considering the needs of older adults when making policy and funding services is ageist and discriminatory against older adults.

New Yorkers 50-plus helped build our city and make it great, but policymakers have ignored their needs for too long. We urge you to work with the Mayor to prioritize the needs of older adults in our city. Investing in programs and services that support aging in place not only enhances the quality of life for older New Yorkers but also strengthens our communities as a whole.

Thank you.





## **Asian American Federation**

### **Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Aging**

*May 17, 2024*

#### Written Testimony

I want to thank Chair Hudson and the Council Members of the Aging for holding this hearing and giving the Asian American Federation (AAF) the opportunity to testify on the needs of our older adult community. I am Andrew Sta. Ana, Deputy Director of Research and Policy at AAF, where we proudly represent the collective voice of more than 70 member nonprofits serving 1.5 million Asian New Yorkers.

Before I begin, on behalf of AAF, I wanted to take a moment to acknowledge Don Lee, the former Chair of Homecrest's Board of Directors, who recently passed. He was recently acknowledged by this body, and his influence continues to resonate through AAF's work. Don was an unparalleled voice in the pan-Asian community in advocacy for seniors, in work to address Anti-Asian Hate, and in solidarity with all communities of color to keep all New Yorkers safe. We are uplifted by his wisdom and inspired by his ferocity and leadership.

Going into FY 2025, Asian older adults continue to endure the impacts of teetering economic conditions and continued anti-Asian hate. Making up 13.7% of New York City's senior population, Asian older adults constitute the fastest-growing older adult community citywide, with 23.2% of said population living in poverty. Of our older adults in poverty, 25.2% live alone and 83.5% possess limited English proficiency (LEP). Our Seniors Working Group (SWG), the first and only Asian older-adult-focused advocacy coalition in New York City and State, comprises 12 Asian-led, Asian older-adult-serving member organizations. Since its inception, the SWG, under the guidance of AAF, has become an authoritative voice for policymakers to reference and consult with about addressing the concerns of older Asian adults, from food delivery, to anti-Asian hate to language accessibility. This group has served more than 144,459 Asian older adults spanning numerous ethnic and linguistic communities in Q1 of 2023 alone. It is critical to note that 37,933 of these older adults were also low-income.

Anti-Asian violence uniquely targets Asian older adults. The COVID-19 pandemic and its related crisis of anti-Asian hate have had a disproportionate impact on the Asian older adult population in New York City, with multiple of the most high-profile anti-Asian attacks recorded being against older adults of our community. Given this reality, our older adults require support that fully addresses their physical, emotional, and financial needs. Moreover, as our partners in the Asian community can attest, these dual crises are fundamentally changing the behavior of clients as they seek out older adult services; thus, the City must adapt its policies in order to support our older adult service providers adequately.

Food insecurity is among the top concerns of Asian older adults within our Seniors Working Group, in addition to anti-Asian violence, functioning older adult centers, and mental health, all of which are interconnected. Culturally competent meal programs have become our older adults'



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lifeline, especially amid an era of increased anti-Asian violence that have left older adults understandably terrified to leave their homes. Such conditions make it even more critical that our older adults are receiving as much support as they can every time they interact with one of their trusted CBOs. The meal programs our CBOs offer not only give older adults an opportunity to eat together, but also to participate in social activities, receive assistance applying for services, and access health and mental health care.

A lack of cultural sensitivity in meal programs, however, has become an issue for many older adult service providers, according to members of our SWG. The arbitrary and inaccurate standards for 'culturally-sensitive meals' set by DFTA have left many providers restricted with the meal options they can offer Asian older adult clients. For example, DFTA's criteria that claims 'tofu and soy sauce' are ingredients required for Asian food is not only culturally incorrect but also extremely limiting for our already understaffed, overworked providers who are seeking to address problems of health, poverty, and food insecurity. Asian older adults are not a monolith - they are incredibly diverse and a one-size fits all model for DFTA's standard for culturally sensitive meals only serves to exacerbate further existing issues our older adults and providers face.

With the newly redrawn district lines, Asian New Yorkers comprise at least 10% of the population in 35 City Council districts, with the remaining districts possessing some of the most rapidly-growing Asian populations. It is always important to note that from Fiscal Year 2002 to 2014, the Asian community received a mere 1.4% of the total dollar value of New York City's social service contracts, reflecting a broader, long-term trend. SWG members, in balancing the need for culturally-competent food, managing older adult centers, and simultaneously addressing the needs of isolated older adults, are consistently on the brink of physical and emotional collapse. CBOs continue to report more burnout among staff who are stretched to their limits with too much work and not enough institutional support.

CBO staff members say meeting our most vulnerable where they are with culturally-competent, effective older adult services requires **systemic change**. They cite that DFTA's 'one-size fits all' models create additional challenges and barriers for Asian and immigrant communities. This necessitates further understanding of our diverse community's needs, as such change depends on the City and its work in supporting, reinforcing, and building capacity for programming by and for marginalized communities through prioritizing cultural competency and language access in contracting processes. It also requires a greater focus on funding smaller contracts so the organizations providing care to our most marginalized communities can access funds they can spend down at their size.

Our recommendations for further action are elaborated on below.

### Recommendations:

1. Increase funding to Asian-led, Asian-serving older-adult service providers, and expand this funding to include time and expenses spent on case management and digital literacy, devices and training. Our CBOs are juggling the expansion of in-person services while



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simultaneously catering to the needs of an isolated older adult population without funding to meet the demand for both streams.

2. Prioritize funding both congregate and remote services and programming. CBO staff are stretched thin because of the City's focus on the former while the broader community continues to demand the latter. The recent announcement of older adult center closures
3. Continue funding a network of linguistically and culturally competent food service programs that provide alternative food benefits to older-adults.
4. Expand funding to include culturally competent, in-language, and older-adult-focused non-traditional mental health service models. This includes prioritizing CBOs with a history of providing free or subsidized nontraditional, culturally competent services for funding opportunities.

On behalf of the Asian American Federation, thank you for raising the work that needs to be done and prioritizing the voices and needs of our older adults and our older adult service providers, the true experts in this work. We look forward to working with all of you in the near future and want to emphasize that policymakers always have a standing invitation to our Seniors Working Group meetings.

# CARNEGIE HALL

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2024  
May 17, 2024  
Executive Budget Hearing: Committee on Criminal Justice

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Chair Brannan, Chair Nurse, and Members of the Committees on Finance and on Criminal Justice:

Thanks for the opportunity to testify about the value and importance of the arts in the portfolio of solutions to forge pathways for at-risk and justice-involved young people and help them succeed.

Since the launch of Carnegie Hall's education and social impact arm, the Weill Music Institute, in 2003, we have offered a suite of creative youth development and young artist training programs in alignment with our mission. For more than twenty years, Carnegie Hall has partnered with city agencies and community organizations to ensure that our programs intentionally reach at-risk young people who otherwise would not have access to these opportunities.

In particular, Carnegie Hall's Social Impact Programs have developed and implemented in-depth creative youth development programs. These programs include:

- Future Music Project: in partnership with the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), Future Music Project delivers after-school music programs in various NYC juvenile justice settings. Through the medium of music, teaching artists help young people develop as artists, critical thinkers, and collaborators.
- Youth Truth: this initiative was led by youth with the purpose of engaging their peers to increase social awareness and use the arts as a vehicle to prompt social change.
- NeON Arts: for ten years, Carnegie Hall worked with the Department of Probation (DOP) to produce NeON Arts, offering young people in seven NYC communities the chance to explore the arts through a variety of creative projects that help them establish positive peer relationships and develop important social and career skills.

All of the above programs have incorporated content and learning around the music industry; however, program participants, partners, and Carnegie Hall staff have identified the need for a dedicated space that illuminates pathways towards building a career in music business. By launching The B Side in 2023, Carnegie Hall's Social Impact team draws upon their experience creating meaningful programs in order to deepen our engagement and provide young people with the tools they need to thrive, lead, and transform the music industry.

[The B Side](#) is a free intensive program for New Yorkers ages 14-22 interested in the business of music, with a focus on at-risk young people and those from under-resourced communities. The B Side provides participants an interactive space to learn about the inner workings of the music industry. Curriculum designed and facilitated by teaching artists, guest speaker panels, and field trips guide participants through the many roles and career opportunities across the industry. Participants, experienced youth development facilitators, and guests are encouraged to co-create a learning community that supports the development of aspiring artists and future music industry leaders.

This year, participants progressed through activities beginning with an exploration of the various career tracks through the music industry and an introduction to key terms and concepts. Activities included engaging in lessons/curricular activities; presentations from guest speakers; field trips to a record label, and the Louis Armstrong House; panels and interactive discussions; and jam sessions/performances.

In a recent report from USC's Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, researchers found that "Underrepresented and Black artists are dominating the charts, but the C-suite [executive level] is a diversity desert," the lead researcher, Dr. Stacey Smith, said in a statement.

The B Side seeks to address this "diversity desert" by engaging early to create opportunities and provide resources for young people in communities where robust resources may not already exist. Carnegie Hall's goal is not only to bring visibility to possible careers in music, but also to support young people in developing the skills needed to thrive and transform the industry. The B Side will connect young people to peers and professionals, encouraging a supportive network that participants can rely on as they navigate their career journey.

In offering The B Side, Carnegie Hall acknowledges that business learning opportunities are few and far between, usually costly, and often populated by young people who already have abundant resources and support. Understanding this reality, The B Side will provide free food, stipends, and transportation to participants.

The B Side participants will benefit from:

- a supportive space for learning and exploration among peers;
- direct engagement with music industry professionals;
- meaningful networking opportunities; and
- personal and professional development in career preparedness, relationship building, and communication.

The B Side seeks to build professional competencies and practical skills while exploring careers in music. The program also supports interpersonal growth and sustained learning pathways, create collaborative group dynamics among peers, and build connections to community, higher education, and professional opportunities.

Recent feedback from B Side participants includes:

"Since the B-Side program, I've gotten a marketing internship with a Real Estate company primarily to see what skills I can attain so I can be an asset to grow any business, as well as performing in a modeling event for local brands and am on track to graduate college this upcoming semester."

"Since the B-Side I've been able to gain hands-on experience with the music industry. Through a relationship I cultivated with from the studio field trip, I was able to act as an A&R and get one of the artists I was already working with signed. In addition to that I've gained the confidence to work on personal projects such as getting my beats placed with local artists and starting up a group-owned record label. With much more on the horizon I'm more than satisfied with what I gained from the program."

"Since completing The B-Side program, I did an externship at a local music studio where I worked as an administrative assistant, I managed schedules, coordinated studio bookings, and facilitated communication between artists and production teams."

"For a lack of better words, the numerous opportunities to work in music that The B-Side showed me blew my mind and the opportunities that I have encountered in college have only continued to do so. Before coming into Carnegie, I believed that there was one way to make it in the industry and that was the path I had to follow. I have since encountered so many inspirational people and experiences that I wouldn't have explored without the courage that The B-Side instilled in me... I am still incredibly passionate about both music production and social justice but I believe since coming here, I have seen many possibilities in which I can intersect the two in atypical ways. I'm interested in expanding my knowledge on community outreach and ways to connect with people, and

especially youth through music. I would be incredibly honored to take part in any opportunities that Carnegie Hall has to offer with this and would love to continue to stay connected with you all and The B-Side!”

For Carnegie Hall, our belief is that all young people, regardless of their circumstances, should have opportunities to be creative, explore their talents, and develop skill sets that help them grow and overcome challenges. The issue of arts access is especially critical for system-involved individuals, an area in which Carnegie Hall has invested deeply for more than two decades. To ensure that The B Side intentionally prioritizes those who otherwise may not have access to these opportunities, Carnegie Hall partners with the City’s human services agencies, including ACS, DOE, DCLA, DOP, DHS, DYCD, NYCHA, and MOME, as well as community partners, including Children’s Aid Society, Good Shepherd Services, credible messenger organizations such as Life Camp, to advance our recruitment efforts.

To support this work and the young people we serve, **Carnegie Hall respectfully requests the Committee’s expressed support to Speaker Adams of renewing the Council’s \$200,000 Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative allocation for The B Side and increasing to \$250,000.**

The aforementioned programs are just a few examples of the breadth of services available that demonstrate the broad and deep impact of the arts and cultural sector in our city, especially through public-private partnerships. Carnegie Hall is also a proud member of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG), a collective of 34 nonprofit museums, performing arts centers, historical societies, zoos, and botanical gardens across all five boroughs with a distinct private-public partnership with the City of New York and a commitment to serving all New Yorkers. In pursuit of meaningful, sustained public support of the vast array of programming and public resources offered by our CIG colleagues and the NYC arts and culture community at large, **Carnegie Hall endorses the field’s \$53 million request to restore culture fully in FY25:**

- **Reverse November Plan PEGs - \$7.9 million**
- **Reverse CIG FY24 reduction - \$5 million**
- **Restore one-year funding - \$40 million**

**A commitment to funding the arts and culture is a compound investment in economic resiliency and growth, workforce development, community healing, education, and public safety. Sustained investment in the arts and culture is a statement to each and every person who calls New York City home that their holistic wellness matters, and we urge this sector’s outside impact to be recognized and duly supported.**

We thank the Committee for their interest in The B Side, and we encourage the Council to support arts programming for at-risk and justice-involved young people and other programs by our cultural colleagues across the city. The Council has recognized time and again the value of the arts and creative experiences as key to the City’s holistic efforts in the justice system, and **we respectfully request full reinvestment in this work in FY25.**

We welcome the opportunity to meet with each of you individually to discuss Carnegie Hall’s programming partnerships in your district and citywide. Thank you for your support for and consideration of our requests, and thanks to our public partners, artists and arts organizations, teachers, stakeholders, and the talented young people involved in these programs for being a part of truly transformational changes.



**New York City Council Committee on Finance**  
Executive Budget Hearings – Criminal Justice  
May 17, 2024

Good afternoon, Chairs Brannan and Nurse and members of the Finance and Criminal Justice committees. I'm Nadia Chait, the Senior Director of Policy & Advocacy at CASES, a leading provider of services to New Yorkers with involvement in the criminal legal system. At CASES, we provide a range of programs and services that offer hope and healing to over 10,000 New Yorkers annually, most of whom are low-income Black and Brown people in overpoliced and under-resourced neighborhoods. We ensure community safety by meeting the needs of our clients, including mental health care, employment services, education, career enhancement, case management and supervised release.

**Restore Funding to DOP Programs, Including IMPACT and NextSTEPS**

***Cancellation of IMPACT Contract - \$3.3 million***

In 2022, CASES was awarded an RFP for the IMPACT program, to provide an alternative to placement (ATP) program for young people in family court and/or Criminal Supreme Court. Unfortunately, this contract was terminated last fall, before we were able to begin operations. We urge the Council to restore funding for this program, as there is no equivalent program. IMPACT was funded at \$3.3 million annually.

IMPACT would have offered credible messenger mentorship, helped clients reach their educational, employment and pro-social goals and provided home-based family therapy. The contract was intended to start on January 1, 2023. CASES hired staff and conducted outreach to community organizations, public defenders, district attorney's offices and judges to provide information about the program and our intake process. We were prepared to launch this program for several months, however, DOP refused to provide their sign-off to let us start, and ultimately cancelled the contract.

There is no equivalent ATP for our young people – although DOP and ACS both operate other ATPs, these serve young people with different needs than IMPACT. We also operate the Adolescent Portable Therapy program, through a contract with DOP and additional funding from the City Council. While APT provides in-home therapy, it does not provide the significant additional services that IMPACT offers. APT is not an alternative to placement and is also funded for a much smaller caseload (30 young people). IMPACT would have served 175 young people across the city, who are otherwise highly likely to experience juvenile detention. These young people deserve access to the robust supports IMPACT would have provided, instead of being forced out of their community into a less supportive and more expensive setting.

***Cancellation of Next STEPS Program - \$2.5 million***

Last August, with less than one week's notice, the Department of Probation abruptly ended the Next STEPS program. This cancellation covered the entire program, which operated at 15 different New York City Housing Authority developments. CASES operated this program at the Tompkins and Bushwick Houses in Brooklyn. Citywide, the program served over 240 young

people and employed at least 40 individuals, who lost their jobs with less than one week of notice. We urge the Council to restore the full \$2.5 million in funding for this program.

Next STEPS, an initiative of the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety, offered one-on-one and group mentoring within a cognitive behavioral therapy-based curriculum designed to help young adults make the attitudinal and behavioral changes necessary to avoid criminal activity and re-engage with education, work and community. The program was started in 2014 and provides services in each borough. Mentorship is a critical support for many of our young people, as noted in [Mayor Adams' Blueprint for Community Safety](#). Mentors helped youth connect to educational and vocational opportunities, provided youth with a trusted adult who can support them in challenging times, and helped guide youth as they navigate decisions and enter adulthood. Next STEPS programs employed community members, providing them with an opportunity to achieve both economic stability and mobility.

Our program participants wrote a letter sharing their frustration at the cancellation of this program, and what the benefits of the program were to them:

*“Next STEPS has helped us to find jobs and internships while helping to motivate us on a daily basis. Next STEPS creates a good, safe, positive space for us to express ourselves and be free. With mentors that genuinely care, it gives us extra support from someone that we can go to without the fear of being turned away. This program has encouraged us to always do the right thing and to follow in the right path.*

*“Through this program we receive help with things like resume writing, filling out job applications and preparing for interviews. Our mentors work with us to better prepare us for these jobs by leading mock interviews, shopping for professional clothing, and whatever can be done to help us develop as professionals...Everyday has become a learning experience for us and through sex education, know your rights, boxing, chat no cap, and juvenile justice awareness to name a few, we have gained new knowledge...*

*“Whenever we are in need Next STEPS works to help us in ways that we are forever thankful for. We are grateful to have such an amazing program with loving staff that have assisted us in getting out of our comfort zones in order to reach new peaks.”*

The City should reverse this decision and restore funding for the program immediately. The cost of the entire program is just \$2.5 million, a small cost for the unmeasurable impact of transforming lives and guiding young people to achieve their full potential.

### **Reduce the Department of Corrections Budget**

Our City has a legal mandate to close Rikers by 2027. Unfortunately, the executive budget is a recipe for keeping this dangerous, antiquated jail open, not for moving toward closure. We urge the following budget actions:

- Reduce DOC uniformed headcount to 5,110, by eliminating vacancies for uniformed staff and holding staff accountable for chronic absenteeism. The DOC headcount needs to be rightsized in alignment with closing Rikers.



- Reduce overtime spending by consolidating operations and permanently closing jails on Rikers, starting with the vacant Anna M. Kross Center. It is a waste of taxpayer dollars to have officers guarding buildings where no one is incarcerated.

### **Fully Fund Alternatives to Incarceration – Restore Cuts & Add \$1.1 million**

We oppose the proposed cuts to alternative to incarceration, supervised release, and reentry programs funded through the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ). We are pleased to see some restored funding compared to the preliminary budget for ATI and reentry, but these programs still face significant cuts. We operate a range of ATI programs that receive funding from MOCJ, including:

- Nathaniel ACT ATI: an innovative program that serves people with serious mental illness facing felony charges and at least one year of incarceration. Participants receive intensive mental health services, peer support, housing assistance, employment services and nursing, from a team that coordinates directly with the court and the Kirby Forensic Psychiatric Center. In just the first 8 months of FY24, we enrolled 22 new clients, 75% more than our contract’s goal.
  - among people who entered the program on a violent felony charge, there were no new violent felony convictions in the two years after they completed the program’s mandated services
  - 94% of all participants had no new felony conviction of any kind in the two years after they completed the program
  - 70% decrease in homelessness from program intake to program exit
  - 50% decrease in psychiatric hospitalization from program intake to program exit
- NewSTART: a short-term ATI that includes individual and group cognitive behavioral interventions, referrals to treatment, engagement in employment-readiness workshops and community service. We expect to serve over 1,300 clients in FY24. NewSTART disrupts patterns of frequent, low-level court involvement and short jail stays by targeting common barriers to wellness and stability in the community, including untreated behavioral health conditions and unemployment. Services begin at arraignment and continue at CASES’s community offices. After completion of their mandate, clients can engage in voluntary services, including specific services for youth and young adults.
- Nathaniel Community Success (NCS): an ATI and ATD for individuals with mental health needs and/or substance use disorders. We expect to serve over 350 clients in FY24. Services begin with a specialized clinical assessment to develop an individual plan for each client, with services including motivation interviewing, skill building and linkages to services in the community. NCS coordinates closely with CASES’s Nathaniel Clinic, which provides mental health, substance use, primary care and peer services in Central Harlem and the South Bronx. This program is funded by the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice, with annual funding of \$2,853,596.
- ROAR (Reframing Opportunity, Alternatives & Resilience): an ATI for youth and young adults 16-27 which aims to help young people achieve success and avoid further court involvement. We have served 237 clients so far in FY24, more than our budgeted caseload. Each young person in ROAR has an individual success plan and works with a multidisciplinary team including a youth development coach, employment specialist, therapist, and criminal justice liaison. We provide a range of services depending on the young person’s needs, including high school equivalency classes & test, college admissions support, mental health services, primary care services through our partnership

with the Institute for Family Health, family therapy provided in the home, & work readiness and employment programs. This program is funded by the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, with annual funding of \$3,381,835.

It is critical that ATI funding be fully restored and baselined for future years. However, simple restoration of funds will not achieve the community safety that New Yorkers deserve, and it is not sufficient to achieve the City's legal mandate to Close Rikers by 2027. Instead, the budget should significantly increase investments in ATIs and ATDs to scale these programs to fully meet the need. Twenty percent of individuals incarcerated in NYC jails have a serious mental illness. Rather than incarcerating these individuals in a jail that has consistently shown an inability to provide even basic mental health care or ensure the safety of incarcerated individuals, the City should fund ATIs, like Nathaniel ACT and Nathaniel Community Success, that are proven to provide to improve public safety by providing these individuals with the mental health care they need, along with access to housing and other essential supports.

Additionally, ATI funding must be increased to support the staff who provide this essential work. We were thrilled to see the City recognize the value of the nonprofit workforce with an agreement to fund a 9% COLA over 3 years. This is a critical step in support our workforce, who have been undervalued in city contracts for decades. ATI funding must be increased to ensure that staff receive the COLA as committed to by the City.

#### **Increase the Board of Correction Headcount to 1% of DOC headcount**

The Board of Correction serves a crucial oversight role, but simply does not have adequate staffing to fulfill their mission. Linking the BOC headcount to the DOC headcount, as occurs with CCRB, would ensure more adequate staff. This would add 35 positions, a critically needed increase that would cost just \$4m.

#### **Increase Funding for the Commission on Human Rights by \$4 Million**

The passage of the Fair Chance for Housing bill provides a wonderful opportunity to help individuals with criminal system involvement access housing and build lives in the community. The Commission on Human Rights is tasked with ensuring compliance with this impactful law. However, the Commission has been underfunded and understaffed for years, and thus does not have the resources to do this successfully. We urge the Council to add \$4 million to provide the holistic funding the agency needs to successfully implement Fair Chance ofr Housing and fulfill its mandate of preventing discrimination.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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**Testimony before the New York City Council Committee on Criminal Justice  
FY25 Executive Budget Hearing, May 17, 2024**

Chair Nurse and Committee Members:

Since 1995, Children's Rights has been a national advocate for youth in state systems. We are also a member of the New York City Jails Action Coalition. Our experience with adolescents and young adults in foster care and juvenile legal systems often brings us into contact with young adult and youth corrections policy, as our clients are disproportionately represented in young adult and juvenile correction facilities. We advocate on behalf of young adults, 18- to 21-years old, incarcerated on Rikers Island.

We cannot incarcerate our way to public health and public safety. We must invest in our communities, not continue to throw money at the humanitarian disaster that is Rikers Island.

New York City operates both the most excessively-funded and over-staffed jail system in the country. In 2021 alone, New York City spent almost three times as much per incarcerated person as the second most expensive jail system in the United States.<sup>1</sup> The City now spends over \$556,000 per incarcerated person per year.<sup>2</sup> There are more correctional officers than there are incarcerated persons on Rikers.<sup>3</sup> Despite the enormous sums poured into the City's jails, however, countless reports show that detainees are subjected to some of the most dangerous, degrading, and inhumane conditions in the country. You need look no further than the *Nunez* monitor's regular reports and the February 28, 2024 report filed in *Benjamin v. Molina* detailing vermin infestation and sanitary violations on Rikers.<sup>4</sup> Serving time on Rikers can also be a death sentence: since Mayor Adams took office, 31 incarcerated people have lost their lives while in Department of Correction custody.<sup>5</sup>

Rikers must close by 2027 in accordance with the law. Yet Mayor Adams's proposed budget will undoubtedly reduce the chances of this happening by cutting funding for alternatives to incarceration and re-entry services, and failing to adequately fund community resources such as supportive housing and community-based mental health treatment, all of which would reduce the ballooning population on the Island and hasten its closure. The administration is proposing \$6.7

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/a-look-inside-the-new-york-city-correction-budget.pdf> at page 2.

<sup>2</sup> <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-cost-of-incarceration-per-person-in-new-york-city-skyrockets-to-all-time-high-2/> The most recent available data show that more than 84% of incarcerated persons on Rikers are there pre-trial, more than 55% have mental health conditions, and over 90% are people of color. <https://greaterjusticenyc.vera.org/nycjail/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cityandstateny.com/opinion/2023/08/opinion-rikers-richly-staffed-without-plan-rightsize-it-will-cost-us-dearly/389647/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://tillidgroup.com/projects/nunez-monitorship/>; <https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/new-rikers-island-report-reveals-graphic-details-about-unsanitary-conditions-fire-safety-and-ventilation-systems/>; [https://ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/politics/2024/01/11/detainees-request-clean-laundry-report-unsanitary-conditions-on-rikers#:~:text=%22They%20don%27t%20have%20soap.%2C%20to%20wash%20their%20clothes.%22](https://ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/politics/2024/01/11/detainees-request-clean-laundry-report-unsanitary-conditions-on-rikers#:~:text=%22They%20don%27t%20have%20soap.%2C%20to%20wash%20their%20clothes.%22;); see also <https://centerforjustice.columbia.edu/news/new-report-solitary-many-other-names-report-persistent-and-pervasive-use-solitary-confinement>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.vera.org/news/nyc-jail-deaths>. Yet another person has died since we testified in March 2024.

million in cuts to alternatives to incarceration programs – a key resource included in the plan to close Rikers. The proposed budget also cuts \$13.1 million from the supervised release program, despite the Council’s securing \$36.8 million in new funding for this program in the last year alone.

The cuts that the administration is proposing will uniquely impact young adults incarcerated on Rikers Island. Evidence shows that incarceration reduces youth’s success in education and employment, and also leads to lasting damage to their health and well-being.<sup>6</sup> Evidence also shows that alternatives to incarceration lead to better outcomes for youth and adolescents, all while costing far less than incarceration.<sup>7</sup> Reducing funding for alternatives to confinement and re-entry services makes no sense morally, ethically, or fiscally.

There is still time for Mayor Adams to change course. For example, the City can deliver on its promise to open 380 units of Justice Involved Supportive Housing, a model that has been widely successful in reducing jail, shelter, and hospital stays, and generates significant cost savings.<sup>8</sup> We also urge the City to increase the number of Board of Correction staff in proportion to the number of Department staff. Increasing the Board’s headcount to only 1% of the Department’s would allow for 25 additional staff, adding only \$4 million to the overall expense budget and increasing the Board’s ability to address the deplorable conditions that human beings suffer on Rikers, all while preparing to shut it down.

Negotiating changes to the proposed budget provides an opportunity for the Council to move the City in the right direction, while also rightsizing the expenditure of taxpayer dollars. Instead of allocating \$2.6 billion to the Department of Correction as the Mayor has proposed, the Council should provide sufficient funding for alternatives to incarceration, supervised release and re-entry programs, supportive and affordable housing, and community mental health services. We urge the Council to fund the Board of Correction adequately so it can provide meaningful oversight of the abomination that is Rikers.

The budget in its current state does not move toward any of these goals. We look to you and Speaker Adams to negotiate a fair, just, and reasonable budget that serves all New Yorkers, including young adults and adults on Rikers, and expedites closure of the Island.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Sincerely,



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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/why-youth-incarceration-fails-an-updated-review-of-the-evidence/>

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Reduce-Homelessness-for-People-Impacted-by-the-Criminal-Legal-System.pdf>



**Chinese-American Planning Council  
Testimony Before the Committee on Finance and Committee on Aging  
Chair, Council Member Justin Brannan  
Chair, Council Member Crystal Hudson  
May 17th, 2024**

Thank you Chairs Brannan, Hudson, and members of the City Council for the opportunity to testify today. The mission of the Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc. (CPC) is to promote social and economic empowerment of Chinese American, immigrant, and low-income communities. CPC was founded in 1965 as a grassroots, community-based organization in response to the end of the Chinese Exclusion years and the passing of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. Our services have expanded since our founding to include three key program areas: education, family support, and community and economic empowerment.

CPC is the largest Asian American social service organization in the U.S., providing vital resources to more than 80,000 people per year through more than 50 programs at over 30 sites across Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. CPC employs over 700 staff whose comprehensive services are linguistically accessible, culturally sensitive, and highly effective in reaching low-income and immigrant individuals and families. With the firm belief that social service can incite social change, CPC strives to empower our constituents as agents of social justice, with the overarching goal of advancing and transforming communities.

To that end, we are grateful to testify about the issues that greatly impact our communities. CPC serves over 11,000 older adults annually through our culturally-appropriate, linguistically accessible, community-based Senior Centers, where they participate in classes and social activities, access nutrition, health and mental health services, and get connected to resources and support. We house 300 seniors through our affordable housing units. And we serve over 3,000 older adults and people with disabilities through our Home Attendant Program.

**Continuing to invest and expand meal delivery service for seniors**

Home delivered meals for seniors were crucial during the pandemic and remain so as many seniors are limited mobility and/or can't afford rising costs of groceries. According to a report by the [Robin Hood Foundation](#), it was reported that 1 in 4 adults over the age of 65 experienced poverty in 2022. We are glad to see the administration's concerted effort in expanding these services; however, we are urging the Council to allocate **\$12 million to increase the per meal rate for HDM programs to \$15.31 per meal**. HDM providers report an average deficit of \$2.51 dollars per meal served, the contract with the city should at least pay for the services that they require.

**Investing in Senior Centers and Geriatric Mental Health Initiative:**

Older Adult Services have huge capital needs due to deteriorating spaces, appliances, and vehicles that have gone without necessary upgrades for the past decade. Case management organizations are serving individuals with more intensive mental health issues with less funding



from the city. At the same time the administration is cutting \$18 million dollars from OACs with planned cuts of over \$50 million dollars in the next 5 fiscal years to a system that they have refused to comprehensively invest in citing administrative hurdles and a lack of need that does not match the reality of older adults across our city. In addition, the Council's Geriatric Mental Health Initiative is critical to addressing the growing mental health crisis in the AAPI community, which experiences the highest rate of senior suicides. Through GMHI, we are able to break down the stigma and barriers to mental health access by normalizing mental health and providing appropriate services.

### **Healthy Aging**

The Chinese-American Planning Council Home Attendant Program, Inc. (CPCHAP) is one of the largest not-for-profit home care service agencies in New York City, licensed in 1998 by the NYS Department of Health as a Home Care Service Agency. Under contract with the New York City Human Resources Administration from the outset, CPCHAP also contracts with many managed care organizations for the provision of Personal Care Services and Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program to Medicaid-eligible individuals. CPCHAP serves about 3,000 home care recipients daily and employs over 4,000 employees.

CPCHAP is well-respected for its ability to provide culturally and linguistically competent home care services for individuals who live in one of the five boroughs of New York City and who are medically disabled, elderly and/or physically disabled who might otherwise require institutionalization. CPCHAP works with clients, their families, nurses, social workers and physicians in tailoring each plan of care and provides services for individuals who speak Chinese, Spanish, English, Russian, and Korean, as well as other languages. CPCHAP works with patients and their families to offer the care needed, ranging from a few hours each week to 24-hour care.

Asian Americans are the fastest growing population in New York State, and seniors are the fastest growing subset. Over 1 in 3 Asian American seniors lives under the poverty line, and over 2 in 3 are Limited English Proficient (LEP).

Broadly speaking, New York State has the fourth oldest population in the nation, with 3.7 million people aged 60 and over. By 2030, [5.2 million people](#) in the state will be 60 and older, with 1.81 million New Yorkers will be 75 or older. An estimated [seven out of 10](#) people over the age of 65 will need some kind of long term care. In addition, there are over a million New Yorkers with disabilities, chronic illnesses, or other functional complications that require direct care, creating a significant population in New York State that requires direct care support to live and age in dignity. Direct care in homes and communities is either provided by unpaid family caregivers, paid family caregivers, or home health workers through an agency. Care that takes place in homes and in communities is often higher quality, preferred by consumers, and less costly overall than institutionalized care. Many immigrant seniors and families prefer home health care because they can receive language accessible and culturally competent care that they would not find in institutionalized settings.

Because of the growing needs of people with disabilities and an increasingly aging population, the home care sector is the largest employer in the nation, yet continues to face shortages. In



NYC alone, [there are 187,000 home health](#) workers, and in New York State, there are over 330,600 home health workers. Yet because of growing need, by 2025, New York State will see a 33 percent growth in need for home health aides and face a shortage of [23,000 workers](#). While automation and investments in technology serve to improve the function and efficacy of hospitalization and institutionalized care, this portion of the healthcare industry is highly reliant on human work, adding urgency to investments in this workforce.

We urge the Council to join us in advocating for New York State to build a robust home care sector that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

In addition, we are also strongly urging the Council to consider and ensure that the following are included in the FY25 adopted budget that is necessary to uplift our growing aging population:

- **Maintain the existing council discretionary funding to keep our system whole.**
- **\$50 Million to create a capital funding pot to get centers and resources in a state of good repair.** There must be a baselined funding stream that keeps the physical spaces and resources of our system in good repair. Organizations cannot contract with the city on these services if the city cannot commit to paying for the resources needed to do this work.
- **Identify and reform existing obstructions to providing capital funding across the board, but particularly with NYCHA and RAD converted properties.** Organizations have been able to secure capital funding through alternative city, state and federal sources for projects that were not approved for capital funding by the administration. Administrative hurdles should not be cited as the reason older adult centers are falling apart and the city has the ability to change its own rules to get the funding where it needs to be.
- **\$20 million to expand social work support across the network to allow for more comprehensive service to New Yorkers.** Organizations on average need 2 more case managers and 1 intake staff to create a program that can keep talent and serve the community well. This will allow higher needs cases to be handled effectively and keep the focus on service instead of admin work.
- **Reverse ALL cuts to the aging system.** We have identified acute needs across the system that any currently unspent funds could be used to remedy. Pulling money out of this system will only create a death spiral through physical deterioration of centers and resources, or fiscal insolvency for many smaller providers.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify on issues that greatly impact our communities. If there are any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to Ashley Chen, Policy Analyst at [achen9@cpc-nyc.org](mailto:achen9@cpc-nyc.org).



## **TESTIMONY OF CITYMEALS ON WHEELS**

**Before the New York City Council**

**Committee on Aging**  
**Honorable Crystal Hudson, Chair**  
*jointly with*  
**the Committee on Finance**  
**Honorable Justin Brannan, Chair**

**Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget Hearing**  
**May 17, 2024**

**Submitted by:**  
**Jeanette Estima**  
**Director, Policy and Advocacy**  
**Citymeals on Wheels**

### **Overview**

Citymeals on Wheels was established in New York City in 1981 as a unique public private model to fill a critical gap in the City's home delivered meal program, which provides only one meal per day, five days a week, excluding weekends and holidays. Since then, Citymeals has also become a citywide emergency food responder for homebound older adults, beginning with 9/11 and continuing throughout the pandemic.

The need for food programs that can reach older adults at home has increased over the past years due to both the general growth in the older



population, increasing food insecurity, and an increase in the number of climate-related emergencies. Simultaneously, the cost of food has continued to rise after the pandemic and is outpacing the City's funding for home-delivered and congregate meals programs.

In FY23, Citymeals served about 1,150 more older adults than we did in FY22. Our food costs have also increased by about 33% since the pandemic. Therefore, **we respectfully request a renewal of \$500,000 and an enhancement of \$300,000 through the Older Adult Clubs, Programs, and Enhancements Initiative to ensure that we can keep meeting the needs of older New Yorkers who are unable to access other food programs during emergencies.**

On average, the City's contracted providers of home-delivered meals have seen food costs increase by about 25% and fuel costs by about 7%. However, NYC Aging's upcoming RFP indicates a flat per-meal reimbursement rate, making it untenable to maintain the current level of service, let alone respond to the increasing need. Citymeals works hand-in-hand with these providers to ensure that older adults are able to eat at the very least one meal every day. To that end, **we urge the City to allocate \$12 million to increase the per meal reimbursement rate for home-delivered meals programs to \$15.31 per meal.**

Finally, meals served at older adult centers play an important role in supporting the nutritional and social needs of older adults, yet many have fallen into disrepair—a condition that no doubt has contributed to lower participation rates in the past year. The answer is not to cut funding, but rather to recommit to making these centers vibrant and safe community hubs for older New Yorkers. Therefore, we join our partners in calling for a

**\$50 million capital fund to repair and upgrade these important community resources that can support deeper engagement.**

We thank the City Council for its continued partnership in ensuring that homebound older New Yorkers do not go hungry and are not forgotten during emergencies.

**The Citymeals on Wheels Model**

Citymeals on Wheels was founded 41 years ago to fill a significant gap in city services, securing funding to provide weekend and holiday meals to those homebound older adults unable to shop and cook for themselves. While the Department for the Aging funds the one daily meal that homebound older adults receive Mondays through Fridays (excluding holidays), Citymeals funds the same network of providers to deliver weekend, holiday, and emergency meals. *Without Citymeals, the most vulnerable older New Yorkers would not have a meal on about 115 days each year.* On a 3-day holiday weekend, the most isolated older adults could go 3 straight days without a meal; and, in times of emergencies, they could go even longer without food or contact with another person. To bridge this gap, Citymeals raises around \$25 million to fund or provide about 2 million emergency, weekend, and holiday meals annually.

In addition to providing food on weekends and holidays, Citymeals has become a citywide emergency responder for older adults, beginning with 9/11. In 2018, the opening of our Bronx warehouse solidified this role by giving us the capacity to store up to 10,000 packed and ready meals, and enough food to quickly package up to 60,000 more meals. With this level of inventory, we can pre-supply existing program participants with nutritious, shelf-stable meals and respond to those in temporary need during extreme

weather, an emergency closure, or a suspension of meal delivery service. We can turn on a dime to reach large numbers of older adults in senior housing facilities, NYCHA housing, or Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs), as well as individuals living across the five boroughs. We have stepped up during citywide emergencies like Hurricane Ida, as well as more localized emergencies such as a power or gas outage. Time and again, we have illustrated the value of our agile and resourceful model.

Nowhere was this more clearly demonstrated than the Covid-19 pandemic, which rendered thousands of older adults effectively homebound when it very suddenly became unsafe for them to be in most public spaces. They were no longer able to access their usual food programs, such as lunches at an older adult center, or food pantries. We delivered our first emergency meals on March 5, 2020, at least a week before the city shut down, because we anticipated that something could happen which would leave older New Yorkers without enough food on hand. Throughout the pandemic, we delivered over 6 million meals to the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

**In FY23, Citymeals responded to 63 emergencies with 34,515 meals, and pre-supplied program participants with over 160,000 meals in our seasonal emergency meal packages.** This is what we do, and what we hope to keep doing. Citymeals has the infrastructure and stands ready for the next emergency, provided we can access the additional funding that makes our nimble model possible.

## **The Need**

There are more than 1.7 million New York City residents over the age of 60—that's one in five New Yorkers. Increased life expectancy is a testimony to the achievements of modern science, technology, and even the social

safety net. Living longer and on a fixed income presents a wide-ranging set of needs from healthcare to mobility restrictions to food insecurity. For our recipients this could look like not being able to see well enough to cook their own meals, being unable to safely walk to the store or carry groceries home, or not having someone who can come by regularly to help with these tasks. These facts, combined with a global demographic shift means we can confidently predict that more and more people will be coming onto the HDM rolls in the years to come—indeed we have been seeing a steady increase for years.

Being unable to shop for groceries or prepare your own meals does not warrant institutionalization; these needs can be effectively managed through a network of community services and supports. And remaining at home is not only the overwhelming preference of older adults, it's also better for their overall wellbeing, and of course, much more cost effective—for both the individual and the City—than moving into a nursing home.

In addition to this rapidly growing need, inflation has driven up the cost of food and fuel further straining our ability to feed hungry, homebound older New Yorkers. During the pandemic, our food costs increased 33% and there is no longer federal aid that supported nonprofits in ramping up services during that time.

While the pandemic highlighted the need for emergency, supplemental food for our recipients the need is still here and growing. For example, the number of climate events that create enough damage that people become unable to leave their homes to get food, whether due to power outages or unsafe streets, has grown. *The homebound older adult population is not regularly served by any other citywide emergency food groups.* Citymeals is

the only provider who can respond at scale, bringing food to older adults at their homes across New York City. Therefore, it is critical that Citymeals can continue to pre-supply emergency food that can be kept in a cabinet for more minor emergencies, and quickly respond to bigger emergencies with truckloads of 3-meal bags. **Therefore, we respectfully request an enhancement to \$800,000 (up from \$500,000) through the Older Adult Clubs, Programs, and Enhancements Initiative to fund Citymeals' emergency meals program.**

### **Sector-wide Needs**

The entire network of home-delivered meals providers is under extreme pressure caused by increased needs and, on average, a 25% increase in food costs and a 7% increase in fuel costs. However, NYC Aging's recent RFP keeps a flat per-meal reimbursement rate, making it untenable to maintain the current level of service. **We urge the City to increase the reimbursement rate for home-delivered meals contracts to \$15.31 per meal, an investment of \$12 million.**

Finally, we urge the City to not cut any funding for older adult centers. If participation is lower than usual, then the answer is to recommit to making them vibrant community hubs, that are safe, in good repair, and provide robust programming (both in person and virtually). This cannot be done without upgrades and repairs at many sites across the city, yet centers are deeply restricted in what they are able to do with their physical sites, due to capital funding constraints and bureaucratic red tape. **Therefore, we join our partners in calling for a \$50 million capital fund to repair and upgrade these important community resources.**



May 17, 2024

Dear Members of NYC Council of **the Criminal Justice Committee**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the NYC budget for 2025.

I am Lauren Velez from the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), a national nonprofit that works to reduce homelessness by helping communities provide permanently affordable housing and wraparound services. Supportive housing is for people who, without services, would not be able to stay housed.

My testimony today is focused on people in NYC who have significant behavioral health needs and are often cycling between shelters, street homelessness, emergency rooms and Rikers jail. **We are asking the City to invest in our community providers to help reduce crisis system use and help with public safety.**

The solution to our City's housing and mental health crisis is to appropriately fund service providers, so these organizations have the right workforce, can retain their staff, secure apartments for clients in a competitive market, and be able to expand their programs. **The current funding levels are not adequate nor responding to the evolving needs on the ground.**

***We respectfully ask that City Council urges Mayor Adams to invest in the housing and services needs of the most at-risk New Yorkers and takes steps forward on the [City's commitment to Close Rikers](#) by:***

- 1. Allocating an additional \$6.4 million to ensure the JISH units are fully operational and make JISH funding its own line-item in the DOHMH budget.**

Justice Involved Supportive Housing (JISH) is currently the only NYC designated supportive housing program for people leaving Rikers Island, with 120 apartments currently available, despite a need of more than 2,500<sup>1</sup>.

In 2019 the City promised to fund 500 Justice Involved Supportive Housing (JISH) units, but the funding levels are not high enough to adequately staff or provide critical services to the existing 120 units. Despite the JISH program serving some of the most complex clients in supportive housing, JISH units receive approximately \$17,000 less per unit compared to similar supportive housing units across the city.

- 2. Restore \$4.7M to the Office of Criminal Justice for ATIs, supervised release and re-entry programs** including \$2.1M for alternatives to incarceration and \$2.6M for re-entry services. Closing Rikers jail requires deep investment in alternatives to incarceration. Restoring this funding is critical for the safety and health of our city.

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<sup>1</sup> [Reduce-Homelessness-for-People-Impacted-by-the-Criminal-Legal-System.pdf \(csh.org\)](#)



## Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) Testimony

May 17, 2024

3. **Allocate an additional \$8.9M to DOHMH to meet mental health needs**, and fulfill commitments in the Close Rikers plan, including:
  - a. \$2.9M more to enable 5 of the 22 newly funded state Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams to operate as Forensic ACT (FACT) teams (\$575K per team).
  - b. \$6M more to fully implement Local Law 118-2023, supporting the establishment of four new crisis respite centers.
  - c. Ensure adequate funding to fully implement Local Law 119-2023 by establishing at least five new clubhouses (21 citywide), and take steps to prevent closures of existing sites.
  
4. **Ask Mayor Adams' administration join City Council in publicly committing to a comprehensive reallocation plan for NYC 15/15 that better serves the evolving needs of our community.**

NYC 15/15 funding needs to be reallocated to respond to the reality of the housing landscape, with a focus on removing barriers to scattered site housing and preserving the units we do have. We greatly appreciate City Council agreeing publicly to a comprehensive reallocation plan for NYC 15/15 during the 2025 budget negotiations and respectfully request Council leadership continue asking the Administration to join in this commitment.

The case for investing in housing can be made both ethically and financially, and the conclusion is the same: safe, affordable housing with services and connections to community resources is how we will increase public safety and help move people beyond often generational cycles of poverty and crisis.

Respectfully,

Lauren Velez, Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), [lauren.velez@csh.org](mailto:lauren.velez@csh.org)



Testimony of Christine Dey, Director,  
Co-op Village NORC, Educational Alliance  
to the New York City Council Committee on Aging  
Crystal Hudson, Chair  
New York City Executive Aging Budget FY25  
May 17, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the NYC Aging budget. My name is Christine Dey, and I am Director of the Cooperative Village Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (Co-op Village NORC) at Educational Alliance. Educational Alliance is a settlement house with community centers located throughout Lower Manhattan that offer individuals and families high-quality, multi-generational programs and services that enhance their well-being and socioeconomic opportunities.

Educational Alliance provides programs and services to older adults through our Weinberg Older Adult Center (OAC), the Co-op Village NORC, and our Sirovich OAC.

Through these programs, supported by contracts with NYC Aging, we serve a highly diverse population of about 4,000 older adults annually. Our OACs enhance the lives of older New Yorkers through congregate meal programs, arts, education, and fitness classes, civic engagement opportunities, and the provision of social services. Co-op Village NORC provides education, health screenings and preventive services, doctor referrals, and wrap-around nursing services and case management to support older New Yorkers as they age-in-place. In our most recent Client Satisfaction Survey, 98% of respondents (of 170) agreed that their participation in our programs contributed positively to their health and wellbeing.

As we stated in our testimony in the preliminary budget hearings before this committee in March, older adult services simply cannot sustain cuts to funding. As it is, the entire network of programs that serve older adults is already impacted by years of disinvestment in the sector.

We are very grateful that the Administration recognized the importance of human services workers and included a 3% COLA and workforce enhancement for NYC Aging in the executive budget. However, the executive budget does not restore funding from the previously proposed cuts to NYC Aging and includes an \$80 million funding shortfall to older adult centers and home delivered meals. Such cuts pose serious threats to the essential programs provided for older adults and **we urge the Administration and City Council to reverse ALL cuts to NYC Aging and reinvest in this system.**

At Educational Alliance, like many providers across the City, our OACs work with the most vulnerable populations among older adults, including those living in high poverty and with limited English proficiency. Our programs provide food, health and fitness programming, case

You belong here.



management, and meaningful trip and cultural experiences for older adults. In our NORC, comprehensive wrap-around nursing support enables older New Yorkers to age in their homes for as long as possible, dramatically improving their quality of life while reducing financial strain on long term care facilities.

With acute needs across the system, instead of cuts to NYC Aging, the City must invest funds into the older adult network for both services and capital repairs and maintenance of centers. Organizations cannot continue to provide services without resources needed to keep our buildings in good repair. Additionally, we must work to expand comprehensive social work support for older New Yorkers and combat older adult hunger through increased funds for congregate home delivered meals.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**Testimony of Fiorela Caro Turin, Senior Director of Older Adult Programs,  
Sirovich OAC, Educational Alliance  
to the New York City Council Committee on Aging  
Crystal Hudson, Chair  
New York City Preliminary Aging Budget FY25  
May 17, 2024**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the NYC Aging budget. My name is Fiorela Caro Turin, and I am the Associate Director of Older Adult Programs at the Sirovich Center for Balanced Living Older Adult Center (Sirovich OAC) at Educational Alliance. Educational Alliance is a settlement house with community centers located throughout Lower Manhattan that offer individuals and families high-quality, multi-generational programs and services that enhance their well-being and socioeconomic opportunities.

Educational Alliance provides programs and services to older adults through our Weinberg Older Adult Center (OAC), the Cooperative Village Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) and our Sirovich OAC.

Through these programs, supported by contracts with NYC Aging, we serve a highly diverse population of about 4,000 older adults annually. Our OACs enhance the lives of older New Yorkers through congregate meal programs, arts, education, and fitness classes, civic engagement opportunities, and the provision of social services. Co-op Village NORC provides education, health screenings and preventive services, doctor referrals, and wrap-around nursing services and case management to support older New Yorkers as they age-in-place. In our most recent Client Satisfaction Survey, 98% of respondents (of 170) agreed that their participation in our programs contributed positively to their health and wellbeing.

As we stated in our testimony in the preliminary budget hearings before this committee in March, older adult services simply cannot sustain cuts to funding. As it is, the entire network of programs that serve older adults is already impacted by years of disinvestment in the sector.

We are very grateful that the Administration recognized the importance of human services workers and included a 3% COLA and workforce enhancement for NYC Aging in the executive budget. However, the executive budget does not restore funding from the previously proposed cuts to NYC Aging and includes an \$80 million funding shortfall to older adult centers and home delivered meals. Such cuts pose serious threats to the essential programs provided for older adults and **we urge the Administration and City Council to reverse ALL cuts to NYC Aging and reinvest in this system.**

You belong here.

At Educational Alliance, like many providers across the City, our OACs work with the most vulnerable populations among older adults, including those living in high poverty and with limited English proficiency. Our programs provide food, health and fitness programming, case management, and meaningful trip and cultural experiences for older adults. In our NORC, comprehensive wrap-around nursing support enables older New Yorkers to age in their homes for as long as possible, improving their quality of life while reducing financial strain on long-term care facilities.

With acute needs across the system, instead of cuts to NYC Aging, the City must invest funds into the older adult network for both services and capital repairs and maintenance of centers. Organizations cannot continue to provide services without resources needed to keep our buildings in good repair. Additionally, we must work to expand comprehensive social work support for older New Yorkers and combat older adult hunger through increased funds for congregate home delivered meals.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Linda P. ...". The signature is stylized and cursive.



**Testimony of Jeannie of Sirovich Center for Balanced Living,  
Educational Alliance Older Adult Center, to the  
New York City Council Committee on Aging  
Crystal Hudson, Chair  
New York City Preliminary Aging Budget FY25  
May 17, 2024**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the NYC Aging budget. My name is Jeannie and I am a member of Sirovich Center for Balanced Living since September 15, 2022, an Older Adult Center of Educational Alliance. **I am writing today to urge the City Council and Administration to reverse ALL cuts to NYC Aging and reinvest in older adults.**

I always say that one person can say something or do something that can change one's life. It happened to me, again, on September 14, 2022, Thursday.

I had a second major heart surgery in February, 2020 just as the pandemic began. I spent the year recovering in an assisted facility away from family and friends. In 2021, I spent most of the year packing an apartment of 36 years to move to a new apartment on the ground floor. In early 2022, I moved and spent several months unpacking!

By mid September, I had had enough of boxes and needed something else. I was on a mission. I had heard of Educational Alliance for years on 197 East Broadway. I took the bus on September 14, registered with Hannah but was then told that all the classes I was interested in were full and had a waiting list. I was very disappointed.

A man sitting at the desk next to me had overheard the conversation and just said, "there's another place that is part of Educational Alliance on East 12 St called Sirovich". He wrote down the address on the schedule that I had. The man was Cory Michael Herman and that information changed my life.

As I mentioned, I was on a mission. I took the bus uptown to the East Village where I had lived since 1978. Sirovich is a 10 minute walk from my apartment. I walked into Sirovich, registered with Yenny, received the meal schedule and class schedule. I returned for lunch the next day on September 15, Friday and I like to say that I have never left.

That was my first day and the first of many new experiences. I had lunch which was delicious and was told that there was a harvest moon festival that afternoon in the auditorium. I attended and was delighted to see performances of Chinese dance and singing. I took photos to show my niece.

I returned on Monday and started having lunch with new friends and attending classes. I attended a writing class, a Wellness class, various lectures, an art class and an empowerment class that were all engaging and challenging. Sirovich was just what I needed.

**You belong here.**

As many seniors who have worked all their lives and then retire, then recovering from 2 heart surgeries and developing lupus, I spent some time wondering, now what?

In a society that is so focused on youth and beauty, one is never educated about aging. Personally, I had been a caregiver in my family, taking care of many family members until it was just me, myself and I!

Sirovich has been and continues to be an important and invaluable presence in my life. I am thankful and grateful for the classes that are offered especially the ones about wellness and aging. I appreciate the conversations and discussions with others and hear about different life experiences and coping mechanisms. I learn about new methods from the instructors.

The exercise classes are active and fun. We are encouraged to move at our own pace, not to force movements but be mindful of our abilities at the present and the ones to be developed in time.

The art studio was recently renovated at the beginning of 2024, freshly painted, refurbished with tables, supplies organized. I attended classes with Sheryl Jaffe, a social worker/art therapist and Anastasia Dresden, an art therapist intern from NYU.

I have always been ready, willing, able and open to trying new experiences in life. In Sheryl and Anastasia's class we were introduced to a new artist every week. This was a prompt to work on our own ideas with this suggestion. I was challenged to think and paint with new concepts and colors which has been exciting and invigorating! Near the end of each class, we shared our work, our ideas and inspirations.

I began a ceramics class in late January. I have a background of many years in ceramics but a new environment, studio and other artists are, again, exciting and invigorating. We are guided by Sherman, Nick and Deb.

We, also go on field trips which are fun and educational. I went to the Rubin Museum with Julie's meditation class. Recently, Sirovich went to the Brooklyn Botanical Garden to see the orchids and the beautiful cherry blossom trees.

I am forever grateful and thankful for Sirovich and how it has nurtured and enriched me. We are nurtured by the delicious food prepared and served by the kitchen staff. We are enriched by the supportive, encouraging and hardworking staff and visiting instructors and interns.

A serendipitous event in February began a new activity. Fiorela Caro, the associate director asked me, Riki Takashima and Lyndell Weeks if we would be interested in painting a dragon for the Lunar Celebration for the following week, after lunch. We agreed.

In 2 1/2 hours, with M. Clayton's help we painted a majestic 8' dragon. During the celebration one week later, it was the backdrop for the performers and singers on stage. It was appreciated by one and all.

Riki, Lyndell and I greatly enjoyed the entire process and result. We, also, work very well together in getting the job done. We agreed we would like to do this again. I spoke to Cory and Fiorela about a birthday banner for the monthly celebrations then banners for CelebratEArts at Sirovich and the "Under the Sea" Prom at Manny Cantor. They have been completed. Our next banner will be for the Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Celebration on May 28, Tuesday at Sirovich.

Another activity is the Puppetry Workshop with Federico Restrepo. I have never done this before but it has been fun and interesting as a new challenge. Our performance will be May 31, Friday.

I would like to give my special thanks to the Sirovich staff, Shao Director, Fiorela Associate Director, Cory Artistic Director, Sheryl, Julie, Dana, Schekira, M., Yenny, Rick, Steve, Sherman, Nick and Deb. And Isaiah and Henry who keep Sirovich spotless!

Please continue funding for senior programs like the centers of Educational Alliance, such as Sirovich, 14 St Y, Manny Cantor... We are a community here, engaged, active, vibrant, learning and growing together!!!  
Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

JC



Testimony of Shao Mei Zhang, Senior Director of Older Adult Programs,  
Sirovich OAC, Educational Alliance  
to the New York City Council Committee on Aging  
Crystal Hudson, Chair  
New York City Executive Aging Budget FY25  
May 17, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the NYC Aging budget. My name is Shao Mei Zhang, and I am the Senior Director of Older Adult Programs at the Sirovich Center for Balanced Living Older Adult Center (Sirovich OAC) at Educational Alliance. Educational Alliance is a settlement house with community centers located throughout Lower Manhattan that offer individuals and families high-quality, multi-generational programs and services that enhance their well-being and socioeconomic opportunities.

Educational Alliance provides programs and services to older adults through our Weinberg Older Adult Center (OAC), the Cooperative Village Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) and our Sirovich OAC.

Through these programs, supported by contracts with NYC Aging, we serve a highly diverse population of about 4,000 older adults annually. Our OACs enhance the lives of older New Yorkers through congregate meal programs, arts, education, and fitness classes, civic engagement opportunities, and the provision of social services. Co-op Village NORC provides education, health screenings and preventive services, doctor referrals, and wrap-around nursing services and case management to support older New Yorkers as they age-in-place. In our most recent Client Satisfaction Survey, 98% of respondents (of 170) agreed that their participation in our programs contributed positively to their health and wellbeing.

As we stated in our testimony in the preliminary budget hearings before this committee in March, older adult services simply cannot sustain cuts to funding. As it is, the entire network of programs that serve older adults is already impacted by years of disinvestment in the sector.

We are very grateful that the Administration recognized the importance of human services workers and included a 3% COLA and workforce enhancement for NYC Aging in the executive budget. However, the executive budget does not restore funding from the previously proposed cuts to NYC Aging and includes an \$80 million funding shortfall to older adult centers and home delivered meals. Such cuts pose serious threats to the essential programs provided for older adults and **we urge the Administration and City Council to reverse ALL cuts to NYC Aging and reinvest in this system.**

At Educational Alliance, like many providers across the City, our OACs work with the most vulnerable populations among older adults, including those living in high poverty and with

You belong here.

limited English proficiency. Our programs provide food, health and fitness programming, case management, and meaningful trip and cultural experiences for older adults. In our NORC, comprehensive wrap-around nursing support enables older New Yorkers to age in their homes for as long as possible, improving their quality of life while reducing financial strain on long-term care facilities.

With acute needs across the system, instead of cuts to NYC Aging, the City must invest funds into the older adult network for both services and capital repairs and maintenance of centers. Organizations cannot continue to provide services without resources needed to keep our buildings in good repair. Additionally, we must work to expand comprehensive social work support for older New Yorkers and combat older adult hunger through increased funds for congregate home delivered meals.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.





**Testimony of Xiomara Maldonado, Educational Alliance  
to the New York City Council Committee on Aging  
Crystal Hudson, Chair  
New York City Executive Budget FY25, NYC Aging  
May 17, 2024**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the NYC Aging budget. My name is Xiomara Maldonado, and I am Senior Director of Older Adult Programs at Educational Alliance (EA), a settlement house with community centers located throughout Lower Manhattan that offer individuals and families high-quality, multi-generational programs and services that enhance their well-being and socioeconomic opportunities.

Educational Alliance provides programs and services to older adults through our Weinberg Older Adult Center (OAC), the Cooperative Village Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) and our Sirovich OAC. Through these programs, supported by contracts with NYC Aging, we serve a highly diverse population of about 4,000 older adults annually. Our OACs enhance the lives of older New Yorkers through congregate meal programs, arts, education, and fitness classes, civic engagement opportunities, and the provision of social services. Co-op Village NORC provides education, health screenings and preventive services, doctor referrals, and wrap-around nursing services and case management to support older New Yorkers as they age-in-place.

As we stated in our testimony in the preliminary budget hearings before this committee in March, older adult services simply cannot sustain cuts to funding. As it is, the entire network of programs that serve older adults is already impacted by years of disinvestment in the sector.

We are very grateful that the Administration recognized the importance of human services workers and included a 3% COLA and workforce enhancement for NYC Aging in the executive budget. However, the executive budget does not restore any funding from the previous proposed cuts to NYC Aging and in fact includes an \$80 million funding shortfall to older adult centers and home delivered meals. Such cuts pose serious threats to the essential programs provided for older adults and **we urge the Administration and City Council to reverse ALL cuts to NYC Aging and reinvest in this system.**

At EA, like many providers across the City, our OACs work with the most vulnerable populations among older adults, including those living in high poverty and with limited English proficiency. Our programs provide food, health and fitness programming, case management, and meaningful trip and cultural experiences for older adults. In our NORC, comprehensive wrap-around nursing support enables seniors to age in their homes for as long as possible, dramatically improving their quality of life while reducing financial strain on long term care facilities.

You belong here.

With acute needs across the system, instead of cuts to NYC Aging, the City must invest funds into the older adult network for both services and capital repairs and maintenance of centers. Organizations cannot continue to provide services without resources needed to keep our buildings in good repair. Additionally, we must work to expand comprehensive social work support for older New Yorkers and combat older adult hunger through increased funds for congregate home delivered meals.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Testimony of \_\_\_\_\_ of Sirovich Center for Balanced Living,  
Educational Alliance Older Adult Center, to the  
New York City Council Committee on Aging  
Crystal Hudson, Chair  
New York City Preliminary Aging Budget FY25  
May 17, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the NYC Aging budget. My name is HECTOR GUILBES, and I am a member of the V.O.A., an Older Adult Center of Educational Alliance. I am writing today to urge the City Council and Administration to reverse ALL cuts to NYC Aging and reinvest in older adults.

WE ARE ALIVE - CUZ SOMEONE  
CARES WHAT IS TO BECOME OF US/ U.S  
DO NOT TAKE AWAY WHAT IS GIVING  
US A WAY OF LIFE = HOW ARE WE  
TO CONTINUE WITHOUT THE SUPPORT  
COMING FROM THE BUDGET.

To prevent this from happening, the City must restore all cuts to NYC Aging and make additional investments in meals, case management, and capital repairs for older adult centers across the City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

*Hector Guilbes*  
You belong here.



Testimony of Julianna Miller of Sirovich Center for Balanced Living,  
Educational Alliance Older Adult Center, to the  
New York City Council Committee on Aging  
Crystal Hudson, Chair  
New York City Preliminary Aging Budget FY25  
May 17, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the NYC Aging budget. My name is Julianna Miller, and I am a member of the Sirovich Center, an Older Adult Center of Educational Alliance. I am writing today to urge the City Council and Administration to reverse ALL cuts to NYC Aging and reinvest in older adults.

I rely on the center for my nutritional needs. I can not afford to feed myself, even though I receive SNAP. It has also become a place where I can meet friends and create a social circle.

To prevent this from happening, the City must restore all cuts to NYC Aging and make additional investments in meals, case management, and capital repairs for older adult centers across the City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julianna Miller'.

You belong here.



Testimony of Wilma Montiel of Sirovich Center for Balanced Living,  
Educational Alliance Older Adult Center, to the  
New York City Council Committee on Aging  
Crystal Hudson, Chair  
New York City Preliminary Aging Budget FY25  
May 17, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the NYC Aging budget. My name is WILMA MONTIEL, and I am a member of the SIROVICH, an Older Adult Center of Educational Alliance.

I am writing today to urge the City Council and Administration to reverse ALL cuts to NYC Aging and reinvest in older adults.

The centers are very important for us, the elderly if it wasn't for them we will have a sedentary life, we do a lot of exercises and interact with different cultures, do hobbies like knitting & crochet, is a lot that we do to have the best of our lives.  
THANK YOU!

To prevent this from happening, the City must restore all cuts to NYC Aging and make additional investments in meals, case management, and capital repairs for older adult centers across the City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,

You belong here.



Testimony of Margaret A. Donohue of Sirovich Center for Balanced Living,  
Educational Alliance Older Adult Center, to the  
New York City Council Committee on Aging  
Crystal Hudson, Chair  
New York City Preliminary Aging Budget FY25  
May 17, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the NYC Aging budget. My name is Margaret Anne Donohue, and I am a member of the Sirovich Center, an Older Adult Center of Educational Alliance. I am writing today to urge the City Council and Administration to reverse ALL cuts to NYC Aging and reinvest in older adults.

In addition to being 70 I am also disabled, a post coma T.B.E. patient, and lack the ability to prepare hot meals for myself. Sirovich, in addition to serving 10 hot meals weekly, also provides a social-network for those of us who have, unfortunately, buried our friends and relatives. Seniors need healthy meals and we need to socialize. Sirovich can not afford budget cuts. Sirovich keeps us healthy!!!

To prevent this from happening, the City must restore all cuts to NYC Aging and make additional investments in meals, case management, and capital repairs for older adult centers across the City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,

Margaret A. Donohue

You belong here.



Testimony of Melinda of Sirovich Center for Balanced Living,  
Educational Alliance Older Adult Center, to the  
New York City Council Committee on Aging  
Crystal Hudson, Chair  
New York City Preliminary Aging Budget FY25  
May 17, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the NYC Aging budget. My name is MELINDA, and I am a member of the Sirovich Center, an Older Adult Center of Educational Alliance. I am writing today to urge the City Council and Administration to reverse ALL cuts to NYC Aging and reinvest in older adults.

We need more funding to provide more ceramic classes for seniors. The ceramic class ~~provide~~ provide lifeline for us to learn, communicate, socialize with others. Beside learning how to make and create ceramic pieces, it support our well-being and our health.

To prevent this from happening, the City must restore all cuts to NYC Aging and make additional investments in meals, case management, and capital repairs for older adult centers across the City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,

You belong here.



# EDUCATIONAL ALLIANCE

Testimony of TK of Sirovich Center for Balanced Living,  
Educational Alliance Older Adult Center, to the  
New York City Council Committee on Aging  
Crystal Hudson, Chair  
New York City Preliminary Aging Budget FY25  
May 17, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the NYC Aging budget. My name is TK, and I am a member of the SIROVICH, an Older Adult Center of Educational Alliance. I am writing today to urge the City Council and Administration to reverse ALL cuts to NYC Aging and reinvest in older adults.

Sirovich is the last center in NYC where seniors have chance to continue their favorite oil paintings and keep improving their skills in oil paintings, it helps them to improve their health as the art therapy, so they don't have to go to doctors for therapy

To prevent this from happening, the City must restore all cuts to NYC Aging and make additional investments in meals, case management, and capital repairs for older adult centers across the City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,

You belong here.





# EDUCATIONAL ALLIANCE

Testimony of SANDRA SHEPPS of Sirovich Center for Balanced Living,  
Educational Alliance Older Adult Center, to the  
New York City Council Committee on Aging  
Crystal Hudson, Chair  
New York City Preliminary Aging Budget FY25  
May 17, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the NYC Aging budget. My name is SANDRA SHEPPS, and I am a member of the Serovich, an Older Adult Center of Educational Alliance.

**I am writing today to urge the City Council and Administration to reverse ALL cuts to NYC Aging and reinvest in older adults.**

I had thought I had a full life, but after my husband died there was a huge emptiness in my life. A friend told me about serovich Sr. Center, After joining, it filled that gap with Art, friendship and joy. Thank god for our Sr. Centers.

To prevent this from happening, the City must restore all cuts to NYC Aging and make additional investments in meals, case management, and capital repairs for older adult centers across the City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,

You belong here.



Testimony of \_\_\_\_\_ of Sirovich Center for Balanced Living,  
Educational Alliance Older Adult Center, to the  
New York City Council Committee on Aging  
Crystal Hudson, Chair  
New York City Preliminary Aging Budget FY25  
May 17, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the NYC Aging budget. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am a member of the \_\_\_\_\_, an Older Adult Center of Educational Alliance.

**I am writing today to urge the City Council and Administration to reverse ALL cuts to NYC Aging and reinvest in older adults.**

*The staff is already underpaid.*

*Give them a raise*

To prevent this from happening, the City must restore all cuts to NYC Aging and make additional investments in meals, case management, and capital repairs for older adult centers across the City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,

You belong here.



Testimony of \_\_\_\_\_ of Sirovich Center for Balanced Living,  
Educational Alliance Older Adult Center, to the  
New York City Council Committee on Aging  
Crystal Hudson, Chair  
New York City Preliminary Aging Budget FY25  
May 17, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the NYC Aging budget. My name is Audrey Bogen, and I am a member of the Sirovich at 12<sup>th</sup> St, an Older Adult Center of Educational Alliance. I am writing today to urge the City Council and Administration to reverse ALL cuts to NYC Aging and reinvest in older adults.

As a senior going to Sirovich is very important to me. I am in the ceramics program & it would be devastating if our program has a budget cut & we thrive here as a community.

To prevent this from happening, the City must restore all cuts to NYC Aging and make additional investments in meals, case management, and capital repairs for older adult centers across the City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

You belong here.



# EDUCATIONAL ALLIANCE

Testimony of Member of Weinberg Center for Balanced Living,  
Educational Alliance Older Adult Center, to the  
New York City Council Committee on Aging  
Crystal Hudson, Chair  
New York City Preliminary Aging Budget FY25  
May 17, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the NYC Aging budget. My name is Sallie Stroman, and I am a member of the Above Center & many others, an Older Adult Center of Educational Alliance. I am writing today to urge the City Council and Administration to reverse ALL cuts to NYC Aging and reinvest in older adults. Planned cuts to OACs at a time when the population of high need New Yorkers over 60 is growing simply does not reflect a commitment to an age-friendly city.

Senior centers are a life line to the aging population which has been growing in New York City that has become isolate.  
The city of New York has an good number of centers that offer different programs & services. Listed below are some of the services & professional staff. I also go to different senior centers to meet different people of many back grounds. (A) Nurses - take your blood pressure (B) Social workers to provide information & help fill out various forms. (C) Other services cooking classes, painting, crocheting, exercise, dancing, presentation programs example (NYPD SCAMS) Fire Dept, Nutrition advice.  
With all of these services it help seniors to avoid long term care

To prevent this from happening, the City must restore all cuts to NYC Aging and make additional investments in meals, case management, and capital repairs for older adult centers across the City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,

*Sallie Stroman*

You belong here.



Testimony of Christina Hong of Sirovich Center for Balanced Living,  
Educational Alliance Older Adult Center, to the  
New York City Council Committee on Aging  
Crystal Hudson, Chair  
New York City Preliminary Aging Budget FY25  
May 17, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the NYC Aging budget. My name is Christina Hong, and I am a member of the Sirovich Center for Balanced Living, an Older Adult Center of Educational Alliance.

I am writing today to urge the City Council and Administration to reverse ALL cuts to NYC Aging and reinvest in older adults.

*We Senior citizens need the Senior Center to be adequately funded. Many of us work hard and pay our taxes faithfully. Some of us are disabled and need the social worker at the Senior Center to assist us to access the benefits due to us. Please do not cut off or reduce the budget that supports our Senior Centers.*

To prevent this from happening, the City must restore all cuts to NYC Aging and make additional investments in meals, case management, and capital repairs for older adult centers across the City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,

*Christina Bator Hong, member of the  
advisory council of the Sirovich Senior  
Center for Balanced Living* You belong here.



55 Water Street, New York, NY 10041-8190

**New York City Council Finance Committee jointly with Committee on Aging – New York City Council Fiscal Year 2024 Executive Budget Hearing**

**Testimony of EmblemHealth**

**May 17, 2024**

On behalf of the thousands of New Yorkers we employ and serve, EmblemHealth would like to thank Chair Brannan, Chair Hudson, and the members of the Committee on Finance and Committee on Aging for providing the opportunity to share information on the programming at EmblemHealth Neighborhood Care and how we can better address the needs of the communities we serve with funding support from the City Council.

EmblemHealth Neighborhood Care is a non-profit operating 15 centers across New York City's five boroughs where we provide free in-person and virtual support, access to community resources, and health and wellness classes to all community members, ensuring that individuals are connected to care at the right place and at the right time. We are located in many under-resourced communities, and are continuing to expand, having opened our fifteenth site in the Northwest Bronx in April 2024. We are changing how community members access care, providing continuous support and culturally competent care and resources, including virtual classes to ensure we can also reach homebound individuals. Our staff represent and reflect the communities they serve, and across our various sites, we provide services and support in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Haitian Creole. In 2023, nearly 72,000 individuals accessed care through Neighborhood Care sites, of whom nearly 30% were over the age of 65. We are seeking funding to be able to reach even more individuals and families and address their most pressing health and wellbeing needs.

With \$10,000 in local funding for individual locations we would be able to bolster our ongoing support, programming, and resources to meet the unique needs of the local communities, including providing resources in multiple languages. We are also seeking \$10,000 in Support Our Older Adults funding to tailor more programming to the large older adult population that we serve. With this funding we would develop culturally competent programming on topics such as women's health, men's health, mental wellbeing, mentoring and community outreach, and more. Local discretionary and Support Our Older Adults funding would enable us to provide more culturally appropriate support and materials in the most needed languages and enable us to collaborate more closely with partners to bring new classes and resources to the community.

We are also seeking \$50,000 in city-wide initiative funding for Older Adult Clubs, Programs, and Enhancements. Nearly one in three individuals that we serve is over the age of 65, making us uniquely positioned to help address the challenges this community is facing. With funding support, we would be able to enhance our programming for older adults, create social spaces, increase food access, and provide classes on digital literacy, self-defense, tai chi, chair yoga,

line dancing, and more. We have found that creating a safe, social space for individuals to gather is also integral to combatting the loneliness and social isolation challenges that many older adults face, and we foster social hours and one-on-one and group discussions.

To further meet the needs of the older adults we serve, we are seeking \$50,000 in city-wide initiative funding for Geriatric Mental Health. With this funding we would be able to reach more individuals and be able to provide tailored support and programming on topics such as self-defense, digital literacy, addressing loneliness and social isolation, and more. Through this program we would also hold one-on-one conversations, multi-week workshops, and wellness resource days with multiple classes and discussions in a row, to ensure that individuals have access to comprehensive support that best meets their needs and keeps them connected to the local community. We have won two federal grants focused on addressing mental wellbeing needs tailored to the populations in Flushing and Crown Heights. With city-wide initiative funding, we would be able to build upon our experience and success to address wellbeing challenges for more older adults, combat loneliness and social isolation, create social spaces, and host tailored classes such as art and relaxation, journaling, and more.

Lastly, we are also seeking \$50,000 in city-wide initiative funding for Access to Healthy Food and Nutrition Education to enable us to provide more culturally appropriate nutritional support and education and to increase the number of events we host to connect individuals directly to fresh food. In 2023 we reached nearly 7,000 recipients at food pantry events and over 500 recipients at farmers market events, in collaboration with our partners. In addition to these events, we host classes on nutrition and diabetes self-management, and we facilitate SNAP benefit enrollment. With funding support we could expand this to include topics such as reading food labels, shopping on a budget, healthy recipes, and more. Our efforts focused on food access help older adults to learn healthy behaviors, to have increased access to healthy food, and to make connections in the community. We know firsthand that access to fresh food and education has a significant impact on overall health and wellness, especially when it comes to older populations who are more likely to be facing chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. We hope to build on our experience improving access to healthy food and nutrition in our communities to reach even more individuals with these crucial services.

EmblemHealth Neighborhood Care is proud to provide free resources, education, and community connection for many underserved communities. With your support we hope to expand our support and increase our impact even further.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to continuing to work together to ensure that everyone in our communities has access to equitable, holistic care and resources.

Send to: [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov)

Testimony of Good Shepherd Services  
Before the New York City Council Committee on Criminal Justice

Submitted by  
**Roy Waterman, Program Coordinator**  
Good Shepherd Services

May 17, 2024

**Thank you, Chair Sandy Nurse and the Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice for the opportunity to testify on the Department of Probation's Executive Budget hearing.**

**My name is Roy Waterman, and I am the Program Coordinator of the Arches Program in the Justice Initiatives Division at Good Shepherd Services.**

Guided by social and racial justice, Good Shepherd Services (GSS) partners and grows with communities so that all NYC children, youth, and families succeed and thrive. We provide quality, effective services that deepen connections between family members, within schools, and among neighbors. We work closely with community leaders to advocate, both locally and nationally, on behalf of our participants to make New York City a better place to live and work.

Good Shepherd Services is a provider of community-based Youth Justice Programs, Cure Violence, Family Enrichment Centers and Community Partnership Programs, as well as Community Centers and afterschool programming.

I want to thank the Council for calling for the reinstatement of the Next STEPS program and the restoration of the cuts made in the November Plan to the Arches program in your Council response. Thank you for your commitment to protect programs funded by DOP that support youth across New York City.

Youth need educational and/or vocational opportunities but they also need the positive adult relationships and mentoring that programs like Next Steps provided. Many youths will never make it to the educational/vocational opportunity without the assistance of credible messengers. Credible messengers help youth cope with and navigate the daily challenges of their lives and these tools later serve as the foundation for future success. We are truly dedicated to the young people and communities we support, and Next STEPS is a part of those communities. Each and every day, we meet young people where they are, in their communities, and that is why it is so important that we reinvest in these programs.



At a time when young people are in crisis and under attack, we should not be removing services for youth programming. We need the City to invest in young people and the communities that support them.

Next Steps existed because there are people in the community who care and were invested. Next Steps was successful because we were built on credible messengers. People from the same communities where our youth live who care and who are concerned and, who are embedded in the NYCHA developments that they all live in.

Young people are facing so many issues right now, and we need to reinvest in them, not take resources away. There is an urgency for young people's tomorrow. The urgency for young people's needs, cares and, concerns start at a program like Next STEPS.

In March of this year, twin sisters, Samiya and Sanyia Spain were stabbed in Brooklyn. Their story made the news but what did not make the coverage was that they were participants in the Next Steps mentoring program in Gowanus, Brooklyn. Samiya and Sanyia and many more young people were benefiting from the mentorship, guidance and trips that the Next Steps program was providing weekly. We need to do better.

We need the Council to negotiate a budget that includes the reinstatement of Next Steps and the restoration of cuts made to the Arches program.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.



253 South Street ,New York, NY 10002

**New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2025**

**New York City Council Committee on Aging -- Honorable Crystal Hudson, Chair  
New York City Council Committee on Finance – Honorable Justin Brannan, Chair**

**Submitted by: Bonnie Lumagui, Assistant Executive Director Older Adults & Community Services**

**May 17, 2024**

Thank you, Chair Hudson, Chair Brannan, and members of the Committee on Aging and Committee on Finance for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to submit testimony. I am Bonnie Lumagui, Assistant Executive Director for Older Adult Services at Hamilton-Madison House (HMH), a 126-year-old multifaceted community services organization based in Chinatown and on the Lower East Side of Manhattan focused on early childhood education, behavioral health, youth development and, the subject of this testimony, services to seniors.

For decades, HMH has been deeply dedicated to comprehensively supporting older adults, enabling them to retain their independence for as long as feasible, and helping equip them to maximize quality of life. Presently, we operate three Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) programs, among NYC’s largest senior centers, a Social Adult Day Care program and two Caregiver Support programs. Among participating seniors are many immigrants, and we are committed to supporting them with linguistic proficiency and cultural competence. Annually we serve over 4000 older adults in our varied programs.

Thank you for holding a Committee hearing about the budget for Aging. Funding is needed to help older adults manage challenges and crises, navigate complex public systems, and remain independent in their residences, enjoying lives marked by vibrancy and fulfillment, and we express appreciation to Councilmember Hudson and the committee and we are prepared to continue supporting this vital effort.

Older Adult Centers (OACs) have broken refrigerators, floors, vans, HVAC systems, roofs, elevators, and other capital items. OACs in NYCHA spaces have faced the brunt of this—some have physically collapsed or have mold issues that render them unusable. This is part of the “underutilization” argument the administration uses to justify cuts, but these spaces are underutilized precisely because they were made unsafe by underfunding and neglect in the first place.

Case management contracts have seen a reduction in resources leading to a loss of administrative staff and increases in the caseloads of case managers from 65 to often over 80. Clients are also presenting with higher rates of undiagnosed mental health issues/ dementia and are being released from rehab/ hospitals after extended stays back to homes that have deteriorated rapidly due to their absence.

We also take the opportunity of this hearing to assert our organization is contending with difficulties in recruiting and retaining senior-serving staff, especially those who speak languages other than English spoken by older adults. As such, we are calling for funding from City government that would allow us to sponsor foreign-born staff to receive H1B visas that would enable them to serve for 6 years. The City’s Department of Health and Mental Health offers this provision and we request that the accommodation be extended to older adult-serving organizations. We believe that

implementing this practice would go far toward fulfilling our shared commitment to support NYC's immigrant communities.

Without the City Council's NORC Initiative, many programs would not be able to continue providing critical services to so many older adults in New York City. To sustain and strengthen the NORC program, the FY25 budget must restore this Initiative to FY23 funding levels. This amounts to \$6.09 million, with \$1.3 million to directly support health and nursing services, filling a funding gap for NORC providers. The restoration of these funds will help ensure these programs can continue to provide services to NORC residents.

NORC programs **cost as little as \$483 per older adult per year**, and help our society **avoid the enormous costs of nursing home care, which can be as high as \$142,350 per older adult per year**. It is sensible as our community ages to expand the service capacity of NORCs like ours, and justifies the funding we are requesting here.

Thank you again to Chair Hudson, Chair Brannan, and the Council's Committee on Aging and Committee on Finance and to my many colleagues for supporting Older Adults. Please reach out to us at [seniorservices@hmhonline.org](mailto:seniorservices@hmhonline.org) with any follow up questions.



Dear Members of NYC Council Committees on Finance and Criminal Justice,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the NYC budget for 2025.

The Health & Housing Consortium is a collaborative network of healthcare, housing, homeless and social services organizations, and government partners with the shared goal of improving health equity and housing stability. Our priority areas focus on (1) equipping frontline workers with the information and resources they need to support people with unmet health and housing needs, (2) fostering cross-sector relationships, (3) conducting research to better understand the needs of this population, and (4) advocating for policies that will improve the care and services people receive while addressing the impacts of structural racism on health and housing.

We are a strong advocate for promoting community safety and supporting New Yorkers who have significant behavioral health needs, who often cycle between shelters, street homelessness, emergency rooms and Rikers jail. In order to promote the City's health as well as meet the health and housing needs of the most at-risk New Yorkers, **we respectfully urge Mayor Adams to increase investments in the social services and supportive housing sectors and continue his commitment to Close Rikers jail.**

For Fiscal Year 2025, we respectfully request City Council ensures a budget that will meaningfully support vulnerable New Yorkers with behavioral health needs and ethically promote public safety by:

**1. Allocating an additional \$6.4 million to ensure the operations of Justice Involved Supportive Housing (JISH) units and make JISH funding its own line-item in the DOHMH budget.**

JISH is currently the only NYC-designated supportive housing program for people leaving Rikers Island, with 120 apartments currently available, despite a need of more than 2,500 units.

In 2019, the City promised to fund 500 JISH units, but current funding levels cannot adequately staff or provide critical services to the existing 120 units. Despite serving some of the most complex clients in supportive housing, JISH receives

approximately \$17,000 less per unit compared to similar supportive housing units across the city.

**2. Restoring \$27.8M to the Office of Criminal Justice for Alternatives, supervised release and re-entry programs** including:

- a. \$6.7M for alternatives to incarceration.
- b. \$13.1M for supervised release.
- c. \$8M for re-entry services.

Closing Rikers jail requires deep investment in alternatives to incarceration, and restoring this funding is critical for the safety and health of our city.

**3. Allocating an additional \$14.9M to DOHMH to meet mental health needs, and fulfilling commitments in the Close Rikers plan, including:**

- a. \$2.9M more to enable 5 of the 22 newly funded state Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams to operate as Forensic ACT (FACT) teams (\$575K per team).
- b. \$6M more to fully implement Local Law 118-2023, supporting the establishment of four new crisis respite centers.
- c. \$6M more to fully implement Local Law 119-2023, supporting the establishment of five new clubhouses.

**4. Asking Mayor Adams' administration to join New York City Council in publicly committing to a comprehensive reallocation plan for NYC 15/15** that better serves the evolving needs of our community.

NYC 15/15 funding needs to be reallocated to focus on removing barriers to scattered site housing and preserving the current units we have. We thank City Council for agreeing publicly to a comprehensive NYC 15/15 reallocation plan during the 2025 budget negotiations and respectfully request Council leadership continue asking the Administration to join in this commitment.

**5. Restoring PEG cuts to the B-HEARD program and placing trained peers on the B-HEARD response teams.**

The Consortium is also a supporter of Correct Crisis Intervention Today (CCIT) – NYC, a coalition advocating for a peer-led, non police mental health crisis response system. The current city pilot program, B-HEARD, omits peers from response teams. We ask that Council adopt the best practices and features of the CCIT-NYC model by focusing on placing trained peers on the B-HEARD response teams as well as fully restore prior B-HEARD PEG cuts.

Finally, we must address the ongoing workforce crisis in the human services sector.

We thank the council and the administration for heeding the calls of the human services sector by agreeing to a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). The proposed three-year, three percent wage increase will help these essential workers support themselves and their families as they continue to provide critical services to some of New York's most vulnerable residents.

However, the City must ensure that the nonprofits that employ these workers are paid on time for the services they provide. Nonprofits are under significant financial strain due to the City's failure to reimburse them for contractually mandated services in a timely manner. Some providers are still awaiting payment for services provided in 2018, with millions of dollars in arrears.

As proposed, the Executive Budget's significant cuts to the Mayor's Office of Contract Services (MOCS) would exacerbate this already untenable situation. We urge the Council and Administration to restore funds to personnel and non-personnel services to avert further harm.

The Consortium envisions a world where all people live healthy, fulfilling lives and experience safety and holistic wellbeing in the housing and communities of their choice, with the support they need to thrive. We must guarantee the support of New Yorkers with behavioral health needs, invest in service delivery around the experience and dignity of the individual, and ensure the workers delivering these services are paid a living wage.

Sincerely,



Bonnie Mohan  
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# KATAL

**CENTER FOR EQUITY, HEALTH, & JUSTICE**

Testimony

Executive Budget Hearing - Criminal Justice

Melanie Dominguez, Organizing Director

[melanie@katalcenter.org](mailto:melanie@katalcenter.org)

for

Committee on Criminal Justice

Friday, May 17, 2024 -- 9:30 AM

New York, NY

Thank you, Chair Sandy Nurse, for holding this New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearing on the Executive Budget of the Department of Correction for Fiscal Year 2025. My name is Melanie Dominguez, I'm the organizing director at the Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice, based in Brooklyn. Our members are from across the city, and include people who have been incarcerated, family members of currently and formerly incarcerated people, and more. Many of our members know exactly how horrific Rikers really is and are deeply troubled by the mayors proposed budget.

We submit this testimony to bring your attention to the crisis at Rikers and the need to immediately shutter the notorious and deadly jail complex. New Yorkers across the city are deeply concerned about the humanitarian crisis playing out in our city's jail system and its enormous fiscal cost. According to the City Comptroller, the cost of incarceration at Rikers is \$556,539 a person per year, which is *\$1,525 a day*.<sup>i</sup> It is intolerable that Mayor Adams is driving up the jail population, costing New York taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars and getting us further away from shutting down Rikers, while simultaneously slashing the budgets of essential services and programs.

Why are public schools, libraries, universal pre-K and childcare, CUNY, health services, and other essential services being cut while the city continues to excessively fund the NYPD's discriminatory policing practices and incarceration at a deadly and tortuous jail complex?

The mayor is proposing a bloated \$2.6 billion dollar budget for the Department of Correction in FY 2025, while also cutting \$28 million in funding for alternatives to incarceration, supervised release, and reentry services.<sup>ii</sup> We know alternatives to incarceration work, they are much cheaper, and diversion options are available *right now* to reduce the jail population. Yet the mayor continues to focus on a jail-first approach.

Another driving cost of the Department of Correction's bloated budget is the gross overstaffing of the DOC. On a weekly basis, the department is riddled with scandals and blatant mismanagement cases, yet they remain the most excessively staffed jail in the country with a staffing ratio of nearly one-to-one. The city could save a total of \$162 million in the upcoming fiscal year alone by eliminating DOC uniformed vacancies.<sup>iii</sup>

Evidence and research have also long shown that mental health programming is *dramatically* cheaper than incarceration, yet Rikers has become the city's largest mental health facility. More than 50 percent of people incarcerated there have been diagnosed with a mental health condition and nearly 20 percent have a serious mental health diagnosis, yet they have little or no access to meaningful care while they are locked up.<sup>iv</sup>



This *jails-first* approach preferred by Mayor Adams is costing taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars while threatening the closure of Rikers Island. In 2017, under pressure from community groups, the city finally committed to closing Rikers Island. In 2019, the city council passed a legislative package to make closure a reality by 2027. The 2019 plan requires the population to be brought down to less than 4,000, yet the jail numbers are trending in the opposite direction.

Reports by the Independent Commission on NYC Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform and the Institute for State and Local Governance have found that the closure of Rikers will save city taxpayers \$1.3 billion *annually* – even after accounting for costs of implementing the plan. Yet Mayor Adams has simply ignored the legal and process benchmarks of the 2019 plan. The most recent example of this was on May 6<sup>th</sup>, when a notice in the City Record revealed that the construction timelines for the Queens and Bronx borough-based jails were not slated to end till 2031 – four years after the legal deadline to close Rikers.<sup>v</sup> Based on the Institute for State and Local Governance reports, this construction delay constitutes a loss of \$5.2 billion in taxpayer’s savings that Adams has failed to capture.

And worse, the mayor since day one has worked to undermine core tenets of the 2019 plan, particularly regarding the jail population – instead of working to reduce the jail population, the mayor has focused on sending *more* Black, Brown, and low-income New Yorkers to jail. For more than two decades, the population at Rikers was, generally, on a downward trend along with crime rates in our city—we showed that, reducing incarceration and reducing crime went hand in hand. But since his first day in office, Mayor Adams has worked to reverse that trend. There were about 5,000 people in city jails when Adams became mayor. Today, there are more than 6,300 people in city jails,<sup>vi</sup> and they’re not done: the previous DOC Commissioner told the Council that they are planning for the city’s jail population to go beyond 7000 by the end of the year.<sup>vii</sup>

It has been said that budgets are moral documents that they reflect priorities. The mayor’s budget is morally bankrupt and shows he intends to keep Rikers open. Adding another 700 people to the city’s jail population will, using the Comptroller’s figures, cost nearly \$400 million. This coupled with championing the NYPD’s \$12 billion-dollar bloated budget – which includes \$788 million in overtime spending – to expand resources to advance discriminatory policing practices will further drive up the jail population and set back the closure plan as it will result in more Black, brown, and low-income New Yorker’s being arrested and sent to Rikers.

This is outrageous, irresponsible, and clearly untenable, especially as the conditions at New York City’s massive jail complex are horrific and life-threatening for human beings – both the people incarcerated and those who work there.<sup>viii</sup>

Under Mayor Eric Adams, conditions at Rikers have gotten worse. Violence at Rikers is out of control. At least 31 people have died in the city jail system since Adams became mayor in 2022.<sup>ix</sup> Under Mayor Eric Adams, the levels of violence and dysfunction at Rikers are so egregious that in April 2023, federal prosecutors from the Southern District of New York wrote, “Incarcerated people and corrections staff continue to face an imminent risk of harm on a daily basis.”<sup>x</sup> It’s clear the only solution is to close Rikers once and for all.

**We urge members of the NYC Council to take drastic steps to get the city back on track to fulfilling its commitment to shutting down Rikers.**

We urge this council to focus on three things: **first**, cut the budgets used for caging people – the DOC budget is bloated, wasteful, and must be cut. The city must also cut the number of people incarcerated at Rikers through increasing funding for alternatives to incarceration, supervised released, and re-entry services. **Second**, the closure of Rikers is not just a moral and legal imperative, but given the extraordinary savings that can be realized, it is also a *fiscal* imperative. The Council must pass a budget that advances efforts to shutter the notorious jail complex. **Third**, we must focus investments on things that produces real public safety: housing, healthcare, education, jobs. The mayor has it exactly backwards – he wants to cut these core components of public safety while putting more funding into caging people. This council must reject that approach.

**Finally, with regards to Rikers and the human beings detained there and working there, there is one more thing this council can do now – pass Resolution 183, which calls for a federal receiver.** Katal and other community organizations have worked for years to shut down Rikers and hold Adams accountable while demanding action by the city, state, and federal government to save lives. After years of foot-dragging by the courts, last summer, Judge Swain finally opened the door to the possibility of appointing a federal receiver, acknowledging that “people incarcerated at Rikers are at a grave risk of immediate harm” and that “the current state of affairs is tragic and unacceptable.”<sup>xi</sup> Calls for a federal receiver have grown over this year -- today, over 70 community, advocacy, and faith-based organizations have joined the call for a federal receiver to take over at Rikers. And as of today, the Legal Aid Society along with the other public defense offices across the city, the U.S Attorney for the SDNY, the NY Attorney General Leticia James, New York Civil Liberties Union, Vera

Institute for Justice, and the New York City Bar Association have all filed motions in federal court formally calling for the appointment of an independent federal receiver.

While the council continues its work on fighting for a budget that will allow all New Yorkers to thrive, we urge the council to take immediate action to relieve suffering at Rikers by passing Resolution 183. Passing Resolution 183 is a concrete step this council can take *right now* to address the crisis at Rikers. Until Rikers is shut down, there must be immediate action to improve conditions and save lives and invest in alternatives to incarceration and other non-carceral solutions that are proven to reduce the jail population and increase public safety. Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> New York City Comptroller. “Comptroller Stringer: Cost of Incarceration per Person in New York City Skyrockets to All-Time High.” December 6, 2021. [comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-cost-of-incarceration-per-person-in-new-york-city-skyrockets-to-all-time-high-2](https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-cost-of-incarceration-per-person-in-new-york-city-skyrockets-to-all-time-high-2)

<sup>ii</sup> Vera Institute for Justice “A Look Inside the FY 2025 DOC Budget: Mayor Adams Continues to Invest in Incarceration over Communities.” February 2024. [https://vera-advocacy-and-partnerships.s3.amazonaws.com/GJNY\\_Look%20inside%20the%20DOC%20FY25%20Budget.pdf](https://vera-advocacy-and-partnerships.s3.amazonaws.com/GJNY_Look%20inside%20the%20DOC%20FY25%20Budget.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> Vera Institute for Justice “A Look Inside the FY 2025 DOC Budget: Mayor Adams Continues to Invest in Incarceration over Communities.” February 2024. [https://vera-advocacy-and-partnerships.s3.amazonaws.com/GJNY\\_Look%20inside%20the%20DOC%20FY25%20Budget.pdf](https://vera-advocacy-and-partnerships.s3.amazonaws.com/GJNY_Look%20inside%20the%20DOC%20FY25%20Budget.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> Jan Ransom and Jonah E. Bromwich. “‘I Just Want to Be Normal’: A Mentally Ill Man’s Death at Rikers.” *The New York Times*. September 27, 2021. [nytimes.com/2021/09/27/nyregion/rikers-island-esias-johnson.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/27/nyregion/rikers-island-esias-johnson.html), citing Anthony Shorris and Mindy Tarlow. *Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report*, February 2016. 62. [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2016/2016\\_pmmr.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2016/2016_pmmr.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> Matt Katz. “Worries about closing Rikers grow as timeline for replacement jails is delayed.” *Gothamist*. May 8, 2024. <https://gothamist.com/news/rikers-is-supposed-to-close-in-2027-but-2-replacement-jails-wont-open-until-2031>

<sup>vi</sup> For the 2024 data, see Vera Institute for Justice. “JailVizNYC.” May 14, 2024. <https://greaterjusticenyc.vera.org/nycjail>.

<sup>vii</sup> Courtney Gross. “Rikers closure plan not on track, commissioner says”. *Spectrum News 1*. 2023. Retrieved from <https://ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2022/12/14/rikers-closure-plan-not-on-track--commissioner-says>

<sup>viii</sup> Erica Bryant. “[It’s] a Torture Chamber: Stories from Rikers Island.” Vera Institute of Justice. February 2022. [vera.org/its-a-torture-chamber](https://vera.org/its-a-torture-chamber).

<sup>ix</sup> Sam McCann and Erica Bryant. “Third Jail Death in 2024 Brings New York City’s Total to 31 Under Mayor Adams.” *Vera Institute of Justice*. March 28, 2024. <https://www.vera.org/news/nyc-jail-deaths>

<sup>x</sup> Steve J. Martin, Kelly Dedel, Anna E. Friedberg, Dennis O. Gonzalez, Patrick Hurley, Alycia M. Karlovich, Emmitt Sparkman, and Christina Bucci Vanderveer. *Status Report on DOC’s Action Plan by the Nunez Independent Monitor*. April 24, 2023. 27. <https://tillidgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-04-24-Status-Report-of-Action-Plan.pdf>

<sup>xi</sup> Reuven Blau. “Judge Says ‘Transformative Change’ Needed, Laying Groundwork for a Possible Rikers Takeover.” *The City*. August 10, 2023. <https://www.thecity.nyc/2023/8/10/23827946/rikers-takeover-judge-receiver>



Making New York a better place to age

**New York City Council  
Committee on Aging  
Chair Hudson  
Committee on Finance  
Chair Brannan  
May 17th 2024  
Executive Aging Budget FY25**

My name is Kevin Kiprovski and I am the Director of Public Policy at LiveOn NY. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

LiveOn NY's members include more than 110 community-based nonprofits that provide core services under the NYCAging portfolio and many other home and community based services in our city.

**Background**

Over 200 older adults have submitted testimony today in strong opposition to the Mayor's budget and shared their stories about how these services keep them connected to their communities and their lives.

Ageism is pervasive in this year's executive budget, with a built in hole of about \$80 million dollars that threatens to disconnect older New Yorkers from the services and the support they need to stay involved in their communities. We testified earlier this year that older adult centers are in dire need \$82 million dollars to shore up the existing system, and in response we see a budget that will cut an additional \$100 million and close older adult centers and reduce services across the city.

We are an aging city, and we must invest in that reality. The current paltry aging budget, less than a half of a percent of the budget, is not an adequate investment in our future.

**Recommendations**

- **Maintain the existing council discretionary funding to keep our system whole.**
- **\$50 Million to create a capital funding pot to get centers and resources in a state of good repair.** There must be a baselined funding stream that keeps the physical spaces and resources of our system in good repair. Organizations cannot contract with the city on these services if the city cannot commit to paying for the resources needed to do this work.
- **\$20 million to expand social work support across the network to allow for more service to New Yorkers.** Organizations on average need 2 more case managers and 1 intake staff to create a program that can keep talent and serve the community well. This will allow higher needs cases to

# LiveOn NY

Making New York a better place to age

be handled effectively and keep the focus on service instead of admin work.

- **\$12 million to increase the per meal rate for HDM programs to \$15.31 per meal.** HDM providers report an average deficit of \$2.53 dollars per meal served, the contract with the city should at least pay for the services that they require.
- **Rethink our aging system and fully fund the true needs of aging services in New York.** The proportion of the budget spent on aging must be drastically increased and we must understand that every dollar invested improves quality of life for so many in our city and saves money in the long run.
- **Reverse ALL cuts to the aging system.** A fiscal cliff and unreversed PEGs will leave our already underfunded system on the verge of collapse. We must reimagine how we fund aging services across our city. We have a system that can create a just city and a place where we can all age

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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*For questions, please email Kevin Kiproviski, Director of Public Policy at LiveOn NY, [kkiproviski@liveon-ny.org](mailto:kkiproviski@liveon-ny.org)*

*LiveOn NY's members provide the core, community-based services that allow older adults to thrive in their communities. With a base of more than 100 community-based organizations serving at least 300,000 older New Yorkers annually. Our members provide services ranging from senior centers, congregate and home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing with services, elder abuse prevention services, caregiver supports, case management, transportation, and NORCs. LiveOn NY advocates for increased funding for these vital services to improve both the solvency of the system and the overall capacity of community-based service providers.*

*LiveOn NY also administers a citywide outreach program and staffs a hotline that educates, screens and helps with benefit enrollment including SNAP, SCRIE and others, and also administers the Rights and Information for Senior Empowerment (RISE) program to bring critical information directly to seniors on important topics to help them age well in their communities.*



## **New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault**

**Testimony of Emily Miles  
Executive Director  
New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault  
Before the Committee on Finance and Committee on Criminal Justice  
May 17, 2024**

My name is Emily Miles (she/her), and I am the executive director of the New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault (the Alliance). The mission of the New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault is to prevent sexual violence and reduce the harm it causes. Through public education, prevention programming, advocacy for survivors, and the pursuit of legal and policy changes, the Alliance works to disrupt systems and institutions that, unfortunately, can retraumatize survivors when they most need our support. The Alliance is a member of the Sexual Assault Initiative, through which the City Council supports survivor services across the city, as well as the Young Women's Initiative to empower young women – especially young women of color.

### **Sexual Assault Initiative (SAI)**

The Sexual Assault Initiative (SAI) is comprised of five New York City-based sexual violence intervention programs: Crime Victims Treatment Center (CVTC), Kingsbridge Heights Community Center (KHCC), Mount Sinai's Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Program (SAVI), New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault (the Alliance) and North Brooklyn Coalition Against Family Violence. Together we serve thousands of victims and survivors annually across all five boroughs.

The people we support are largely survivors of sexual violence, including rape and attempted rape, unwanted sexual contact, child sexual abuse, drug/alcohol-facilitated sexual assault, exposing, incest, non-consensual sharing of explicit images, sexual exploitation by a professional (e.g. clergy, medical personnel, massage therapists, psychotherapist, etc.), sex trafficking, stalking and cyber- based (online) forms of sexual violence. These crimes and behaviors impact New Yorkers of all ages, genders, ethnic backgrounds, religions, ability, financial position and citizenship status with marginalized communities disproportionately affected. Our organizations have joined together as SAI to form a network of advocates, counselors and other providers who serve survivors from all of these backgrounds. We support survivors to heal, both those suffering from the acute trauma caused by recent violence as well as survivors who are struggling to cope with violence they experienced in the past. We also work together to implement primary and secondary prevention activities to make sexual violence less likely and to push for positive systemic change to ensure that

support for victims is survivor-centered, holistic, and trauma-informed.

Despite this good work, the demand for our services is great and has only increased over the course of the last year, resulting in the need for additional resources to provide adequate support to the survivor community. **Due to the increased demand for services and trainings, the Sexual Assault Initiative is requesting an enhancement to \$2.5 million.**

#### Sexual Assault Examiner Training Institute

The funding for the Sexual Assault Initiative supports the Alliance's Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner Training Institute (SAFETI), the largest NYS Department of Health-certified training program for emergency department and medical professionals in the state. SAFETI trains doctors, nurses, and physician assistants to provide competent, compassionate, and prompt care to sexual assault victims, and to conduct sexual assault forensic evidence collection and preservation. Many don't know that training in how to address the unique needs of sexual assault survivors is not part of standard training for medical professionals, with a majority leaving their medical education having never worked with survivors in any capacity. As a result, too often survivors will present in a medical setting seeking care and those on staff will lack the knowledge in how to support them during this critical and traumatic time. SAFETI seeks to change that. Our SAFETI courses bring together a multidisciplinary team of experts to provide comprehensive training in evidence collection, injury identification, trauma informed practices, and culturally competent care to child, adolescent, and adult survivors of sexual violence. Additionally, we offer ongoing professional development for medical staff, including training in how to provide expert testimony in court proceedings, how to avoid burn out and address vicarious trauma and meeting the needs of special populations (e.g., the LGBTQIA+ community, people with disabilities).

In addition to trainings, we also maintain an online resource center for SAFE certified medical professionals and provide technical assistance to hospitals across New York City who seek to become a SAFE Designated Centers, specifically targeting those in under resourced areas to ensure all survivors have equal access to appropriately trained medical professionals.

#### Training for Human Service Professionals in Best Practices in Responding to Sexual Assault

Though many survivors present in a hospital setting, others instead sought services and support through organizations that are more culturally or linguistically specific, or with whom they have built a relationship of trust. These community-based organizations frequently lack the specific knowledge in how to support survivors of sexual assault and to connect them with appropriate support services. To fill this gap, the SAI also funds the Alliance to provide training to staff of community-based organizations across New York City that wish to expand their ability to serve survivors. The goal is for survivors of sexual violence to be met with expert and compassionate care in whatever systems they encounter, with trainings tailored to meet the needs of specific organizations and the communities they serve.

## **Young Woman's Initiative-Project DOT**

As a proud member of the Young Women's Leadership Initiative, the New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault implements Project Dream, Own, Tell (DOT) – an afterschool program engaging young women of color in a multisession participatory, educational curriculum during which youth are taught critical skills about healthy relationships, analyzing harmful social norms and gender stereotypes, imparting leadership skills practicing consent and safe bystander engagement behaviors. The Alliance launched Project DOT in 2014 to address sexual violence in a way that leverages community strength and focuses on young girls' leadership development.

DOT was designed in partnership with youth collaborators, community-based organizations, and sexual violence prevention experts, to focus on social norm change, healthy relationships, practicing consent, safe bystander engagement techniques, and leadership skills. It runs over an 18-week period that concludes with a youth driven community change project. In the past, youth participants have done radio shows, community teach-ins for adult caregivers, community fairs, and focus groups with parents to foster opportunities for intergenerational dialogue on healthy relationship and dating practices. Since funded under the Young Women's Initiative, Project DOT has conducted groups with young women of color, young Muslim women, the LGBTQ community, young immigrant women and girls from low-income communities.

Project DOT's current funding level of \$100,000 has made it difficult to meet the demand for additional groups and to bring our program to additional communities. **To support the expansion of Project DOT, the Alliance is seeking an enhancement to \$150,000 to support this work.**

## **OutSmartNYC**

OutSmartNYC is a collaborative effort between the New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault (the Alliance), the Crime Victim Treatment Center (CVTC), hospital partners, and nightlife workers to reach bars, clubs and event spaces across the city with sexual violence prevention training and support. We help nightlife workers recognize warning signs, intervene safely and effectively, and create safe spaces for New Yorkers to enjoy a night out. Since OutSmart's inception, we have worked with over 80 nightlife establishments to train their staff and support their leadership to protect patrons from sexual violence. City Council support will allow us to scale this program citywide, to shift the culture of nightlife and make our city safer from sexual violence.

To meaningfully prevent sexual violence, we must focus on the context in which people become vulnerable and the locations in which they might encounter potential perpetrators. As a result, nightlife spaces are important targets for sexual violence prevention interventions. Nightlife is a meaningful part of community life for New Yorkers, and we know prevention works best when it reaches people where they live, work, and play. Nightlife locations are also strategic sites for sexual violence prevention efforts because they can host various risk factors in their settings (e.g., drug and alcohol use, overcrowding). According to the National Institutes of Health, approximately half of all sexual assault cases involve alcohol consumption by the perpetrator, victim, or both.

While we know, respect and often work with other organizations and individuals across New York City who focus on the nightlife space, our OutSmart model is unique for several reasons.



OutSmart stands out by: 1) not charging for our services to reduce potential barriers for owners and managers to invite us in; 2) bringing our training and support to the establishments rather than expecting them to come to us, which allows our facilitators to better tailor training to the context; 3) facilitating a flexible curriculum with content developed for a diversity of cultural contexts rather than a one-size-fits-all standardized training model; and 4) explicitly focusing on sexual violence prevention instead of including it only as a component of a larger training.

With City Council support, we will be able to increase our capacity to provide these critical trainings. Our expanded team will proactively push into underserved communities and take the time to persuade reluctant managers and owners of nightlife establishments to host OutSmart programming. OutSmart will also rapidly respond to high profile cases of sexual violence in nightlife spaces by reaching out to affected establishments to offer technical assistance, training and support with the goal of shifting the culture at problem venues.

**We ask the City Council to invest \$300,000 in order to expand OutSmartNYC and bring its much needed trainings to all communities across the five boroughs.**

**The New York City Council  
Meeting of Committee on Aging  
Friday, May 17, 2024 @ 9:30 am  
Council Chambers, City Hall & via Zoom**

**Good afternoon, I am Linda Hoffman, President of New York Foundation for Senior Citizens. We are grateful for the support that each of you has provided for our city-wide Home Sharing and Respite Care Program.**

**On behalf of our Board of Directors, we would deeply appreciate your ensuring the continuation of our program by supporting the provision of \$250,000 from the Speaker's city-wide budget, an allocation from your individual and borough delegations' discretionary budgets within the next City Budget.**

**Our free home sharing service matches adult "hosts" with extra space in their apartments or houses to share with responsible, compatible adult "guests" in need of affordable housing. One of the "matchmates" must be age 60 or over.**

**During the past 43 years, we have successfully matched over 2600 persons in 1300 shared living arrangements. If and when appropriate, we would like to extend our home sharing services to asylum seekers and matching them as guests in shared living arrangements with older adult New York City hosts.**

**Our respite care service provides affordable, short-term, in-home care at the low cost of \$18.55 per hour, paid directly to the home care workers by frail elderly who are attempting to manage at home alone or with the help of others and, thereby, prevent their need for nursing home care. Although the cost of private agency home care is \$30 per hour, our respite care service provides the lowest cost, highest quality home care at \$18.55 per hour and free of charge under emergency circumstances. During the past 43 years, we have provided over 12,095 older adults and many more thousands of their caregivers with respite care services plus jobs for hundreds of Certified Home Health Aides.**

**Our program provides the only services of their types in New York City, is responsive to its housing crisis, prevents institutionalization and, thereby, saves the City significant Medicaid and other expenses. To continue our city-wide program requires \$250,000 from the Speaker's City-wide Budget, allocations from your individual and borough delegations within the City's next budget.**

**Thank you very much in advance for, hopefully, providing these desperately needed funds.**



To: New York City Council Committee on Criminal Justice

From: Phylisa Wisdom, Executive Director, New York Jewish Agenda (NYJA)

Dear Council Member Nurse and Committee on Criminal Justice,

Thank you for considering written testimony from New York Jewish Agenda (NYJA), a non-profit organization committed to amplifying the voice of the liberal New York Jewish community whose shared values motivate them to promote social justice here in our own backyard. Our work includes advocating for a criminal justice reform agenda in New York, reimagining public safety for New Yorkers, as well as closing the jails on Rikers Island by 2027 as the City has committed to. We conduct our criminal justice advocacy efforts through our membership in the New York Jewish Coalition for Criminal Justice Reform (NYJCCJR), in addition to other social justice policy work.

New York Jewish Agenda calls for a budget that reflects the city's commitment to closing Rikers, improves community safety, and moves toward eliminating the city's overreliance on incarceration. The commitments made in the Close Rikers plan, such as increased Justice Involved Supportive Housing units and the creation of "a new community-based mental health safety net" have not been adequately funded; the city needs to fully fund and honor these commitments so that those who need treatment don't end up in jail and so that those in jail can successfully return to society. The City should reallocate funds from the proposed Department of Corrections budget to these areas, rather than reward the most richly funded yet worst performing jail system in the country—in 2021 the city spent 290% more per incarcerated person than the second most expensive jail system in the country despite its inmates being subjected to some of the worst jail conditions in the nation.

NYJA and the NYJCCJR advocate for a criminal justice reform agenda with guidance from our shared Jewish values, and our Jewish moral and spiritual traditions—these values drive the New York Jewish community's passion for just, fair, and empathic restorative justice in our city; over incarceration does not make our community feel safer. We believe in the process of *Teshuva*, which is the process of redemption for one who has committed wrongdoing; *Teshuva* tells us to seek the best solution for *everyone* involved through meaningful reparation and support for the victims of the crime, as well as the restoration and return of the person who caused harm to the community, thus making the community stronger in the process. Moreover, in Deuteronomy 16:20, we are reminded that it is imperative that we exercise justice in a fair manner; *Tzedek*

*Tzedek Tirdof*, or “justice, justice you shall pursue so that you may thrive...” emphasizes the word “tzedek/justice” by repeating it twice, affirming that justice can only be fulfilled with compassion, mercy, and empathy.

New York City’s liberal Jews care deeply about criminal justice reform in our city; to that end, NYJA urges the City to allot funds to where they are really needed in this year’s budget, such as Housing, Education, Mental Health, and Drug Rehabilitation rather than another bloated Department of Corrections budget. The DOC’s inflated budget should be streamlined, with funds redistributed towards addressing the other aforementioned areas of need, such as fulfilling the City’s commitment to opening 380 more units of Justice Involved Supportive Housing. NYJA and the large Jewish community we represent urge this Council to meaningfully reallocate funds from the DOC budget to address and improve community safety, reduce New York City’s overreliance on incarceration, and support underfunded services such as supportive housing and community-based mental health treatment.

Thank you again for considering our testimony; we urge the City Council to pass a budget that adequately funds the commitments in the Close Rikers plan, supports alternatives to incarceration and re-entry support for incarcerated individuals, and redistributes funds from the DOC budget proposal.

Sincerely,

Phylisa Wisdom, Executive Director

New York Jewish Agenda



Testimony from the New York Jewish Coalition for Criminal Justice Reform  
Before the City Council Criminal Justice Committee Budget Hearing  
May 17, 2024

The [New York Jewish Coalition for Criminal Justice Reform](#) calls upon the Mayor and the City Council to pass a budget that will expedite the closure of Rikers and increase funding for supportive housing and mental health and substance use treatment. We believe that Rikers Island is a moral blight on our city and more of a threat to public safety than a solution.

The New York Jewish Coalition for Criminal Justice Reform (NYJCCJR) is composed of 29 member organizations with tens of thousands of members across New York City, including synagogues, community-based organizations and advocacy and education groups. Our members are profoundly concerned about public safety and justice in New York City. We believe investing in supportive housing and mental health treatment will help make us safer by addressing the underlying conditions that lead to crime, helping to prevent victims from being harmed, and keeping people out of Rikers in the first place.

We are greatly concerned that commitments in the Close Rikers plan are still inadequately funded:

- In the Points of Agreement on Closing Rikers, the administration agreed to establish 380 more units of Justice Involved Supportive Housing, a model that has been hugely successful in reducing jail, shelter, and hospital stays, and generating substantial cost savings. But funding rates proposed in the RFP issued were so low that qualified providers have not applied, and operators of the existing 120 units are struggling to keep them open.

The budget provides many opportunities to both improve the conditions at Rikers and support its necessary closure. **We support the following:**

1. **Allocate an additional \$19.4M to meet housing and mental health needs, and fulfill commitments in the Close Rikers plan.**
2. **Fully restore program funding and expand it to connect people with services for successful re-entry.**

We believe that increasing funding for supportive housing is essential not only to reduce the population at Rikers with serious mental health issues and expedite the closure of those jails, but also to address the city's interconnected crises of mental health and affordable housing. The number of people in Rikers diagnosed with a serious mental illness has increased 41% since January 2022. Among this vulnerable population, almost no one leaves Rikers better off than when they went in. Supportive housing has been proven to interrupt this inhuman, ineffective and dangerous cycle, providing people the stability and treatment they need, while reducing recidivism.

In the Jewish tradition, a home is a source of stability and a primary need that enables us to thrive. Supportive housing has been shown to enrich communities and provide critical support services for those that need it the most. Moreover, investing in supportive housing investment is not just our moral obligation and duty; it is overwhelmingly fiscally sound. Maintaining someone in supportive housing costs about \$50,000 per year while incarcerating someone at Rikers costs more than *ten times* as much.

Our Coalition members send clergy, lay leaders and volunteers to Rikers several times a month to support the Jewish Chaplains as they do prayer services and mark religious holidays. We regularly hear from those attending that this is now one of the only chances the population has to do any type of programming since the budget was cut. Programming for those currently held at Rikers Island provides a vital sense of purpose and connection, and prepares people for successful re-entry. DOC staff do not have the capacity or training to take on this work. We need funding for contracted providers to be restored, connecting people with services for successful re-entry.

Thank you.

[New York Jewish Coalition for Criminal Justice Reform](#)

## **Testimony to the City Council Committee on Criminal Justice**

### **Criminal Justice Committee, Executive Budget Hearing, May 17, 2024**

#### **Testimony Submitted May 21, 2024**

Thank you Chair Nurse and Council members for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Mayor's Executive Budget.

My name is Megan Carr, and I am a legal fellow at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. We are a nonprofit civil rights law firm that has been advancing civil rights through community lawyering and partnerships with the private bar for over forty years. We advocate for health, disability, and environmental justice.

The Mayor's Executive Budget fails to prioritize decarceration and decarbonization, in accordance with the legal mandate for Rikers Island to close by 2027, and the city and state's ambitious climate goals as required by the Renewable Rikers Laws and the CLCPA. In the Executive Budget summary, the Mayor touts "climate budgeting" and claims to "elevate environmental justice," but the money says otherwise.

The Department of Corrections (DOC) continues to be allocated a bloated budget of \$2.6 billion on jail operations, which is largely fueled by overincarceration, a ratio of uniformed staff to incarcerated people that is 4 times higher than the national average, and astronomical staffing costs due to overtime pay. Meanwhile, the budget fails to make the necessary investments to reduce incarceration, such as allocating an additional \$19.4M to meet housing and mental health needs and fulfill the Close Rikers plan. These alternative investments, which provide supportive housing and mental health services – thus helping with reentry and preventing incarceration in the first place – are necessary to lower the population at Rikers and transfer to the borough-based jail system. Only once Rikers is decarcerated and the mandated land transfers from DOC to DCAS are made will Rikers Island finally become a site of environmental justice.

The continued operation of Rikers Island perpetuates environmental injustice. The penal colony nestled in the middle of the East River was literally built upon mounds of trash, as landfill was transported from Manhattan to expand the island and make it suitable for development. It is well documented that this decomposing garbage released high levels of methane gas on the island. Poor air quality on Rikers Island is further exacerbated by the many industrial facilities and polluting sources in the South Bronx and Northern Queens – including multiple Peaker plants, waste transfer stations, and of course, LaGuardia Airport.

Rather than aggressively pursuing a renewable future for the island, DOC seems intent on its perpetual use as a carceral facility and its continued reliance on fossil fuels. Per Local Laws 17 and 31 of the Renewable Rikers Act, the City has released feasibility studies on Renewable Energy potential at Rikers Island as well as Wastewater Resource Recovery at Rikers Island. But DOC's actions indicate a desire to move in the opposite direction. For example, the gas-powered

cogeneration plant that powers the island has been operating under an expired Title V air permit since 2018. DOC has applied to have that expired permit renewed and modified, seeking to lift the emission caps on nitrogen oxides and PM10. Nitrogen oxides alone are harmful to human health, and when emitted can react with other chemicals in the air to form particulate matter and ozone, compounding risks for those that have to breathe the polluted air. We are deeply concerned about the attempts to pollute more at Rikers Island, which can and should be transformed into a clean energy and thriving green jobs hub, as the latest feasibility studies show. We are also troubled that, according to the DOC's own documents, this request for an increase in emissions seeks to reflect the current emissions from the plant, meaning that they are already exceeding the limits of their expired permit. This shows us once again that the DOC believes they can act beyond the bounds of the law.

DOC has budgeted \$3,655,093 for maintenance of the Riker's cogenerating power plant this year. That's a lot of money, although just a small slice of DOC's staggering \$2.6 billion budget. DOC's budget documents do not show consultancy or other costs for this project that typically come with complex permit applications. At the Criminal Justice budget hearing in March we heard from Deputy Commissioner Patrick Benn that the DOC is moving forward with their application for a modified permit. We believe that any costs associated with this application – including consulting costs, costs of proposed pollution mitigations systems, etc. - must be included in the DOC's budget. We also believe that the public is entitled to an explanation as to how Rikers Island – perhaps the most famous and scrutinized correctional facility in the nation – has been operating without a valid air pollution permit for six years.

Yet there are even more costs posed by this power plant and its proposed modification. There are the costs to human health of more nitrogen oxides and particulate matter emissions. There are the costs to human life and dignity of detaining people on Rikers Island, a place that has become synonymous with cruelty and injustice. Beyond this enormous, unnecessary, and costly proposed budget, there are the unknown future costs that come with every decision that locks in continued operation of Rikers Island, and the human cruelty and environmental injustice that comes with it.

In conclusion, we ask that the Mayor's DOC budget allocation be significantly reduced, and we support the demands of our peers at the Freedom Agenda, who have offered concrete recommendations for how this budget can be reduced while prioritizing justice and safety. We ask the City Council to stay vigilant while monitoring the DOC's spending and actions, both of which reflect a lack of commitment to closing Rikers Island and, and in fact seeks to increase the many environmental harms faced by the population of the island and surrounding communities. We call for the robust and swift vision of a transformed Renewable Rikers to be realized.



**Testimony to New York City Council  
Finance and Criminal Justice Committees  
Executive Budget FY25**

**Public Hearing**

**May 17, 2024**

Tanya Krupat  
Vice President, Policy & Advocacy  
Osborne Center for Justice Across Generations



**Osborne**  
ASSOCIATION

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today to inform critical decision-making underway regarding the City's FY25 budget. My name is Tanya Krupat and I am the Vice President of Policy and Advocacy at the Osborne Center for Justice Across Generations. As many of you know, Osborne is one of the oldest and largest criminal justice service organizations in the state. We serve 10,000 participants in programs from arrest to reentry. We have offices in Harlem, Brooklyn, Buffalo, Newburgh, White Plains, and Troy, with our headquarters in the Bronx. We also have programming in 41 state prisons and (to a limited degree now) on Rikers Island. Through advocacy, direct service, and policy reform, Osborne works to create opportunities for people to heal, grow, and thrive.

Osborne has been a member of the Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) and Reentry Coalition since its inception and we are among the 11 organizations included in the funding request of \$1,952,074, a \$100,000 increase per organization from current funding levels. This funding collectively allows for our organizations to continue providing services across the full spectrum of the criminal legal system. We have been and remain grateful for the flexibility ATI funding provides to our organizations as we work to decarcerate our jails and prisons with a particular focus on reducing the population on Rikers Island and moving towards its closure. It bears repeating as often as possible how effective and affordable ATI programs are: for the cost of one person being detained on Rikers for one year (around \$556,000) – a year in which they are likely to experience or witness violence, are separated from their family, may lose their job and home, and their health and mental health may worsen – ATIs can serve more than 30 people, and yield positive and life-changing results that make us all safer.

We are also members of the Fair Chance for Housing Coalition and are grateful to the City Council for passing Fair Chance for Housing. Starting January 1, 2025, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) will be responsible for enforcing Fair Chance for Housing, and in the months leading up to that, should be doing a public education campaign so that housing providers know their responsibilities and people know their rights. We are advocating for an increase of \$4 million for CHR's budget, to bring the budget up to \$18 million. The agency needs holistic, agencywide funding to be able to fulfill the mandates of preventing discrimination (via outreach and education) and enforcement of this new law (along with other areas of discrimination it addresses and monitors).

We come to this year's budget discussions still reeling from last year's DOC budget cuts to Rikers Island programming, and Probation's elimination of Next STEPS, which served young people living in NYCHA housing. In both cases, the abruptness of the decision was additionally harmful, particularly for the young people who had their mentors taken away in a matter of days. We are very concerned about the now documented (in the [recently released](#) Mayor's Management Report) significant reduction in programming over the first quarter of FY24. Specifically, there were 4,100 fewer group facilitation sessions and 3,460 fewer one-on-one sessions in a four-month period (comparing FY24 to FY23).

We are eager to resume our full array of programming at Rikers and are pleased that the current DOC Commissioner is inviting providers to come back. To make this possible for us, we

have submitted a discretionary funding request to the Council for \$500,000 to relaunch restorative and supportive rehabilitative services for people who are detained at GRVC. This funding would allow Osborne to once again provide daily group services for up to 18 housing areas serving approximately 360 people per week. This restores only a fraction of the programming we once provided, so we welcome additional funding from the Council and/or DOC to serve more people. The benefits of programming are enormous, and not only for individuals in custody, but also for Officers, families, and communities.

To strengthen New York City's families and communities, and contribute to public safety and a brighter City, we have also submitted the following requests for Council funding:

### **Safeguarding Children**

In FYs 22, 23, and 24, the City Council funded Osborne to work with the NYPD to **Safeguard Children at the Time of Their Parent's Arrest**. The funding allowed us to assist NYPD in complying with the recently passed Local Law 1349-A, enacted to reduce trauma to children when NYPD arrests the parent or caregiver of a child. Our role has been to assist in developing and delivering training, provide technical assistance to the NYPD regarding data collection, and build a network of community-based providers who can offer post-arrest support to children and families. While we have trained more than 2,000 newly promoted Sergeants and Lieutenants, as well as new recruits and Youth Coordinating Officers, there remains much more to do, and much that is currently in progress. In FY25, with continued funding, we can train Training Sergeants, create practice tools for Officers to access on their phones via NYPD's intranet, equip scenario-based training rooms with props to indicate the presence of children, and reach many more of the 30,000 members of service. We can also work to create sustainable training plans and ensure this work continues and is embedded in NYPD policy and practice. As mentioned, the funding we received from the City Council also allowed us to build a consortium of service providers that can address the needs of children and families after a parent's arrest. Sustained funding would allow this work to continue; without a dedicated focus on this vital component and funding for it, these efforts would end. FY 25 funding would also allow us to pursue aspects of this work that are critically important but we have not yet addressed: safeguarding children present when warrants are executed through pre-arrest planning, and confronting the ongoing lack of data. We are requesting \$265,000 to continue this work, and a letter from NYPD Commissioner Caban supporting this request is attached to this testimony.

### **Gun Prevention**

#### **Bronx Osborne Gun Accountability and Prevention (BOGAP) Program**

Osborne has submitted a funding request of \$20,000 to expand a program developed with the Bronx DA for 16- to 30-year-olds that provides an accountability-based alternative to the 3.5-year mandatory minimum prison sentence for carrying a loaded gun in the absence of any other crime. This funding would supplement what we have received from other sources, and allow us to serve 75 young people this coming fiscal year. It costs about \$110,000 per year for one person incarcerated in a NY State prison, and as previously noted about \$556,000 per year per

person detained on Rikers. BOGAP successfully keeps young people out of jail and prison, saving millions of dollars and achieving positive outcomes and brighter futures for young adults, as demonstrated by our extraordinarily high retention rate (of 98%) and described in [this recent feature article by the Bureau of Justice Assistance](#). With our requested funding, we'll be able to provide hot meals to program participants, stipends for internships, and additional supportive services to increase young people's success in the program and beyond.

## Housing

The housing crisis in the City remains significant and those reentering from jail and prison encounter not only the shortage of affordable housing but also housing discrimination due to their conviction histories, which we hope will be mitigated with the passage of the Fair Chance for Housing Act. Thank you to the City Council for passing this landmark bill in December 2023!

According to the *State of the Homeless 2023*<sup>1</sup> report, every year since 2015, between 45 and 55 percent of those leaving state prison were discharged to the NYC shelter system. To address the dire need for reentry housing, Osborne recently opened the **Fulton Community Reentry Center** to provide 140 transitional housing beds for older men returning from prison, and an array of reentry services in the former state-owned Fulton Correctional Facility. We are grateful for past Council funding for Fulton, and we are again requesting Council support in the amount of \$250,000 to specifically support: 1) workforce development training for residents; 2) group sessions for residents and community members; 3) restorative justice community-building circles for residents and community members; and, 4) a therapeutic gardening program.

## Elder Reentry

Over the past 20 years, the population in our state prisons has dramatically decreased from a high of 60,000 in 2008 to 31,000 in the most recent year of reporting. We applaud all the reform efforts over the years to bring more individuals home. Many of these individuals have spent decades behind the prison walls and return to the community at an advanced age. They have suffered through a system of acute trauma, inadequate healthcare and nutrition, and have aged at a faster rate, referred to as "accelerated aging." They face unique challenges in a world that is fast-paced, digitized, "in a cloud," and unfamiliar. Osborne for many years now<sup>2</sup> has been educating the public about this community of people and advocating for support on their behalf through our **Elder Reentry Initiative (ERI)**. Funded by the Council in the past, we request continued funding in the amount of \$100,000 to support two related program areas: (1) participant screening, intake and assessment, reentry service plans, community case management, and technical assistance; and (2) advocacy and public education on behalf of older adults.

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<sup>1</sup> Coalition for the Homeless, June 2023, [State of the Homeless 2023, Compounding Crises, Failed Responses](#)

<sup>2</sup> Osborne Association, May 2018, [The High Costs of Low Risk: The Crisis of America's Aging Prison Population](#)

## **Health & LGBTQIA+ Reentry Services**

We have submitted additional funding requests to 1) support previously incarcerated individuals living with or at risk of contracting HIV, with a focus on the LGBTQIA community; 2) the hiring of a full-time Hepatitis B and C Patient Navigator to serve the previously incarcerated, and; 3) programming to assess and address mental health and trauma in youth impacted by the criminal legal system.

Please see our full list of nine (9) funding requests in the attached document.

It should go without saying, yet can't be said enough, that there is great concern about the conditions on Rikers Island and the challenges that lie ahead for its scheduled closure. We hear almost daily about the harm, violence, and, in too many instances, the tragic deaths that occur there. In addition, the population continues to increase, representing a true threat to the hard-fought borough-based jails plan. We urge an "all hands on deck" approach to decarceration, including investing in ATDs and ATIs, expanding treatment and mental health services, improving court processing times and court production, funding Second Look efforts, and expanding an array of housing options. We also call for reducing the trauma experienced by those who live and work on Rikers by investing in programming and visiting. Maintaining relationships and support systems for those detained benefits everyone on Rikers - including staff - and benefits their children and families.

We support the efforts of the new Lippman Commission to fully evaluate the current status of the new jail plan and development of recommendations to close Rikers. We also support an increase to the budget for the Board of Correction to hire more staff to enhance the monitoring of daily operations and to conduct investigations. It will take all of us working together along with critical investments to transform Rikers from a place that is filled with terror and tragedy to a smaller, fairer, safer place. Investments in community programs and communities - including alternatives to detention and incarceration, but also core services for young people, and addressing mental health and addiction - will help fewer people end up on Rikers in the first place.

Thank you.

**The Osborne Association  
New York City Council  
FY25 Discretionary Funding Requests**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>FY25 Request</b>	<b>FY24 Funding</b>
<b>Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Services</b>	Osborne’s portion of the ATI coalition request, which will support multiple programs: (1) court advocacy and mitigation services; (2) video visiting and family strengthening activities; (3) expansion of job training and placement; (4) elder reentry services; and (5) the Osborne Center for Justice Across Generations.	\$1,952,074	\$1,852,074
<b>Rikers Island: Partial Program Restoration - Supportive Services at George R. Vierno Center (GRVC)</b>	To relaunch critical rehabilitative services for people who are detained at the GRVC on Rikers Island. Osborne will restore daily group services for up to 18 housing areas, serving approximately 360 people per week.	\$500,000	N/A
<b>Bronx Osborne Gun Accountability and Prevention (BOGAP) Program</b>	For expanding BOGAP—an innovative diversion program developed with the Bronx DA—to serve approximately 75 participants annually. Funds will be used to provide hot meals to program participants, stipends for internships, and additional support services to participants to increase their chances of success in the program.	\$20,000	\$20,000

<p><b>Elder Reentry Initiative Services and Advocacy</b></p>	<p>To support two related program areas: (1) The Elder Reentry Initiative’s participant screening, intake and assessment, reentry service plans, community case management, and technical assistance; and (2) Osborne’s advocacy and public education on behalf of older adults.</p>	<p>\$100,000</p>	<p>\$90,000</p>
<p><b>The Fulton Community Reentry Center</b></p>	<p>For Osborne’s new transitional reentry housing facility. Funding will support workforce development training for Fulton residents; group sessions for residents and community members (e.g., AA meetings); restorative justice community-building circles for residents and community members; and a therapeutic gardening program.</p>	<p>\$250,000</p>	<p>\$10,000</p>
<p><b>Health and Wellness – Ending the Epidemic</b></p>	<p>To support formerly incarcerated people who are living with or at high risk of contracting HIV and come from low-income communities of color, with a focus on LGBTQIA+ people. Osborne will provide sexual health education, prevention/treatment, trauma support, and other supportive services.</p>	<p>\$60,219</p>	<p>\$60,219</p>
<p><b>Hep Free NYC</b></p>	<p>To support a new, full-time staff position of Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C Patient Navigator—who will serve formerly incarcerated people and others with criminal legal system involvement from Osborne’s offices in the Mott Haven section of the South Bronx.</p>	<p>\$125,000</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<p><b>Implementation of the NYC Safeguarding Children Initiative</b></p>	<p>To support implementation of Local Law 1349-A, enacted to reduce trauma to children when NYPD arrests the parent of a child. Osborne will provide necessary training and administrative support to the NYPD, and build a network of CBOs that can provide post-arrest support to children.</p>	<p>\$265,000</p>	<p>\$265,000</p>
<p><b>Improving Behavioral Health and Wellbeing for Youth</b></p>	<p>For assessing and addressing mental health and trauma in youth impacted by the criminal legal system through treatment options that alleviate stress, improve functioning, and reduce trauma symptoms. Targets: 60 assessments; 120 referrals.</p>	<p>\$158,000</p>	<p>\$158,000</p>





**THE POLICE COMMISSIONER  
CITY OF NEW YORK**

January 16, 2024

Speaker Adrienne Adams  
New York City Council  
250 Broadway Ste. 1880  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Speaker Adams:

I have been informed that the Osborne Association has applied for continued New York City Council discretionary funding for its work with the New York City Police Department ("NYPD") on implementing practices and developing training regarding the Child-Sensitive Arrest protocol delineated in New York City Administrative Code section 14-181.

This law was enacted in 2020, specifically to reduce the trauma children and families may face when NYPD officers arrest the caregiver of a minor child. Last year, Osborne received City Council funding which allowed it to assist the NYPD with the implementation of this protocol, which requires training and follow-up support. The law specified that the NYPD should include a nonprofit partner to participate in the process, however, no funding was allocated to accomplish this. I understand that the City Council provided funding to Osborne through which Osborne was able to hire a full-time staff. Further, Osborne was able to make additional staff available to NYPD to develop training materials and establish a network of partner referral organizations, as required in the above mentioned law.

We are in the process of working with Osborne to tailor training to a wide variety of personnel, including recruits, police officers and various ranks of supervisors. We welcome Osborne's role in educating uniformed members of the service about the impact of parental arrest, along with practical ideas for implementing policies designed to lessen trauma at, and following, an arrest including providing and connecting children to safe settings when caregivers are taken into custody.

We would request that you give the Osborne Association's funding application all due consideration for inclusion in the Fiscal Year 2025 budget as it supports a significant City interest.

Sincerely,  
Handwritten signature of Edward A. Caban in black ink.

Edward A. Caban  
Police Commissioner



## **NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON AGING**

### **Budget Hearing – May 17, 2024 Public Testimony**

Thank you, Chair Hudson and Committee Members, for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Kimberly George and I'm the President and CEO at Project Guardianship. I want to start by thanking these Committees and the City Council at large for supporting Project Guardianship and access to critical guardianship services for New Yorkers.

For the past 20 years, Project Guardianship has served as a court-appointed guardian for adults who need a surrogate decision-maker. We do this work because our state guardianship system was designed for those who have family members to care for them or money to pay for private care, which leaves out a substantial and growing segment of New Yorkers who are poor, aging alone, and experiencing a loss of capacity. Most of these folks reside here in the five boroughs.

According to the Center for an Urban Future, over the last decade the number of New Yorkers ages 65 and over increased by more than 31 percent, making older adults the fastest growing segment of the population statewide. Today, nearly 1 in 5 New Yorkers is 65 or older. They are also increasingly immigrants and people of color.

Sadly, as New York's older population increases, so does the number of societal risks. Inadequate health care, elder abuse, homelessness, and poverty are among the many issues disproportionately impacting older New Yorkers. In fact, the number of older New Yorkers living below the poverty line increased by over 37 percent in the last decade. At Project Guardianship, where most of our clients are 65 or older, 78 percent live below the poverty line.

At Project Guardianship, we provide an essential network of support for aging people with diminishing capacity who need help in managing their daily affairs. We help them navigate a complex web of social systems such as housing, immigration, public benefits, end-of-life arrangements and more. Our multidisciplinary teams work to improve their safety, health, well-being, and quality of life.



Unfortunately, Project Guardianship, like many nonprofit guardians across New York, is at capacity and cannot accept any additional appointments without additional funding. This poses a serious problem for judges, who have come to rely on nonprofit guardians as more and more private attorneys have stepped away from guardianship practice. On any given day, New York City judges are unable to find guardians for approximately half of the cases where a guardianship appointment is necessary.

So, what will happen to those New Yorkers who are experiencing a loss of capacity and do not have family or friends looking out for them, and who do not have the financial means to pay for private care? Project Guardianship applauds the City Council for its commitment to finding comprehensive ways to meet the needs of our city's aging population. As budget negotiations continue, we urge you to set aside resources for nonprofit guardianship. Thank you.



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New York City Council  
Criminal Justice Committee  
May 17, 2024

**Testimony of Gina Mitchell – Attorney-in-Charge of Policy and Law Reform –  
Queens Defenders**

Good morning, Chairperson Nurse and members of the Criminal Justice Committee. My name is Gina Mitchell, and I am the Attorney-in-Charge of Policy and Law Reform at Queens Defenders. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the executive budget proposed for the fiscal year 2025. As it stands, the proposed budget prioritizes overspending on incarceration and underspending on community investment and is contrary to the City Council’s commitment to closing Rikers Island by 2027.

The City has proposed \$2.6 billion on jail operations in the 2025 fiscal year.<sup>1</sup> The NYPD budget is just under \$12 billion.<sup>2</sup> However, alarmingly, the budget for agencies that focus on community interventions, revitalization, health and safety have been cut significantly. The Department of Youth and Community Development has been cut by over 25% and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has been cut by over 20%.<sup>3</sup> This is despite a crisis in both rates of youth violence and access to mental health services.<sup>4</sup> Alternatives to incarceration, supervised release and re-entry support services have been cut by \$27.8 million. The Office of Neighborhood Safety, which includes the Office to Prevent Gun Violence, has been cut by \$66 million.<sup>5</sup>

As Public Defenders, we bear witness every day to the individuals who will be most impacted by these cuts and by the bloated DOC’s budget. 90% of those detained in Rikers are Black or Latinx. Over half of the current population is flagged for mental health concerns. Many are remanded in Rikers simply because they are unhoused and cannot make bail.

The budget projects that over 88% of DOC expenses will be staff salaries, overtime and benefits.<sup>6</sup> This rationale for the bloated DOC budget is difficult to understand when the

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<sup>1</sup> Vera Institute of Justice, “A look inside the FY 2025 DOC Budget,” (February 2024).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> Nazish Dholakia, New York City’s New Mental Health Plan is Dangerous, Vera Institute of Justice (January 2023).

<sup>5</sup> Vera Institute of Justice, “A look inside the FY 2025 DOC Budget,” (February 2024).

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*



DOC ratio of uniformed staff to incarcerated people is more than 4 times higher than the national average.<sup>7</sup> Further, there are almost double the number of DOC staff to people in custody. However, staff at NYC jails consistently fail to provide adequate care to inmates.<sup>8</sup> DOC staff continue to be chronically absent, resulting in mass overspending on their wages. The City can save significantly by eliminating vacancies for uniformed staff.<sup>9</sup>

We know that the current incarceration system in NYC is failing. We have seen how overfunding of incarceration fails to provide adequate care to those who are remanded; contributes to the risk of recidivism; and jeopardizes the public safety of all New Yorkers. Instead, the budget must prioritize investments in community-based initiatives that promote and maintain safety more effectively than jails. I urge the City to restore:

- \$27.8 million to alternatives to incarceration, supervised release, and re-entry support;
- \$6.1 million to summer youth employment;
- \$66 million to the Office of Neighborhood Safety; and
- \$26.7 million to street outreach programs.<sup>10</sup>

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Gina Mitchell  
Attorney in Charge of Law Reform and Policy  
Queens Defenders  
gmitchell@queensdefenders.org

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<sup>7</sup> Close Rikers: Decarcerate, Defend, Divest, Redistribute, “FY 2025 Budget Analysis and Priorities”

<sup>8</sup> *See, for e.g.*, Jan Ransom and Ainara Tiefenthaler, “New York City Set to Pay a Record \$28 Million to Settle Rikers Island Suit: Eight corrections officers and a captain stood by for seven minutes and 51 seconds as Nicholas Feliciano tried to hang himself in a jail cell in 2019,” New York Times (April 2024) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/06/nyregion/nyc-rikers-negligence-lawsuit.html>> (accessed 5/15/2024).

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*, *see also*, Martin, Steve J et al., “Status Report on DOC’s Action Plan by the Nunez Independent Monitor.” (November 2023) page 99.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

Alexander Anderson, Executive Director  
Reentry Theater of Harlem  
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New York, NY 10029  
[alex@reentrytheaterofharlem.org](mailto:alex@reentrytheaterofharlem.org)

Honorable Members of the NYC Council,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak today about the critical role of cultural work in repairing the damage done by mass incarceration.

In every American city, justice-involved individuals are everywhere—seated across from you on the subway, pushing the cart next to yours in the supermarket, standing behind you in line at the movies. Once they are no longer required to wear prison uniforms or ID cards, they blend in, looking just like everyone else.

The reality is inescapable: America has become a nation of ex-cons. Thirteen million people have been convicted of a felony and spent time locked up—that’s almost 7 percent of U.S. adult residents. If all these individuals were placed on an island, its population would surpass that of many countries, including Sweden, Bolivia, Senegal, Greece, or Somalia.

This transformation is not surprising. In the 1970s and 1980s, the nationwide “war on drugs,” combined with tougher sentencing policies, led to an unprecedented prison boom. Since 1970, the number of people in U.S. prisons has grown more than six-fold. In 2002, the nation’s jail and prison population exceeded two million for the first time.

However, there is another side to this story: almost everyone who goes to prison eventually comes home. The legislators who called for tough-on-crime laws rarely considered the long-term consequences of incarcerating so many people. As America’s prison population ballooned, few preparations were made for the day when nearly all these prisoners would be set free.

Today, our nation’s prisons release more than 600,000 people a year—that’s more than the entire population of cities like Boston, Seattle, or Washington, D.C. This number continues to grow, fueling an invisible exodus of men and women leaving prisons and returning to their communities.

Most of these individuals come from urban areas and return to the same neighborhoods they left. For instance, twenty thousand prisoners return to New York City every year, thirty thousand to Los Angeles County and fifteen thousand to Chicago. Within these cities, ex-prisoners are often concentrated in just a few neighborhoods, such as Manhattan’s Lower East Side or the South Side of Chicago.

Men and women come back from prison changed. They carry scars, both visible and invisible, from their years behind bars. Some return with health issues like HIV, Hepatitis C, or tuberculosis. They may have new friends, new enemies, or new gang affiliations. The frustration and rage built up during their imprisonment come home with them, too.

In prison, some individuals kick an addiction, while others pick up a new one. Some resolve to abandon their criminal ways and turn their lives around, while others learn how to become more skilled criminals.

This is where cultural work becomes crucial. Cultural activities—such as art, music, storytelling, and community rites of passage—provide a means for these individuals to express their pain, reflect on their experiences, and rediscover their identities. These creative processes foster empathy, understanding, and a sense of belonging, which are essential for personal and communal healing.

Cultural work helps dismantle the stigma associated with incarceration. By showcasing the talents and stories of formerly incarcerated individuals, we challenge societal perceptions and create opportunities for dialogue and reconciliation. This not only aids in their reintegration into society but also strengthens the fabric of our communities.

Programs that integrate cultural work into rehabilitation efforts have shown remarkable success. Participants often exhibit lower recidivism rates, improved mental health, and stronger social connections. These outcomes benefit the individuals involved, their families, and their neighborhoods, creating a ripple effect of positive change.

Investing in cultural work is investing in a more humane and effective approach to justice. It recognizes the inherent dignity of every person and acknowledges that true rehabilitation involves more than just punishment—it requires opportunities for growth, creativity, and connection.

I urge the Council to support and expand initiatives that integrate cultural work into the rehabilitation process. By doing so, we can repair the damage of mass incarceration and build a more inclusive and compassionate city.

**TESTIMONY**

New York City Council Committee on Aging FY25 Preliminary Budget Hearing

Friday May 17, 2024

Delivered by: Darcy Connors, Executive Director of SAGEServes

Good afternoon, Chair Hudson and members of the Committee on Aging. My name is Darcy Connors and I am the Executive Director of SAGEServes, a division of SAGE, the country's first and largest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQ+ older people. SAGEServes provides programs and services to 5,000 LGBTQ+ older New Yorkers annually.

SAGE has been serving LGBTQ+ elders and HIV-affected older New Yorkers for over four decades. With the support of the New York City Council, we provide comprehensive social services and community-building programs through our network of LGBTQ+ older adult centers and services for homebound LGBTQ+ elders and older New Yorkers living with HIV. SAGE also made history in 2020 and 2021 when, together with our developer partners, we opened New York's first LGBTQ+ welcoming elder housing developments located in Brooklyn and the Bronx.

Services for older New Yorkers are more crucial than ever as the population of New Yorkers aged 60 and older is growing five times faster than those under 18, with LGBTQ+ elders making up a significant part of this rapidly growing older population.<sup>i</sup> New York State ranks among the top 10 states in terms of the percentage of its population that identifies as LGBTQ+ and of the estimated 800,000 LGBTQ+ adults in New York State, nearly one-third (28%) are over the age of 50.<sup>ii</sup> Year after year, the population of LGBTQ+ older New Yorkers is only expected to grow as the population ages: by 2030, one in five New Yorkers will be over the age of 60.<sup>iii</sup> Additionally, 60% of New Yorkers living with HIV are over the age of 50.<sup>iv</sup> In short, our City needs policies, initiatives, and investments programs to protect, effectively reach, and serve LGBTQ+ elders and older New Yorkers living with HIV.

Yet in this time of rapidly growing need, LGBTQ+ elders are often invisible, disconnected from services, and severely isolated without traditional biological familial supports. They are far more likely to live alone and less likely to rely on adult children or other family members for informal caregiving.<sup>v</sup> In fact, 25% of SAGE's constituents have reported not having anyone to call during an emergency. Because of these thin support networks, LGBTQ+ older people need to rely more heavily on community service providers for care as they age. Yet, they're often distrustful of mainstream providers based on historical and ongoing discrimination and mistreatment.<sup>vi</sup> The services, community, and support system provided by SAGE are designed to address these gaps and serve as a lifeline for LGBTQ+ elders in New York City.

With the support of the New York City Council, SAGE operates a network of LGBTQ+ friendly older adult centers, SAGE Centers, across NYC. SAGE Centers are a crucial access point for care



and support for LGBTQ+ elders and HIV-affected older New Yorkers who may need assistance. The SAGE Center network includes two SAGE Centers located on the ground floor of our City's very first LGBTQ+ welcoming elder housing developments: SAGE Center Brooklyn at Stonewall House and SAGE Center Bronx at Crotona Pride House. These two developments with their co-located SAGE Centers help to alleviate poverty and improve housing security and overall health outcomes for New York City's low-income LGBTQ+ elders. Many of the LGBTQ+ elders who SAGE serves in these residences and through their co-located SAGE Centers struggle with mental illness, substance abuse, and homelessness and require intensive care management and social service support. Because of this, there has been a higher demand for SAGE's care management services. SAGE is further responding to the needs of these community members by offering in-language programming and services in Spanish, Mandarin, and Cantonese.

SAGE Centers serve as a safety net for LGBTQ+ elders and HIV-affected older New Yorkers and provide programming that reduces isolation; improves access to services; and offers benefits counseling, legal and financial planning, educational workshops, health and wellness programs, support groups, and nutritious meals.

These vital services are made possible by the partnership with the New York City Council and has been funded by the LGBTQ Senior Services in Every Borough Initiative since its creation in FY15. Since then, SAGE has partnered with GRIOT Circle, New York City's only community-based organization specifically serving LGBTQ+ elders of color, through our space sharing at SAGE Center Brooklyn at Stonewall House. SAGE is thankful for the Council's commitment to our elders through this Initiative and requests renewals of direct support in FY25 to SAGE, GRIOT Circle, and Pride Center of Staten Island to support these organizations and our work.

The New York City Council has also been an instrumental supporter of our SAGEVets program, the only program in New York City and New York State designed to address the unique needs of older LGBTQ+ veterans. SAGEVets helps older LGBTQ+ military service veterans improve their access to Veterans Administration (VA) benefits, supports their overall health and wellness, and provides referrals to counsel regarding discharge status upgrades – all while improving veterans-serving organizations' LGBTQ+ competency. The needs of this population are deep; New York City is among the top ten cities in the nation with the highest concentrations of LGBTQ+ veterans, and over half of veteran New Yorkers are over the age of 65. The military's long history of enforced anti-LGBTQ+ policies followed by the discriminating Don't Ask Don't Tell policy mounted many barriers between older LGBTQ+ veterans and their Federal VA benefits, resulting in a disproportional amount of LGBTQ+ older veterans not accessing the services that they need and deserve. As New York's only program specifically serving LGBTQ+ veterans, SAGEVets also plays a large role in assisting older veterans who were discharged due to their sexual orientation or gender identity with discharge upgrades under the New York Restoration of Honor Act and Int. 479A-2018.

In FY25, SAGE requests renewal of our New York City Council funding, commensurate with FY24 levels. Support from the City Council fuels our services for the residents in Stonewall House and Crotona Pride House and the surrounding communities; sustains our citywide network of

SAGE Centers and their robust virtual programming and complimentary care management; reinforces services to LGBTQ+ older veterans; and supports our mental health services for homebound LGBTQ+ and HIV-affected elders. Specifically, SAGE requests:

- Renewal of **\$1,055,000** in Council Initiative LGBTQ Senior Services in Every Borough to fund programs and services at our network of SAGE Centers—LGBTQ+-affirming older adult centers—reaching over 5,000 LGBTQ+, allied and HIV-affected older New Yorkers .
- Renewal of **\$50,000** through the Senior Centers, Program and Enhancement Initiative to support care management services offered at SAGE Centers including crisis intervention, care assistance, caregiving services, individual and group counseling, friendly visiting for homebound elders, legal services, and mental health referrals.
- Renewal of **\$100,000** from the Council’s LGBTQ Caucus to allow SAGE to provide culturally and linguistically competent experienced care management at our expanded SAGE sites, in Harlem, Brooklyn, and the Bronx including the continued expansion of services offered in-language in Spanish, Mandarin, and Cantonese.
- Renewal of **\$100,000** from the Citywide Initiative of Veterans Community Development to fund SAGEVets, New York City’s only program designed to address the unique needs of older LGBTQ+ military service veterans which helps older LGBTQ+ veterans improve their access to Veterans Administration (VA) benefits, supports their overall health and wellness, and provides referrals to counsel regarding discharge status upgrades.
- Renewal of **\$100,000** under the Geriatric Mental Health initiative to support mental health services to LGBTQ+ and HIV-affected elders who are frail and homebound including screening for mental health and substance abuse issues, home visits and support groups, and referral to partner health care and substance abuse programs.
- Consideration of support under the Support our Seniors initiative to help provide safe transportation options to transgender and non-binary elders in response to a pattern of harassment on public transportation.

SAGE deeply values our partnership with the Council. I look forward to working with members of the Committee on Aging and the entire New York City Council to address the needs of LGBTQ+ elders in every district. Thank you, Chair Hudson, for your leadership and for providing me with the opportunity to testify.

Darcy Connors, Executive Director, SAGEServes  
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<sup>i</sup> LiveOn NY, “Aging is Everyone’s Business: Policies for Building a New York for All Ages,” August 2021 <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/562a3197e4b0493d4ffd3105/t/6113ce58c3617a75b357ad4c/1628687962789/Aging+is+Everyones+Business+FINAL+FINAL-min.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> AARP NY and SAGE, [Disrupting Disparities: Solutions for LGBTQ New Yorkers Age 50+](#) (2021)

<sup>iii</sup> LiveOn NY and Hunter College Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging, [Aging is Everyone’s Business: Policies for Building a New York for All Ages](#) (2021)

<sup>iv</sup> Turrini et al. [Assessing the health status and mortality of older people over 65 with HIV](#) (2020)

<sup>v</sup> AARP NY, “Disrupting Disparities: Solutions for LGBTQ+ New Yorkers 50+,” January 2021 <https://aarp-states.brightspotcdn.com/ca/eb/c2353b1e45b3a7fa0f15991c47a6/disparities-lgbtq-full-final-spread-v4.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> Movement Advancement Project, “LGBT Older People & COVID-19,” May 2020 <https://www.lgbtmap.org/file/2020%20LGBTQ%20Older%20Adults%20COVID.pdf>



Testimony for NYC Council Budget Hearing on Aging  
May 17, 2024

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**ACTUARIAL DISSONANCE**

In 2016, NYC Planning published *New York City Population Projections by Age/Sex & Borough, 2010-2040*. It concluded that the population of New Yorkers 65 years and over stood at 1,002,000 in 2010 and is projected to increase to 1,410,000 in 2040—a jump of 408,000 persons or 40.7 percent. The bulk of the increase was expected to occur in the first two decades of the projection period 2010-2030.

How has the City prepared for this? It has not. The Department for the Aging budget, generally a little less than 1% of the total city budget, fell to less than one-half of one percent in 2023. And now we're threatened with more cuts.

Through another lens:

In 2005 people over 65 represented 11.9% of New York City residents

By 2015 it was 13.2%<sup>1</sup>

In 2021 it was 16.2%<sup>2</sup>

What are the ramifications of baby boomers aging in and living longer with no appropriate budget response from the City?

- An affordable housing crisis
- Food insecurity
- The collapse of long term care

No political rhetoric can mask the lunacy of the actuarial dissonance mayoral administrations practice when it comes to allocating budget to care for older New Yorkers.

How does this strategy make any sense?

<sup>1</sup> <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/aging-with-dignity-a-blueprint-for-serving-nycs-growing-senior-population/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://states.aarp.org/new-york/aarp-ny-on-state-of-city-36-growth-in-nycs-older-adult-population-means-more-must-be-done#:~:text=New%20Yorkers%20ages%2065%20and,people%20ages%2065%20and%20over.>



New York City Council

Committee on Aging - Chair Hudson

Committee on Finance - Chair Brannan

May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Executive Aging Budget FY25

I am Shyvonne Noboa, Associate Executive Director of Older Adult Services at Sunnyside Community Services (SCS). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for supporting older adults in New York City.

We are proud to serve 16,000 New Yorkers of all ages, mainly in Western Queens, but you will find our participants throughout the borough and beyond. We are excited to share that our impact in the community is strong, as this year we are celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Older adult services at SCS promotes healthy aging and enables the older members of our community to age comfortably in place for as long as possible. Our continuum of services to support people as they age includes caregiving, geriatric mental health, case management, a vibrant older adult center and elder justice. Home care provides essential care for home-bound older adults and people with disabilities, and we also have a social adult day care for people with Alzheimer's. Our services are a lifeline to older adults who access our daily services and yet we are here fighting for the resources to continue doing this important work.

We are disappointed about the lack of investment in this year's executive budget and cuts to come to the aging services sector. Achieving equity for aging necessitates adequate investments into aging budgets to supporting older New Yorkers and organizations such as ours to continue our vital work in community.

Outlined here are some of our concerns:

### **Case Management**

The disparity between increasing needs and decreasing funding for aging is evident, as FY25 contract awards for case management services has led to reduced funding for my agency while placing greater demands on our staff. This included making difficult choices such as increasing caseloads and reducing essential personnel - which is the exact opposite of our needs - for case managers and staff to support intake. The strain extends to covering operational costs like rent, utilities, and insurance, which far exceed the allocated funds. All the while, the needs of our clients continue to intensify, exacerbated by the pandemic's aftermath, with undocumented clients facing significant financial burdens and a surge in older adults presenting with cognitive impairments or mental illness. At times, we find that our case managers are increasingly providing intensive case management which requires additional time and care to ensure safety and services needs are met.

**Mental Health:**

We also receive discretionary funding for Geriatric Mental Health services which only allows us to budget one social worker, who through herculean efforts manages to provide much needed counseling and support group services and yet it is not enough. This social worker is embedded in our Center to help reduce the stigma accessing mental health services. Mental health cannot afford to have a wait list. We have many older adults who need counseling. We need additional funding for social work services to provide this critical lifeline to reduce loneliness and isolation.

**Older Adult Center**

Lastly, we are thrilled our daily participation is increasing. And while attendance goes up, the salaries in the Center for the staff who work in their service has not. We urgently need investments to provide much-needed raises. Across the board, we need increased budgets from our government contracts to help us recruit and retain staff and remain competitive to serve older adults and provide livable wages to our human services teams. We still have the same kitchen equipment for the past 15 years. Upgrades to our dishwashers, freezers and steamers is overdue. As you can imagine, with daily use, our equipment is breaking down. The cost of repairs is high, and replacements are expensive and supplemental needs for the kitchen such as supplies and equipment maintenance, and costs associated with sanitation of the center are also on the rise. Amidst rising inflation, raw food costs have gone up-we need you to help us feed our older adults. Coming to the Center is a home away from home and the meals and socialization we provide them keep them safe in the community.

We urge you to oppose any cuts to older adult services, to help us prevent further strain on our dedicated staff, and to ensure agencies can serve clients without sacrificing essential operational expenses.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**TESTIMONY OF  
THE FORTUNE SOCIETY**

**THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

City Hall,  
New York, NY

Friday, May 17, 2024

**SUBJECT:** Executive Budget Hearing – Criminal Justice

**PURPOSE:** To highlight the need for investment to Alternatives to Incarceration, reentry services, and supportive housing

Presented by

**Shreemer Chevannes**  
Senior Policy Associate

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Good afternoon, Council Committee Chair Nurse, and Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice, and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I stand before you today to express concerns regarding the Executive Budget and advocate for critical changes that are paramount to achieving genuine community safety. The proposed budget fails to address key areas essential for effective programming and support, perpetuating the status quo rather than fostering positive change. As the Senior Policy Associate at The Fortune Society, I offer insights shaped by professional understanding of the pivotal role effective programs and supports play in the lives of justice-involved individuals.

The Fortune Society, with its 57-year legacy, is committed to supporting successful reentry from incarceration and providing alternatives to incarceration. Our mission aims to strengthen the fabric of communities by instilling a belief in the power of individuals to change. Through programs shaped by the experiences of our participants, we help rebuild lives. We also seek to change minds through education and advocacy to foster a fair, humane, and rehabilitative justice system. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, we served over 11,000 individuals across diverse programs, including nearly 2,700 people in our city jails, whom we are no longer able to serve due to abrupt funding cuts in June of 2023.

Before June of 2023, Fortune and six other providers served 1,700 individuals daily across 200 housing units in seven jail facilities, offering individual and group sessions, hard skills training, certification, and other services. In June 2023, our contracts were abruptly canceled, with the Department of Correction (DOC) claiming it would provide these services in-house. However, the Preliminary Mayor's Management Report showed a 29% decrease in group sessions and a 31% decrease in individual sessions in the first four months of FY 2024 compared to the previous year. Recently, the administration announced \$14 million in new funding, but this does not cover the full amount that was cut and presents additional issues. At the Preliminary Budget Hearing, DOC testified that it would take around 15 months to issue Requests for Proposals (RFPs), with at least one aimed at "institutions of higher learning" rather than the previous service providers. Consequently, the full range of services previously offered has not been fully restored, leaving those in need without access to necessary programming in the interim.

The proposed budget maintains the DOC’s multi-billion-dollar budget while slashing \$2.1 million for Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) and \$2.6 million for re-entry services.<sup>1</sup> To fulfill the legal and moral obligation to close Rikers by August 2027, the City must redirect resources to reduce our overreliance on incarceration. We urge the Council to continue to press for a budget that prioritizes community safety by investing in effective ATI and re-entry services and expands access to housing. Investing in ATI programs and robust re-entry support is essential to breaking the cycle of incarceration and pretrial detention in our city.<sup>2</sup> The Administration’s proposed \$6.7M in cuts to ATI programs and proposed \$13.1M in cuts to the supervised release program<sup>3</sup> are alarming. We urge the City Council to work with the Administration to restore \$27.8M to the Office of Criminal Justice (OCJ) for ATIs, supervised release, and re-entry programs, recognizing their proven efficacy in breaking the cycle of incarceration.

The City budget must also address the need for people with conviction and incarceration histories to be able to access housing as the foundation for successful reentry, which keeps all of us safe. There are two key investments the City must make in this arena: adequately funding supportive housing because it provides a significant pathway out of the revolving door of pretrial detention and ultimate incarceration, and adequately funding the Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) to effectively enforce laws that combat discrimination against people with convictions, including the recently passed Fair Chance for Housing Act (FCHA).

We thank the Council for urging the Administration to allocate more funding. Your commitment to these crucial initiatives is commendable, and we urge you to continue pressing this issue to ensure sustained support and expansion of these essential services. A robust 10-year follow-up report on the precursor to the underfunded JISH program, the supportive housing model called

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<sup>1</sup> The City of New York Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2025 Eric Adams, Mayor. (2024, January). *Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG)*. Mayor’s Office of Management and Budget. <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/peg1-24.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> The City of New York Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2025 Eric Adams, Mayor. (2024, January). *Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG)*. Mayor’s Office of Management and Budget. <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/peg1-24.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> The City of New York Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2025 Eric Adams, Mayor. (2024, January). *Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG)*. Mayor’s Office of Management and Budget. <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/peg1-24.pdf>



Frequent Users Engagement Program (FUSE), showed remarkable outcomes for FUSE participants. FUSE participants spent less time in jails and in shelters than similarly situated participants, leading the researchers to state that “(d)espite intense histories of incarceration and shelter use, the most common pattern seen over the 10 years for FUSE participants was **no jail or shelter experience after an early period of shelter stays.**” (emph. in original)<sup>4</sup> That was a tremendous cost savings for the City. The researchers found that if all 1,000 participants in the FUSE study had been a beneficiary of FUSE the City would have saved an estimated stunning amount of \$45,000,000.<sup>5</sup> This is clearly a massive public safety benefit as well. Recognizing the critical role of JISH in supporting a high-needs population, it is imperative to address the program's funding challenges to sustain and enhance its reach. To make meaningful progress, we must allocate additional funds to fully implement this crucial aspect of the Close Rikers plan.<sup>6</sup>

Thank you, Council, for calling for increased funding in your preliminary budget response but more needs to be done. Fortune emphasizes the urgent need for increased funding for the Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) to effectively enforce laws that prevent discrimination against people with convictions, such as the Fair Chance for Housing Act (FCHA) and Fair Chance Act (FCA). Additional funding would enable the CCHR to conduct robust education and outreach efforts, hire more staff, and effectively enforce civil rights laws, providing individuals with convictions a fair chance at successful reentry and community integration, which makes all of us safer. Despite NYC's reputation for championing human rights, the CCHR has historically received disproportionately low funding compared to similar agencies in smaller cities. For instance, Seattle's Office for Civil Rights in 2022 received a budget of \$7.76 million for about 39 staff, serving a population of nearly 750,000, while the CCHR's budget in Fiscal Year 23 was \$11.7 million for 122 staff, serving a population of over 8 million.<sup>7</sup> This funding disparity

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<sup>4</sup> Aidala, A., McAllister, W., Yomogida, M., Alatas, H., & Torsiglieri, A. (2023, April). *FUSE 10-Year Follow-Up Report Initial Findings*. Retrieved from <https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/FUSE-10-Year-Report-Initial-Findings.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Aidala, A., McAllister, W., Yomogida, M., Alatas, H., & Torsiglieri, A. (2023, April). *FUSE 10-Year Follow-Up Report Initial Findings*. Retrieved from <https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/FUSE-10-Year-Report-Initial-Findings.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Beyond Rikers. (2021, September), *Beyond Rikers Commitment Tracker*. Retrieved from <https://rikers.cityofnewyork.us/beyond-rikers/>.

<sup>7</sup> Seattle Office for Civil Rights, Department Overview, SEATTLE OFF. FOR C.R. (2022), <https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/FinanceDepartment/22adoptedbudget/OCR.pdf>; United States Census Bureau, QuickFacts, Seattle city, Washington, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, Table

hampers the CCHR's ability to combat entrenched housing and employment discrimination against individuals with convictions.

In conclusion, I urge the Committee to advocate for a budget that prioritizes community safety and invests in effective ATI programs, re-entry services, and facilitates access to housing, including supportive housing. By adopting a forward-thinking perspective and investing in proven strategies, we can foster economic justice, advance racial equity, and uphold our collective humanity. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/seattlecitywashington/PST045222#PST045222>; Tanveer Singh & New York City Commission on Human Rights, Report to the Committee on Finance and the Committee on Civil and Human Rights on the Fiscal 2024 Executive Plan for the Commission on Human Rights, N.Y.C. COMMI'N ON HUM. RTS. (May 9, 2023), <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2023/05/CCHR.pdf>; United States Census Bureau, QuickFacts, New York city, New York, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, Table, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/newyorkcitynewyork/PST045223>.



**The New York City Council  
Committee On Criminal Justice  
Chair: Council Member Sandy Nurse**

**New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on The Preliminary  
Budget for Fiscal Year 2025, The Preliminary Capital Commitment Plan for  
Fiscal Years 2024-2028, and The Fiscal 2024 Preliminary Mayor’s  
Management Report**

Testimony of  
The Legal Aid Society’s Incarcerated Client Services Unit  
In Support of Increased Funding to Support Crisis Hotline Services, On-site  
Services, and Programming for New Yorkers Held in City Jails.

May 17, 2024

Presented by:

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## **Introduction**

The Legal Aid Society, founded in 1876, is the nation's oldest and largest nonprofit legal services agency, providing comprehensive legal services to low-income individuals and families in all five boroughs of New York City. Legal Aid's mission is to improve the lives of low-income New Yorkers by ensuring that no New Yorker is denied access to justice because of poverty. For over 50 years, Legal Aid has worked to improve confinement conditions and protect the fundamental human rights of incarcerated individuals in New York City jails. To further that work, Legal Aid operates an incarcerated persons crisis hotline and has paralegals on-site at each jail facility to address the needs of incarcerated persons in the City jails. Legal Aid has for years advocated for more robust programming in the City jails to support people while incarcerated. Through this testimony, Legal Aid calls on the City to invest more funding to support crisis hotline services, on-site paralegal services, and social programming for New Yorkers incarcerated in City jails.

## **Increase Funding to Support Crisis Hotline Services and On-site Services for New Yorkers in the City Jails**

People in carceral settings face significant challenges and trauma while incarcerated, and they require support and services to manage the practical realities of incarceration. While the Department of Correction offers services to incarcerated New Yorkers, Legal Aid supplements those services through its incarcerated persons crisis hotline and our on-site paralegals assigned to each jail facility. Through its crisis hotline, Legal Aid fields calls from incarcerated persons and their families to address their concerns and connect them services, and through their on-site paralegals, Legal Aid meets in person with incarcerated clients and advocates directly with correction officials to ensure clients receive assistance. In fiscal year 2025, Legal Aid is seeking additional funding totaling \$2.7 million to increase our hotline capacity as well as our paralegal staff within the facilities.

Legal Aid's hotline and paralegal staff serves all people in City custody and their families, including those represented by other defense organizations, private counsel, and 18-b attorneys. In fiscal year 2024, Legal Aid served incarcerated New Yorkers across forty-nine of the fifty-one city council districts. Legal Aid's hotline for incarcerated individuals and their families helps people in custody manage issues such as access to medical and mental health care, threats of violence and protection from harm, sexual abuse, discrimination, educational assistance for young, incarcerated people, and oppression and mistreatment of disabled and LGBTQ people in custody. Legal Aid's

case handlers field calls to the crisis hotline and advocate directly with the Department and other agencies to ensure these individuals' needs are met. They also provide accurate and relevant know your rights information to incarcerated people and their families. With the information received from the hotline, our staff also identify systemic deficiencies and develop strategic responses to foster solutions to the chronic issues experienced collectively by incarcerated individuals and their families.

Legal Aid also has paralegals posted in every facility whom incarcerated people can meet with in person and receive real-time assistance. Our paralegals in the City jails are hands on, and they routinely conduct physical wellness checks on persons in custody. The paralegal staff assist people in custody with navigating the DOC bureaucracy with matters like obtaining medical and mental health treatment or the ability to attend the funeral of a family member. Sometimes the paralegals receive calls from people on the hotline with physical ailments, suicidal ideations, or mental health breakdowns. In these cases, the person will be called to the Legal Aid office at the facility and the paralegals will physically walk a person to the health clinic, mental health staff, or if necessary, get DOC staff to escort them.

Legal Aid's paralegals help people with a range of issues like getting in contact with their attorney, sentencing discrepancies, access to programming, law library access, and other issues related to confinement. In the case of sentencing discrepancies, Legal Aid paralegals review the commitment paperwork and, if there is a mistake, which happens sometimes with sentences running consecutively instead of concurrently, the paralegal will reach out to the attorney and even the courts to have the commitment paperwork amended. During fiscal year 2023, Legal Aid paralegals served 1,561 clients and addressed over 2,300 complaints received from incarcerated individuals detained at Rikers and their families.

Legal Aid urges the City Council to increase its funding for our jail services to \$2.7 million in fiscal year 2025. The Department supports this funding increase because it recognizes that Legal Aid provides critical services for persons in custody through its crisis hotline and paralegals on-site in the City jails. *See* Exhibit A, Letter of Support from the Department. This additional funding will enable Legal Aid to expand the volume and efficacy of our services to further advance the dignity and basic needs of incarcerated people.

**Increase Funding for Social Programming to Support People in the City Jails**

At a time when the City is on a path to closing Rikers Island and creating a smaller more humane jail system,<sup>1</sup> divestments in social programming for incarcerated people run contrary to this goal. Instead, to achieve this end, the City must make investments in programs that support people confined in the jail system and helps them upon their release remain in their communities.

Each year, thousands of people with serious mental illness and addiction issues cycle into the City jails. Almost 90% are jailed pre-trial, and most are released back to their communities.<sup>2</sup> As the Independent Rikers Commission found, “[f]requently, they are destabilized, worse off than when they went in. The result is further harm, reduced safety – and often, re-incarceration.”<sup>3</sup> Investments in correctional programming have a meaningful impact and a high return on the investment.<sup>4</sup> Programming in jail settings helps maintain a safe environment within facilities, creating a more stable and humane jail system, and ultimately can help reduce the cost of maintaining a correctional facility.<sup>5</sup> Programming also improves post-release employment outcomes, and better employment outcomes drastically reduces the likelihood of recidivism and ensures broader public safety.<sup>6</sup>

Despite these evidence-based reasons to support programming, in 2023 Mayor Adams’ administration cut \$17 million from the Department’s budget for social programming. And the Adams administration eliminated contracts for five crucial non-profit services providers: The Fortune Society, The Osborne Association, SCO Family of Services, Greenhope Services for Woman, and Fedcap Rehabilitation.<sup>7</sup> These program providers had extensive daily contact with people within the various facilities and provided invaluable support to people incarcerated in the City jails through programming that included cognitive behavioral therapy, employment readiness, conflict avoidance, reentry preparation, and workforce development and training that led to

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<sup>1</sup> A More Just NYC, Closing Rikers Island, *A Roadmap for Reducing Jail in New York City*, July 2021, available at <https://www.morejustnyc.org>.

<sup>2</sup> A More Just NYC, available at <https://www.morejustnyc.org>.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> National Institute of Justice, *The Use and Impact of Correctional Programming for Inmates on Pre- and Post-Release Outcomes*, June 2017, Grant Duwe, Ph.D., Minnesota Department of Corrections available at <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/250476.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Prison Reform: Reducing Recidivism by Strengthening the Federal Bureau of Prisons, available March 6, 2024, at <https://www.justice.gov/archives/prison-reform>.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> See reporting in The Queens Daily Eagle, Detainee Programming on Rikers Declined after DOC Cut Ties With Nonprofit Providers, by Jacob Kaye, January 31, 2024, available at <https://queenseagle.com/all/2024/1/31/detainee-programming-on-rikers-declined-after-doc-cut-ties-with-nonprofit-providers>.

industry certifications. By eliminating the funding to the nonprofits who support those within the jail system, the City lost resources necessary to promoting successful reentry and public safety.

According to the Mayor's Management Report, since the budget cuts, the overall number of detainees participating in programs, services and activities dropped, along with one-on-one counseling sessions,<sup>8</sup> and many are now isolated and sitting idle within the City jails. Recently, some service providers have returned to Rikers Island for free and, without funding, they are only able to offer extremely limited services with very few staff.<sup>9</sup>

While the Mayor recently announced a \$14 million increase in funds for programs and services within the City jails,<sup>10</sup> this number is \$3 million short of the \$17 million dollars cut in 2023. Further, it is unclear how that amount will be disbursed amongst the service providers, if at all, and how much of the \$14 million will be retained by the Department. To remedy this inequity, at a minimum, the \$17 million programming funds cut in 2023 must be reinstated to the Department's budget for fiscal year 2025. And the previous contracted providers should have their contracts reinstated. The City Council should also invest additional funds in correctional and social programming and community resources to further the City's mission of creating a more humane and just system.

### **Close Rikers and Invest in Community**

NYC runs the most richly funded (and richly staffed) jail system in the country yet delivers the worst results. Those resources would be far better used outside of the jail system to meet people's needs and prevent interaction with the justice system. Correcting that misallocation of funds is urgent.

Mayor Adams' proposed budget is a recipe for keeping Rikers open by maintaining DOC budget bloat while cutting funds for alternatives to incarceration (ATIs) and re-entry services and failing

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<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> See reporting in The Queens Daily Eagle, Nonprofits Given Ax by DOC Last Year Return to Work on Rikers for Free, by Jacob Kaye, February 29, 2024, available at <https://queenseagle.com/all/2024/2/29/nonprofits-given-ax-by-doc-last-year-return-to-work-on-rikers-for-free..>

<sup>10</sup> See reporting in The Queens Daily Eagle, Mayor Restores Programming on Rikers Months After Cutting Funding, by Jacob Kaye, March 06, 2024, available at <https://queenseagle.com/all/2024/3/6/mayor-restores-programming-on-rikers-months-after-cutting-funding.>

to adequately fund supportive housing and community-based mental health treatment. The budget also proposes cuts to a wide range of social services and violence prevention initiatives. To follow through on the legal and moral obligation to Close Rikers, the City Council must secure a budget that will improve community safety and reduce our city's overreliance on incarceration.

It's time to focus on drivers of insecurity in our city and distribute funds where they are needed and most effective, such as Housing, Education, Mental Health, and Drug Rehabilitation. The proposed budget does not serve taxpayers. The figures in this budget are invested in the punishment of poor people who have no access to resources and, as a result of that insecurity and others factors, too often are arrested and sent to jail. We join the call of the communities we serve at the Legal Aid Society, who are counting on our allies in the Council to divest from the department of correction and invest in local communities, especially in the poorest and most under-resourced parts of our city.

Thank you for your oversight and your time and consideration of this testimony.





Freedom  
Agenda

## Testimony to the City Council Committee on Criminal Justice

Submitted May 17, 2024 by Darren Mack

Thank you Chair Brannan, Chair Nurse and Council members, for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Darren Mack, and I am Co-Director of Freedom Agenda. We are led by our members who are survivors of Rikers like myself, and impacted family members. We're one of the organizations leading the [Campaign to Close Rikers](#), and I'm glad to testify here today.

New York City has committed to closing Rikers Island because it doesn't serve our City, doesn't create public safety, and doesn't match our values. Rikers is legally required to close by 2027, despite any delay tactics introduced by the Mayor, and this year's City budget MUST align with that commitment to safely reducing the jail population and shifting to a smaller borough jail system.

We know what works to create real public safety, and it's things like housing, healthcare, work opportunities, mentorship, and safe community spaces. The Mayor's budget would cut or continue underfunding all these resources, while leaving the Department of Correction's budget nearly untouched. That approach fails to hold DOC accountable for their mismanagement, and deprives our communities of the resources we need to survive and thrive. We thank the Council for emphasizing many of these necessary resources in your budget response, including alternatives to incarceration and re-entry programs, supportive housing, and community-based mental health treatment teams.

DOC's excessive budget comes from a large and poorly managed staff, who routinely fail to provide even basic services despite their massive headcount. With about one uniformed officer for each person in custody, DOC's staffing ratio is [four times higher than the national average](#). The inefficient design of Rikers, sprawling across four hundred acres on an isolated island, may contribute to this, but for many years, and not too long ago, the NYC Department of Correction had a ratio of [0.7 uniformed officers per person in custody](#). If you applied that same ratio to the current NYC jail population of about 6,300 people, it would amount to 4,410 officers. Instead, DOC is budgeted for 7,060 uniformed staff from FY25 through FY28, when Rikers is required to close. The borough-based jail system and secure hospital units would have a maximum capacity of about 4,000 people. There is clearly no need for 7,060 officers in that system, and the City must start rightsizing the DOC workforce this year by eliminating their 1,450 projected vacancies.

The Mayor's determination to preserve a bloated DOC workforce is a scary indication of his policy priorities, even more so when compared with other agencies, like the Department of Education, the Department of Buildings, the Parks Department and others that face vacancies and hiring freezes.

The Mayor may want to keep investing in failed systems, but the City Council can stop him. If the Council cannot achieve the necessary restorations and investments through negotiations with the Mayor, we urge you to use every power you have, including passing a budget amendment, to ensure a just budget for our city.

In the written testimony that we submitted, you'll see a [full budget analysis](#) from the **Campaign to Close Rikers that calls on the City Council to make the following amendments to the FY25 budget to support the closure of Rikers:**

- **Reduce DOC's uniform headcount to 5,110, by eliminating vacancies and holding staff accountable for chronic absenteeism**
- **Reduce overtime expenses by permanently closing unused jails**
- **Restore \$4.7M to the Office of Criminal Justice for alternatives to incarceration, and re-entry programs, and expand funding by \$1.1M**
- **Allocate an additional \$19.4M to meet critical housing and mental health needs**
- **Increase Board of Correction headcount in proportion to DOC's headcount**

Thank you for your partnership.

Darren Mack

Co-Director, Freedom Agenda

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[attached – FY2025 Campaign to Close Rikers Budget Analysis]

# CLOSE RIKERS

DECARCERATE \* DEFEND \* DIVEST & REDISTRIBUTE

## FY2025 Budget Analysis & Priorities

**Mayor Adams' proposed budget is a recipe for keeping Rikers open** by maintaining DOC budget bloat while cutting funds for alternatives to incarceration (ATIs) and re-entry services, and failing to adequately fund supportive housing and community-based mental health treatment. The budget also proposes cuts to a wide range of social services and violence prevention initiatives.<sup>1</sup> In order to follow through on the legal and moral obligation to Close Rikers, City Council must secure a budget that will improve community safety and reduce our City's overreliance on incarceration.

### **DOC's budget is still bloated:**

- The Mayor has proposed spending [\\$2.6 billion](#)<sup>2</sup> on jail operations in FY2025.
- Most of DOC's costs are driven by overstaffing. Their ratio of uniformed staff to incarcerated people is more than [4 times higher than the national average](#).
- DOC anticipates cost savings from [1,451 uniformed vacancies in FY2025](#), but plans to budget for [7,060 uniformed officers through FY2028](#)<sup>3</sup>. By that time, New York City is required to close Rikers Island and shift to a borough jails system with [approximately 4,000 beds](#). Uniform headcount reductions are consistent with a lower jail population and closing Rikers - in fact, these reductions should have started years ago when the jail population started to decline.
- DOC's projected overtime costs have ballooned to over \$274M this year,<sup>4</sup> 105% above [their adopted budget](#).

**The administration seems to be planning either to continue overusing incarceration, or to employ almost twice as many correction officers as people in custody.** Either option makes no sense, morally or financially.

### **Commitments in the Close Rikers plan are still inadequately funded:**

- In the [Points of Agreement on Closing Rikers](#), the administration agreed to establish 380 more units of [Justice Involved Supportive Housing](#), a model that has been hugely successful in reducing jail, shelter, and hospital stays, and generating substantial cost savings. But funding rates proposed in the RFP issued were so low that [qualified providers have not applied](#), and operators of the existing 120 units are struggling to keep them open.
- [The Close Rikers Plan](#) also promised "A new community-based mental health safety net." This administration has clearly fallen short of that goal - the number of people in Rikers diagnosed

<sup>1</sup> Including large cuts to DSS, DYCD, and DOHMH, outlined here: [GJNY Look inside the DOC FY25 Budget.pdf \(vera-advocacy-and-partnerships.s3.amazonaws.com\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> Including expenses, associated fringe benefits, pensions, and debt service. "A Look Inside the FY 2025 DOC Budget." Vera Institute of Justice. February 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Financial Plan of the City of New York. Fiscal Years 2024 - 2028. Full time and full time equivalent staffing levels.

<sup>4</sup> Per IBO, April 29, 2024.

with a serious mental illness has [increased by more than 40% since January 2022](#) without sufficient investments in community-based interventions and care, and there are long waiting lists for services like Forensic Assertive Community Treatment teams.

### **Alternatives to incarceration and re-entry supports face cuts:**

- The administration is proposing [\\$2.1M in cuts to alternatives to incarceration programs](#).<sup>5</sup> Opportunities to divert people from Rikers should be fully utilized, in collaboration with the Jail Population Review Initiative that the Council established last year through Local Law 75-2023. Expanding alternatives to incarceration was also a key commitment in the [plan to close Rikers](#).
- The administration is proposing [\\$2.6M in cuts to re-entry services](#), while a key commitment in the [plan to Close Rikers](#) was to “Enhance Reentry and Discharge Planning Services Available to Everyone Leaving City Jails,” as [evidence recommends](#).
- The above programs are funded under the Office of Criminal Justice (formerly MOCJ).

### **Jail oversight cuts are proposed:**

- DOC continues to [violate minimum standards](#) established by the Board of Correction, and strong oversight is crucial. BOC needs more staff to fulfill its mandate, but the Mayor proposes [reducing their staff from 35 to 29 positions, and cutting BOC's budget by \\$459,953 \(12%\)](#).

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## **What should happen in this year’s budget**

### **I. Reduce DOC uniformed headcount to 5,110**

- Eliminate vacancies for uniformed staff.** The Department of Correction currently employs about [6,041 uniformed staff](#) (1,019 vacancies)<sup>6</sup> and anticipates cost savings based on an average of [1,451 uniformed vacancies in Fiscal Year 2025](#), but they have not made a plan to rightsize this agency in alignment with closing Rikers.
  - Hold staff accountable for chronic absenteeism.** The Nunez Federal Monitor reported in October 2022 that DOC had [identified 1,029 officers as chronically absent](#),<sup>7</sup> and in the March 2023 preliminary budget hearing, DOC could not report if these staff had returned to work or been held accountable.<sup>8</sup> If approximately 50% (500) of these officers are terminated and 50% return to work to avoid termination, we can reduce jail operations spending by \$55.8M.<sup>9</sup>
- Reduce overtime spending** by consolidating operations and permanently closing jails on Rikers, starting with the vacant Anna M. Kross Center.<sup>10</sup>
  - Allocate an additional \$19.4M to meet housing and mental health needs,** and fulfill commitments in the Close Rikers plan, including:

<sup>5</sup> “The City of New York Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2025. Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG)”. January 2024. P. 30 - 31.

<sup>6</sup> Per IBO, as of April 29, 2024

<sup>7</sup> Martin, Steve J et al. “Second Status Report on DOC’s Action Plan by the Nunez Independent Monitor.” October 28, 2022. p53.

<sup>8</sup> Martin, Steve J et al. “Status Report on DOC’s Action Plan by the Nunez Independent Monitor.” November 8, 2023. p. 99.

<sup>9</sup> Based on \$111,660 per officer, as calculated by the Vera Institute, [GJNY Look inside the DOC FY25 Budget.pdf](#) ([vera-advocacy-and-partnerships.s3.amazonaws.com](#)).

<sup>10</sup> In response to Council Member questions in the March 23, 2023 budget hearing.

- a. Establish a separate line-item for JISH in the DOHMH budget, and [allocate an additional \\$6.4M](#) to increase service funding rates for 380 new and 120 existing units.
  - b. \$2.9M more to enable 5 more state-funded Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams to operate as Forensic ACT (FACT) teams (\$575K per team).
  - c. \$6M more to fully implement Local Law 118-2023, supporting the establishment of four new crisis respite centers.
  - d. Ensure adequate funding to fully implement Local Law 119-2023 by establishing at least five new clubhouses (21 citywide), and take steps to prevent closures of existing sites
4. **Fully restore cuts to the Office of Criminal Justice for ATIs and re-entry programs, and expand funding.** While the Executive Budget includes partially restored cuts to these programs, there is still a vital need to restore \$2.1M for alternatives to incarceration still and \$2.6M for re-entry services. The budget should go further, to add \$1.1M for these programs as requested by the [ATI/Reentry Coalition](#).
5. **Increase Board of Correction headcount** to at least 1% of DOC's headcount. This type of linked budget exists for other oversight agencies [like the CCRB](#). Increasing BOC headcount to 1% of DOC's would add 35 BOC staff positions, but would only add approximately \$4M to the overall expense budget.<sup>11</sup>

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Does the Department of Correction have a staff shortage?**

No. In fact, they are overstaffed. The Department of Correction's ratio of uniformed staff to incarcerated people is more than [4 times higher than the national average](#), and NYC's is the only jail system among the nation's 50 largest cities that has as many officers as people in custody. Reducing their headcount now is an important first step to [rightsizing](#) the department.

### **If they are not understaffed, why is there a shortage of officers to cover posts and provide basic services?**

For three main reasons:

1. **Officers often leave their assigned posts or don't fulfill their duties.** [Investigations](#) found that many officers who *are* at work are *not* at their assigned posts – including some found hanging out in locker rooms. Multiple death reports from the Board of Correction, including their [most recent report](#), indicated that insufficient touring and staff leaving their posts contributed to tragic deaths in custody, including those of William Johnstone, Curtis Davis, and Manish Kunwar. The Nunez federal monitor in their [November 8 report](#), stated “Definitive measures to ensure that staff are available in sufficient numbers and that they stay on post are obviously necessary. It is equally critical that staff *actually do their jobs* [emphasis in original]... Too often, staff are present and yet fail to enact or enforce even the most basic security protocols.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The FY2024 projected budget allocates \$3.8M to BOC, for 35 staff; 68 staff would constitute 1% of a 6,822 person uniformed DOC workforce (1,722 civilian - as projected by the administration and 5,100 uniformed - as we recommend).

<sup>12</sup> Martin, Steve et al. Status Report on DOC's Action Plan by the Nunez Independent Monitor. November 8, 2023. P 25.

2. **There are too many officers assigned to non-jail posts.** There are [hundreds of officers each day](#) who work in non-jail posts either because they are prevented from working directly with incarcerated people due to an ongoing disciplinary case, they are being ‘medically monitored,’ or they have been assigned to a different job like working in the laundry room or as a secretary to a warden - tasks that are performed by civilians in other jail systems. These posts have been widely used in DOC as rewards to officers favored by supervisors, and officers who have these posts have [strongly resisted](#) being transferred to posts in the jails.
3. **Too many officers don’t come to work.** Uniformed DOC staff have unlimited sick leave. As of December 2023, [DOC sick leave rates](#) remained at nearly twice the pre-Covid rates within the department (8.49%), and more than double the rates of NYPD and FDNY - agencies that also offer unlimited sick leave.<sup>13</sup> Another 3.4% of officers are out on [long term sick leave, which is often abused](#).

### **Does DOC need to replace officers who are retiring?**

Reducing the uniform headcount would not prevent DOC from replacing some officers who quit, retire, or are terminated. It would require DOC to more effectively supervise and manage their very large staff.

### **How is the money being spent?**

The FY2025 budget projects that [88.3% of DOC expenses](#) will be staff salaries, overtime and benefits.

### **How does NYC’s jail spending compare to other cities?**

In 2021, [New York City spent 350% more](#) per incarcerated person ([\\$556,539](#)<sup>14</sup> per year) than Los Angeles or Cook County, Illinois, and yet, people in DOC custody are subjected to some of the worst jail conditions in the nation. The *Nunez* federal monitor also reported in their [October 2023 report](#) “The Department’s staffing complement is highly unusual and is one of the richest staffing ratios among the systems with which the Monitoring Team has had experience.”

### **What will we do about those jobs? Aren’t a lot of correction officers people of color, and women?**

The choice to invest so much of New York City’s budget in incarceration has meant that DOC has become a path to the middle class, including for many women and people of color.<sup>15</sup> New York City could and should make a different choice - to invest in and raise salaries, for example, for [EMS workers](#), [green jobs](#) that can help us meet our goals for a vibrant and climate resilient city, and [human services jobs](#) that address community needs. Black and Brown workers deserve jobs with good wages and benefits that aren’t dependent on the incarceration of their neighbors and families. We must invest in a [just transition](#) to expand and better compensate jobs outside of law enforcement - for example, human services, a sector in which more than 80% of workers are women of color, and which is subject to constant budget cuts that have resulted in lost jobs and depressed wages.

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<sup>13</sup> “Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report.” January 2024.p 411.

<sup>14</sup> For FY2021. “NYC Department of Correction, FYs 2011-21 Operating Expenditures.” *New York City Comptroller’s Office, Budget Bureau*. December 2021

<sup>15</sup> New York City correction officers are paid \$92,000/year after 5.5 years on the job, and receive generous benefits. <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/jointheboldest/officer/salary-benefits.page>



**UNITED  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
HOUSES**

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**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses  
Before the New York City Council**

**FY 2025 Executive Budget Hearing: Committee on Aging  
Council Member Crystal Hudson, Chair**

**Submitted by Tara Klein, Deputy Director of Policy & Advocacy  
May 17, 2024**

Thank you for convening today's Executive Budget hearing on Aging. United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) is a policy and social change organization representing neighborhood settlement houses that reach over 770,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life. A progressive leader for more than 100 years, UNH is stewarding a new era for New York's settlement house movement. We mobilize our members and their communities to advocate for good public policies and promote strong organizations and practices that keep neighborhoods resilient and thriving for all New Yorkers. UNH leads advocacy and partners with our members on a broad range of issues including civic and community engagement, neighborhood affordability, healthy aging, early childhood education, adult literacy, and youth development. We also provide customized professional development and peer learning to build the skills and leadership capabilities of settlement house staff at all levels.

UNH members provide a wide variety of services to over 80,000 older New Yorkers each year by operating programs such as older adult centers (OACs), Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs), home delivered meal (HDM) programs, Geriatric Mental Health, case management programs, and others, often funded and contracted by NYC Aging and the City Council. UNH and its settlement house members employ the philosophy that older adults are valued members of our neighborhoods, whose wisdom and experience are important to the fabric of our communities.

This testimony is a follow up and supplement to our [Preliminary Budget testimony](#). We are grateful for the Council's support for aging services by including many of our priorities in their Preliminary Budget response. **Unfortunately, the Mayor's Executive Budget once again creates significant programmatic and financial instability for the aging services network, most significantly by including yet another PEG cut of \$93 million over the next three years, while maintaining many other PEG cuts, meaning the NYC Aging network now faces over \$100 million in cuts over the next several years.** Meanwhile, there are growing community needs, an aging population, and ongoing inflation demands – and this budget fails to include any new funds in NYC Aging's budget to address these issues. **This budget is accelerating a downward spiral of systemic disinvestment, making New York City a worse place to age and risking the health and well-being of over a million older New Yorkers.** We urge the Council to fight to restore funding in the FY 2025 Budget, reverse these cuts, and make new investments in the aging services network.

## Overview

In FY 2025, UNH urges the City to take the following budget actions to support older New Yorkers:

- Combat older adult hunger through at least \$65.3 million in new funds and policy changes, including:
  - Increase the home delivered meals per-meal reimbursement rate to \$15.31 per meal, totalling a \$12 million additional investment.
  - Address problems with the new home delivered meals contracts that will begin on July 1, 2024.
  - End NYC Aging's MLTC eligibility restriction for home delivered meals.
  - Add at least \$53.3 million for older adult center congregate meals to cover recent inflation costs.
  - Allow grab and go meals at older adult centers.
- Invest \$50 million in annual capital funding for the aging services network.
- Support continued growth in demand of the case management program with a \$20 million investment.
- Reverse PEG cuts to NYC Aging and reinvest in the system.
- Maintain Council Aging Initiatives at FY23 levels for a total of \$32.2 million, including for Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs).
- Address cost escalators, the minimum wage increase, and wage compression.
- Invest in the long-term needs of the human services workforce by passing Intro 734-2024 to establish a prevailing wage schedule for human services workers.

### Address Older Adult Hunger

The Executive Budget makes no new investments to address high rates of older adult hunger and rising inflation costs, and rather makes additional cuts. In the FY 2025 Budget, **the City needs to invest at least an additional \$65.3 million to combat older adult hunger**, focused on the home delivered meals program and congregate meals at older adult centers.

### Home Delivered Meals Funding

We reiterate our calls from the Preliminary Budget testimony for at least a \$15.31 per-meal reimbursement rate for the home delivered meals (HDM) program, a \$2.53 increase per meal which would require a \$12 million overall funding increase, to meet rising inflation costs. We thank the Council for including this rate in its budget response and will continue to advocate for this rate to be included in the final budget. Again, this timing is crucial to increase rates because the program is undergoing an RFP, with new contracts planned to begin on July 1, 2024 and last for three years.

### Home Delivered Meals Contracts

NYC Aging recently announced awards for the home delivered meals procurement. While we knew the number of contracts would shrink from 22 to 17 lead contractors, we are concerned by reports that several nonprofit providers lost their contracts in favor of for-profit companies.

Switching this program to for-profit vendors will likely compromise the integrity of the HDM program model. This program has traditionally been more than just a food delivery service; rather, it is a social services program that supports older adults holistically. In addition to the case management program that formally refers and works with clients, the drivers themselves are trained in light-touch case assistance. Drivers frequently identify problems in the home, for example, if an older adult has changed



behavior and needs a referral, is no longer being served by an aide, or in extreme cases has taken a fall or worse. It is difficult to imagine a private catering service fulfilling this important role.

In addition, the City has a poor track record in relying on private vendors for older adult meal delivery. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the GetFood NYC program initially relied heavily on private caterers. Unfortunately, there were many well-documented [cases](#) of poor meal quality during that period. At the time, UNH's members shared frequent complaints from older adults including food that was difficult for seniors to chew, low availability and quality of culturally-appropriate meals, delivery mistakes like missing meals or food left out in hallways to spoil, and poor communication with the deliverers. This led the City to reverse course and rely on the nonprofit network more for meal delivery. The two private vendors that we are aware were selected for new HDM awards were both previously GetFood vendors.

As another concern, many of the nonprofit providers have made significant investments in infrastructure like kitchen equipment, which in many cases was paid for by the City. We are concerned about the financial prudence of now removing contracts from those providers.

Nonprofit HDM providers have served their communities for decades in many cases, and they have clearly proven the value of their services beyond simple meal delivery. We are very dismayed by these new awards and urge NYC Aging to allow the existing nonprofit network to continue to provide meals to their neighbors, either by intentional subcontracting or by reissuing the RFP.

Finally, to date, there has been limited communication between NYC Aging and providers regarding the transition to new providers, for both the current home delivered meal providers and the case management providers who will potentially need to refer clients to a new provider on July 1. At a minimum, there must be a plan for existing clients to continue receiving their meals with no interruption in service, and with a limited time frame until the July 1 start date we encourage contract extensions to help ease this transition. As of this hearing date, we have heard from at least one provider that there has been a contract extension for three months, but we have not yet confirmed this information systemwide.

### **Home Delivered Meals for People on MLTC Plans:**

We continue to be extremely concerned about NYC Aging's policy of refusing HDM services to any older adult who is on a Managed Long Term Care (MLTC) plan. As we learned at the Preliminary budget hearing, this policy is responsible for over 2,000 older adults being unable to receive meals, and our settlement house members note they are frequently forced to refuse meals to older people in need. We strongly urge the Council to mediate a resolution to this problem by convening relevant parties at the State and City levels.

### **Older Adult Center Meals:**

Again, we reiterate our long-time calls to increase funding for congregate meals at older adult centers (OACs) to address long-standing underinvestment and inflation. This year, the City must restore the \$7 million PEG cut to older adult center meals from the FY24 Adopted Budget and include at least \$46.3 million to cover inflation costs, for a total of \$53.3 million in new funding.

### **Continuing Grab and Go Meals at Older Adult Centers:**

We continue to support the option for grab and go meals at all OACs that want to offer them and regardless of whether they were included in contracts. Food insecurity remains high among older

adults, and anything the City can do to address these needs should be embraced. We support Council Member Hudson's legislation that would address this issue, Intro 237-2024.

### **Invest in Capital Needs**

Thank you to the Council for including \$50 million in its Preliminary Budget response for capital needs in aging services programs, echoing our request for a recurring capital fund in this amount each year for NYC Aging. These funds play an important role in high-quality service provision by keeping buildings and equipment in a state of good repair, and programs have a number of long-standing capital needs that continue to grow. These issues vary by provider and include building repairs, renovations, kitchen equipment, HVAC units, vehicle repairs and replacements, and more. There is especially a need for additional HDM vans for contractors and subcontractors. We appreciate the Council's support in pushing for these investments.

### **Case Management**

The Case Management program is overburdened and in need of additional case managers and intake staff to serve the community well. According to the Preliminary Mayor's Management Report from January 2024, case management providers offered a 4% increase in hours in the first four months of FY24 compared to the same period in FY23. We thank the Council for negotiating for additional funds for this program in the last several budgets, and for including funding in the Preliminary Budget response. In FY25, we urge the City to invest \$20 million to expand the case management program to allow for more comprehensive service to New Yorkers.

### **Reverse Cuts to NYC Aging**

As a reminder, the FY24 Adopted Budget, FY24 November Budget modification, and FY25 Preliminary Budget included several cuts to NYC Aging and in particular to older adult centers:

- The FY24 Adopted Budget cut \$7 million from older adult center meals in FY25 and beyond. (Thanks to the Council's advocacy, this cut was partially restored by \$2.5 million, to a total of \$4.5 million in cuts in FY24 only.)
- The FY25 Preliminary Budget includes an \$18.86 million cut to older adult centers in FY24. Though budget documents suggest this is a one-year cut only, in practice this may represent a permanent cut; it is still unclear.
- The FY25 Preliminary Budget also includes a \$2.24 million cut in FY25 and beyond. The budget documents state that the \$18.8m and the \$2.2m cuts are due to "less than needed spending on Older Adult Centers due to underutilization. This has no service impact."
- The November and January budgets included a \$13.48 million cut to older adult centers in FY27 and FY28, defined as finding efficiencies due to underutilization.
- The FY24 Adopted Budget also added \$4.5 million in funding to increase the per-meal reimbursement rate for the home delivered meals program, but simultaneously included a \$5 million PEG cut to units for the program, resulting in a net \$500,000 decrease to the program.

The FY25 Executive Budget did not restore any of these cuts, and added another round of cuts:

- Approximately \$93 million multi-year reduction in NYC Aging's overall OTPS budget, including \$13.7 million in FY25, an additional \$73.3 million in FY26, and an additional \$5.9 million in FY27. We understand approximately \$64 million of the FY26 reduction is expiring federal stimulus funding, and the rest is a combination of reduced State and City dollars.

It has been difficult to understand the total value of all of these cuts, and we appreciate the Council's support in clarifying which of these cuts are baselined, what program lines they will impact, and the impact on services, and for calling for a reversal of these cuts in its Preliminary Budget response.

It is irresponsible that the Mayor continues to implement cuts to an agency that is already deeply overburdened, with contracted programs operating on shoestring budgets. NYC Aging has one of the smallest budgets of any City agency, while the older adult population continues to rise. The cuts to older adult centers in recent budget plans are insulting to older adults and providers, and will leave an already struggling aging services network in a worse position.

We are increasingly concerned that in the next RFP for older adult centers, which has not yet been publicly scheduled but is rumored to be soon, that these cuts may be used as justification to shrink the system and close centers. Fewer dollars in the OAC program means a smaller procurement, and thus a smaller system, in the future. We have heard indications from NYC Aging that this is a strong possibility if the newest round of cuts is not reversed. This budget is gambling with older adults' lives, threatening to cut off their access to meals, activities, healthcare, and socialization, all for a false budget crisis that is avoidable.

These cuts have the potential to create a death spiral that completely erodes our aging services network. Rather, the City should invest in centers so they can make the improvements and offer the services that will support more older adults. **We strongly urge the City to reverse these cuts to NYC Aging.**

### **Restore Council Aging Initiatives**

UNH greatly appreciates the Council's long-standing support for aging through funding invested in Citywide Initiatives, which provide enormous support for older adults and the programs that support them. Aging in particular benefits from a large share of Council funding that the network relies on to carry out essential services, with initiatives such as Support Our Older Adults, NORCs, Older Adult Clubs for Immigrant Populations, and Older Adult Clubs, Programs & Enhancements. Some Council funds support entire programs that do not have other state or city contracts, and others pay for entire staff lines, or give programs the flexibility to hire consultants and fill programmatic gaps.

**In FY 2025, the Council must restore funding for all of its Citywide Initiatives for aging to at least FY 2023 levels, restoring several reductions from FY 2024, and representing a total of \$32.2 million.** Two years ago, several of the programs that were fully supported by the Council for many years received baselined contracts through the NYC Aging OAC/NORC procurement. As a result, some of the awards shifted around, but we continue to advocate that the total investment remain in place given the enormous value of these funds to the aging network.

Specifically this year, we support restorations as follows:

- Access to Critical Services for Older Adults - \$1,180,000
- Borough Presidents' Discretionary Funding Restoration - \$1,129,774
- Case Management - \$2,000,000
- Elder Abuse Prevention Programs - \$335,000
- Elie Wiesel Holocaust Survivors - \$4,250,000
- Information and Referral Services - \$407,811
- LGBTQIA+ Older Adult Services in Every Borough - \$1,755,000
- Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) - \$6,091,026
- Older Adult Clubs for Immigrant Populations - \$1,500,000
- Older Adult Clubs, Programs, and Enhancements - \$4,376,670

- Social Adult Day Care - \$1,505,556
- Support Our Older Adults - \$7,650,000
- DOHMH Geriatric Mental Health Initiative - \$3,405,540

### **Addressing Cost Escalators, the Minimum Wage, and Wage Compression**

As highlighted in our Preliminary Budget testimony, there are a number of crucial contracting considerations that we need the City to address through the FY25 budget, including:

- Building cost escalators into contracts to reflect the annual increasing costs of running a quality program, such as meeting the rising costs of raw food and automatic cost of living adjustments to match inflation,
- Including more funding to account for the rising statewide minimum wage, which should entail an analysis of the aging services network to determine how many employees are currently paid less than \$17 an hour, and
- Consider the impact of wage compression issues as the minimum wage goes up, and increase funding for employees who make just above the minimum wage now so jobs can remain competitive.

### **Invest in the Human Services Workforce with a Prevailing Wage Schedule**

Human services workers in New York City are grossly underpaid. Across UNH's network of settlement houses in New York City, 76% of their total budget comes from government sources, and 65% of that is from New York City. Unfortunately, contracts from New York City often do not include sufficient funding to pay workers a fair and dignified wage.

Wages have failed to keep up with both inflation and changes to the job market, and as a result the human services sector continues to sit on the cliff of a staffing crisis. On average, more than a third (35%) of UNH settlement house members reported double-digit job vacancy rates of 10% or higher in 2023, up from 31 percent the previous year, and nearly two-thirds (65%) of UNH settlement house members reported that job positions remained vacant for 3 months or more in the past year, including 14% who said that positions remained vacant for 6 months or longer.

Without increased budgets in government contracts to cover wage increases, nonprofits will be unable to recruit and train the next generation of nonprofit leaders, setting future New Yorkers up for significant barriers to accessing services that grow over time. Further, insufficient staffing has made it increasingly difficult for nonprofits to serve New Yorkers, leading to under-enrollment and program closures which then leads to budget reductions and a vicious cycle that harms New Yorkers seeking services.

We thank the City Council and Mayor Adams for funding a 3-year Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for human service workers. This will provide immediate relief, we must do more to undo years of budgets that left behind human service workers.

### ***Create a Prevailing Wage Schedule for Human Services Workers***

UNH supports Int 0734-2024 (sponsored by Council Member Stevens) to establish a prevailing wage for City-contracted human service workers, which would require City agencies to include sufficient funding to cover those wages in contracts, and track implementation of those wages by human service contractors. While prevailing wage schedules are an imperfect tool to address the current conditions faced by human service workers, it is a significant improvement from the status quo. This process to design a true prevailing wage system is arduous and will require careful analysis, but we cannot continue to afford ignoring the need. For years, the government at every level has asked nonprofit

partners to do “more with less.” This dynamic has pushed our sector to a real breaking point, and our workforce has suffered the consequences. It’s time for us to look beyond stopgap measures and towards efforts that would have a long-lasting impact on the human service sector.

**UNH urges the City Council to pass CM Stevens’ prevailing wage legislation and fully fund it in the FY25 budget to limit impacts to programs.**

Thank you. To follow up, please contact me at [tklein@unhny.org](mailto:tklein@unhny.org).



older adults turn to when they need help filling out paperwork or resolving health insurance or benefits issues, or when they have complicated family situations and needed someone to talk to. Older Adults rely on our center, and centers like ours across NYC, to maintain their physical and mental health, to have access to nutritious meals, to maintain their benefits and health insurance, and to find joy and connection.

The City’s argument is that OACs are being underutilized. While it may be that some centers have still not rebounded completely to pre-Covid numbers, we believe there are many reasons for that.

First, the pandemic had a much longer-lasting impact on our older population—many remained fearful of gathering in-person due to health concerns, and other former attendees developed mobility or health issues during the years of the pandemic. The City should do more outreach to connect with younger Older Adults and inform them of what OACs can provide.

Second, our older adults are more aware and sensitive to feeling unsafe and not wanting to navigate the streets in the dark. In the winter months, we would rarely have older adults stay past 3 pm because it would get dark earlier. Now, this is shifting due to Daylights Savings Time.

Third, our older adults are more sensitive to changes, particularly in the community that they build and the services that are offered. For example, when we had to increase the optional contribution for meals by less than a dollar due to inflation, we noticed we had participants who would split breakfasts rather than order their own.

For older adults who have difficulty making connections, staff or community turnover can lead them to stop or limit attending. If their favorite center is closed, it’s very possible that an older adult will not seek out another one – both because they are not comfortable joining a new community and because there are no centers that are geographically close enough.

We are deeply concerned that the threat of closing centers and the limiting of staffing and activities at centers will push older adults away from the social activities and resources that they need to live healthy, robust lives.

We are also deeply concerned about the message that these budget cuts send to our participants. They look around and see the crumbling infrastructure, the loss of programming and staff, and they take it personally. They feel as if their city has abandoned them, and this leads to even more isolation.

Please reverse these drastic budget cuts and support our older New Yorkers. Along with LiveOn NY, we have also submitted testimony that our older adults themselves have submitted in opposition to these budget cuts.

**Visiting Neighbors' Testimony**  
**New York City Council's Finance Committee & Committee on Aging**  
**Hearing May 17, 2024**

My name is Dr. Cynthia Maurer, and I am the Executive Director of **Visiting Neighbors**. Thank you for the opportunity to submit Testimony. We are grateful to the *NYC Council* and *The Aging Committee* for your support of our vital programs in our current fiscal year and we need you to continue that support in 2025, as we have not stopped working and have continued to support our older and frailer neighbors. We are now helping second and third generation clients and continue to be in the vanguard.

**Our mission:**

This Spring marks Visiting Neighbors' 52nd year of providing life-enhancing and essential support services enabling individuals age 60+ to remain independent and safe in their own homes and a vital part of the New York City Community. Through programs of "neighbors helping older neighbors," volunteers, supported by Visiting Neighbors' professional staff, help older adults alleviate loneliness and isolation, provide mental stimulation and emotional security, share information about wellness and health related concerns, have important conversations on many important and difficult topics, and encourage physical independence and quality of life at home. Visiting Neighbors champions the power of the volunteer and encourages interdependence so that mutual learning and understanding bring generations together to share life experiences and gain respect for each individual's uniqueness.

The organization promotes a positive acceptance of life after sixty and the value of the elderly in society. Visiting Neighbors' main programs; are *Health Management/ Health Advocacy/ Student Nursing, Health, and Wellness (Physical, Mental and Emotional) Programs, Friendly Visiting, Shop & Escort, Therapeutic Walking, Telephone Reassurance, Intergenerational Friendship and Learning, Case Assistance, Caregiver Support, Remembering Special Occasions, and Information & Referral.*

**Description of the population we serve:**

Visiting Neighbors' clients are age 60 and over. Currently our oldest client is 105 years of age, and the average age is 90 (a couple of years ago 89 and a decade ago it was 79 – the trend is clear). Our clients tend to be frail, with one or more ailments. We serve a diverse group of individuals, most of whom live on fixed incomes and can't afford to pay for help but are not Medicaid eligible and yet struggle financially as they fall through the cracks of assistance. There are no income eligibility requirements, nor a fee for services. Our population is among the most vulnerable in the city. The senior who comes to us usually lives alone and has little or no family nearby to whom they can turn for support. Some have family that do not care. Some do have family that care, but are not in a position to help. Some have friends who are elderly themselves and not able to help. The seniors are often isolated, nervous about crossing streets and getting to and from their appointments safely. The majority of our clients have at least one significant health concern such as mobility issues, diabetes, macular degeneration, osteoporosis, COPD, CAD or peripheral neuropathy, etc. Our 860+ seniors who receive direct services regularly are proud and determined to remain independent, active and in their own homes. They express not wanting to be a burden to anyone and often feel very lonely, sad, and anxious. We also provide information, help them stay calm, feel emotionally supported - including our sharing uplifting messages of hope and guidance to 1650+ individuals.



## **Because of our NYC Council's support Visiting Neighbors has had the following Outcomes:**

1. Many older adults, when they first engage with us, express they feel overlooked, forgotten and/or have low self-esteem. They learn with Visiting Neighbors they do not have to be alone and will have someone they can turn to and will be a lot less lonely. We connect different generations together, so older adults have a trained, reliable, and compassionate volunteer to enjoy meaningful conversation with to combat their sadness, loneliness, anxiety, isolation, sadness and despair. Seniors have someone safe, supportive, and empathetic to talk with/vent their frustrations to. We also give older adults an opportunity to tell their life stories and a chance to be heard, seen and feel understood. Volunteers have been enlightened from hearing about these older adults' histories, recall of significant life events and all kinds of stories (some simple and sweet regarding love or happiness, some poignant about successes, some heartbreakingly sad and painful – all honest and from the heart) and we have seen and heard about mutual learning and enjoyment. Our volunteers (ages 14-81) are gaining understanding and empathy towards their new older friend and the older adults' self-esteem is enhanced from having an active interested listener.
2. Older adults became better informed on a variety of wellness issues, and we got them asking more questions. Older adults had better communication with their health professionals; we encourage them not to be as intimidated, are better informed about their illnesses, ailments, and diseases, take their medications as instructed and with staff and volunteers support have been following up with their medical and other appointments such as physical therapy and support group sessions.
3. Older adults have been getting to and from their health care appointments, procedures, vaccinations, and treatments with the assistance of a trained volunteer escort by their side who will serve as an advocate when necessary. We have been encouraging older adults to follow up with their physicians, and not avoid problems or concerns when they arise (no matter how minor they deem them to be).
4. We have been working with Mercy University Nursing Students supervised by their respective professor(s) and staff. The student nurses work in conjunction with staff to hold small group presentations, as well as having one-on-one discussions on a variety of health concerns with our older adults. Student nurses discuss heart health, fall prevention, appropriate use of mobility aids, oral health, coping with stressors, staying flexible, advanced directives, emergency preparedness and many other health topics. They also do medication reconciliation and discuss management of those medications, conduct in-home assessments, check blood pressure and oxygen levels, discuss weight and/or cognition changes. We also use an in-home wellness visit as an opportunity to update seniors' current emergency contact and primary care physician and keep lists of key info (i.e., medication list, amounts, dosage, and time) readily handy. The nurses address any issue a senior might have with balance problems, their gait, vision, depression, pain, changes in sleep, hygiene, eating habits or mood. The student nurses and staff share wellness tips with our seniors and discuss exercises that are safe and doable at home. Our student nurses are advocates for our older adults and are encouraged to say something if they see or even suspect something to protect the senior and be safe rather than sorry later.
5. We provide safety-in-home checks of senior's dwellings with the intent of having older adults avoid senseless accidents i.e., a throw rug that is not secure, too much clutter that could cause a fall, insufficient lighting because light bulbs are out or an absence of grab bars in the shower – we see to it that these kinds of concerns are addressed so they don't slip and fall.
6. Older adults have been getting their shopping and errands done (such as escorts to/from banks, supermarkets, vegetable markets, pharmacies, nail salons, social programs, rehab centers.)

When an older adult comes home from a hospital stay, we check in on them to make sure they have what they need. We will pick up medications and go shopping for supplies for aftercare, as well as provide emotional reassurance and a chance to vent about their experience. We have also helped seniors to get pets to vets, Access-a-ride & SCRIE offices for sign up & renewals, post office, library, department stores for clothes and/or appliance shopping, and cemeteries, etc. Volunteers escort older adults who want to vote in person. We are promoting older adults using absentee ballots when they can't get out and help get those ballots in the mail. Volunteers will go shopping or do an errand either with or for a senior depending on the seniors' needs, desires, circumstances or based on weather. Most of our seniors do not go to older adult centers, mostly because they physically can't and for the few who do we escort them there and back.

7. We share vital information about good nutrition, super foods, the importance of adhering to their prescribed diet(s) i.e., diabetes, monitoring salt intake, staying hydrated and access to healthy food and essential supplies. We also share information on community activities that would benefit them i.e. health fairs, shredding events, free screenings, and giveaways etc.
8. Older adults have been taking more (and longer) healthy walks safely outside accompanied by a trained volunteer or two (depending on the senior's overall condition and/or age) to avoid potential street hazards and falls. Quite a few seniors have become power walkers because of the more frequent walking.
9. Older adults are remembered on special occasions like birthdays & holidays, so they feel included and connected to others. *Vivian S.*, age 103 said to us after a visit from two birthday volunteers a couple of weeks ago, "It's so wonderful having people think of you and sing, *"Happy Birthday to you."* Grade school children handmade cards for our seniors for Valentine's, Mothers and Father's Day, Springtime and Birthdays and volunteer Elves visit with a special care package of donated items during the holiday season – times that can be especially lonely - to remind older adults they are indeed remembered and valued.
10. Older adults have described feeling emotionally, mentally, and physically supported by Visiting Neighbors and reported feeling empowered, so that have been able to retain or re-establish their sense of self-worth, strengthen their self-esteem, stay hopeful and experience more happiness, and shared laughter in this past year. Older adults expressed to staff and volunteers through direct discussion, get-togethers, and surveys feeling they were better seen and heard and are better informed. We seek to promote their feeling that they still have relevance and value in our society and hold events that promote positive images of aging such as our Senior Talent Show where our older performers demonstrate that "Talent is Ageless" and our Intergenerational activities/projects where participants learn from each other.
11. There has been better understanding and communication between volunteers and older adults in general, so they have had greater appreciation of sensitivity towards each other and have been learning from one another. In our Intergenerational program, we often found that older adults and some of the younger volunteers/students initially had preconceived ideas about each other (seniors thought the young volunteers would be impatient and unenthusiastic about spending time with them, and the students thought the seniors would be rigid and "old" in their thinking and quick to judge them). These ideas quickly got dispelled as they walked, talked, shopped together, and became friends. They found out just how wrong their misgivings about each other were. Our young students gain respect for the life experiences of the seniors – everything from having common sense to basic knowledge of life and seniors learn that they are still relevant.

12. We have advocated for older adult issues to help our community and the public have a greater understanding of seniors' needs in the community, so seniors can age-in-place. *We will continue to help older adults cope with the myriad of changes associated with aging in general, as well as address their specific issues and with the aim of preventing problems from becoming worse or from having disastrous consequences.*
13. Our older adults have been describing feeling better about their life in general. They are learning that knowledge is powerful support (i.e. what one's options are, putting things into perspective and good communication is vital to getting the appropriate and accurate information) and friendships are essential to enhance life's satisfaction and help to better deal with life's stressors.
14. We have older adults expressing that they have experienced more joy and feelings of being loved, appreciated, and valued - volunteers too!
15. Visiting Neighbors Visiting Neighbors' staff assist older adults with questions regarding health care proxy, living will, end of life issues and have important and often very difficult conversations.
16. Regular communication, both important and uplifting messages of hope and inspiration, with our clients continues to be our priority. The older adults tell us how much they appreciate all our mailings that include "hang in there" and empathy notes, sympathy cards, get-well greetings, humorous stories, riddles and jokes, poems, word games and puzzles, stress relieving tips, easy recipes and sharing information. We also still hand deliver donated hand sanitizer, face masks and covid home tests to older adults who request them.

Our greatest challenge continues to be the nonstop nature of the needs of older adults (new and existing) who are asking for our help. Yet, in this past year, we once again managed to achieve all our expected results (and then some). Visiting Neighbors will continue to advocate on behalf of seniors to be better understood, treated with compassion, dignity, and respect and to not be ignored, overlooked, or forgotten, to help foster their self-esteem and self-worth and enable them to be as safe and healthy (physically, mentally and emotionally) as possible. *Once becoming a client, the older adult is usually with us for the remainder of their lives, and we do what we can to enhance the quality of those lives.*

**Just as our older adults need us more than ever, we need your support more than ever!**

*We would not be able to do what we do, nor at the level and pace we have been working, without the support of our NY City Council and the Aging Committee Members!! **You in fact - are our heroes!***

*We need you to continue to be our champions, so we can continue to succeed as we have for the past 52 years and be here for our seniors moving forward.* As our older adults are living longer, their needs intensify and require more time and attention. We are counting on your continued support, as we face what may lie ahead with strength and resolve. We have made a huge impact -doing so a most cost-effective way. We focus on what matters most – good health, inner strength, peace-of-mind, forming friendships, feeling accepted, valued, and loved and experiencing more joy! *Please continue to advocate for programs like Visiting Neighbors who are determined to help our older adults stay safe and survive and thrive at home to enable us to continue to do whatever we can to help!*

Sincerely,  
Cynthia Maurer, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Visiting Neighbors, Inc.  
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5/17/2024

Good Afternoon. My name is Eustacia Smith, and I am the Director of Advocacy at West Side Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing (WSFSSH.) Thank you to Chair Hudson and the entire committee on Aging for the opportunity to speak and for all your work to support older New Yorkers.

WSFSSH houses over 2,500 older adults in permanent affordable and supportive housing and operates a shelter for homeless adults over the age of 50. In addition, WSFSSH operates 3 Older Adult Centers, two located within our affordable senior housing and one in NYCHA housing. These three Centers serve over 1,500 older adults in Manhattan and the Bronx, providing invaluable services such as socialization, recreational activities, and nutritional services, as well as case management and social services. They provide assistance with complicated entitlement programs, navigating access to healthcare and the difficult process of getting home health aide services. They provide counseling and access to mental health services, help completing housing recertifications and referrals for housing when needed.

At a time when people 65 and older make up the fastest growing age group of people experiencing homelessness, the services provided in the older adult centers are vital to keeping people housed, healthy and out of much more costly institutional types of care, such as hospitals and nursing facilities. This is a time that we should be dramatically scaling up funding for services for older adults.

We need NYC to invest \$82 million in new funding across the aging system. Instead, we find ourselves in the position of having to fight just so that our Centers can remain open. The \$20 million dollar pegs for FY24&25 need to be restored. The administration's budget includes an \$80 million drop in FY26 that could lead to the closure of many centers. The closure of older adult centers will plunge these participants into social isolation and loneliness, which is linked to a 50% increased risk of dementia and higher rates of numerous conditions, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, anxiety, depression, Alzheimer's disease, and death. Our participants come from vulnerable populations with little resources where these centers provide a lifeline to community and stability. As one of our center participants put it, "I have already lost so much, even the thought of losing this center is devastating."

Eustacia Smith  
Director of Advocacy  
West Side Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing  
[esmith@wsfssh.org](mailto:esmith@wsfssh.org)



JUSTICE FROM COURTROOM TO COMMUNITY

**New York City Council  
Committee on Criminal Justice  
Executive Budget Hearing**

**Written Comments of Dale Ventura, Director of Community Legal Services at Youth Represent  
May 17, 2024**

Youth Represent is dedicated to improving the lives and futures of young people affected by the criminal legal system. When the justice system creates barriers to success for youth, **we use the law to help youth leave the stigma of a criminal record behind.**

We provide criminal and civil reentry legal services to over 1,200 young people annually, ages 26 and under, including 16- and 17-year-olds charged as "adolescent offenders" under Raise the Age and youth aged 18 and older who were left out of RTA legislation, who were previously or are currently incarcerated at Rikers Island. We are deliberate in serving Black, Latiné, and youth of color who otherwise would not have access to legal services during and after their criminal legal system involvement. We employ a multidisciplinary approach to meet the complex legal needs of recently released young people by providing wrap-around services that are rooted in youth development principles. Through our Community Lawyering Model, we partner with workforce development, job training, and other social service agencies in under-resourced neighborhoods where our clients live and work. By representing clients in venues like housing courts, school suspension hearings, and Family Courts, our lawyers remove barriers to employment, homes, education, and family. We also engage in policy advocacy and youth leadership development through our City Dreamers Advocacy Camp.

Thank you to Chair Nurse, Committee members, and staff for the opportunity to provide testimony on the 2025 budget.

**Expanding Access to Mental Health Services for Youth Impacted by the Criminal Legal System**

Annually in New York, an estimated 80,000 young individuals, mainly from Black and Latiné communities, come into contact with the justice system through arrests, convictions, or incarceration. A significant number of these youths lack proper legal representation, and an even smaller percentage have access to vital mental health services in order to navigate through these oppressive systems. Without adequate mental health services, young people are more

susceptible to experiencing worsening mental health conditions over time, further isolating them from social safety nets and the ability to engage in opportunities for education and employment. Ultimately, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage, trauma, and recidivism.

Youth Represent employs an interdisciplinary model that pairs our legal team with community-based organizations that provide social services, such as job placement and case management support. While this community based, client-centered approach works effectively in many ways, our legal staff found themselves trying to best support clients also struggling from mental health problems. Where a client has been referred to us from an organization with a psychologist or social worker on staff, we have done our best to work closely with those specialists to get the clients the help they need, but issues of confidentiality and privilege often get in the way of being able to have truly fruitful discussions and legal strategies on behalf of the young person. Further, where clients are referred by an organization that does not employ these professionals, we have to refer the client to other sources, which are often stretched beyond their capacity, and where we lack close working relationships. As a result, our attorneys were in the difficult position of trying to be lawyer, case manager, and social worker at once.

Recognizing the need to enhance our services met the needs of our clients, Youth Represent welcomed its first social worker in 2022. Our current social worker offered short-term counseling and therapeutic assistance to clients dealing with both the complexities of the criminal legal system and other life stressors, ensuring young people receive necessary emotional and psychological support during especially tumultuous periods in their lives.

Broadening our services to encompass mental health care has been crucial in tackling the challenges faced by young people involved with the justice system, beyond our historic approach of only legal advocacy. The success of the model, and the call from clients to receive greater support, has inspired us to expand our commitment: and we are thrilled to be bringing on an additional social worker and broadening the scope of our social work program this year. Integrating a second social worker into our team enables us to offer more personalized and extensive support to the youth as they maneuver through the legal system. This expansion enhances our ability to meet the intricate mental health requirements of our clients, equipping them with the necessary tools and backing to succeed.

The compelling evidence from various studies underscores the transformative power of mental health services in the criminal justice system. By integrating targeted interventions, we can reduce incarceration while prioritizing treatment and rehabilitation over punishment. Research from the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research further reinforces that, revealing that continuous healthcare access, particularly for mental health, is a key factor in preventing crime and reducing incarceration rates. Therefore, expanding access to these essential services not only supports the well-being of individuals but also serves as a proactive measure in curbing the cycle

of recidivism, ultimately demonstrating the necessity of comprehensive mental health interventions within the justice system.

**And yet, as of this week, there were nearly 1,300 young people under 25 incarcerated in New York City jails, nearly all of them Black and Latinx.** Of this population, more than half suffer from a mental health condition and 19% suffer from a serious mental health illness<sup>1</sup>. The annualized cost to incarcerate one person in DOC custody is over \$556,5396 -- many times the cost of even the most expensive college. **There are so many better ways to spend this money to improve the welfare of our youth.** Investing in mental health support for young people involved in the justice system is not only the morally right thing to do but also proves to be financially advantageous. You who gain access to mental health support have a fighting chance at achieving lives of dignity and positive wellbeing.

### **Youth Represent: Critical Services for Youth**

**With support from the New York City Council through the Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative,** Youth Represent provides reentry legal services for young people in their own communities.

We are deliberate in serving Black, Latiné, Indigenous, and youth of color who otherwise would not have access to legal services, while still prioritizing those with criminal legal system involvement. We have also expanded our age range from 24 and under to youth 26 and under. This is in response to growing research that shows our brains continue to develop up to age 25, and addresses the very practical reality that our partner organizations often welcome participants over the age of 24. We focus on young people living within New York City's five boroughs and are committed to providing inclusive and gender-affirming services to all youth.

In our most recently completed fiscal year, 46% of our clients identified as Black, 25% as Latine, 7% as multi-racial, 6% as Asian or Pacific Islander, 5% as White, 1% as American Indian, and 9% as other or unspecified. Their average age was 23. Just 10% were employed full-time; nearly 20% were not U.S. citizens. More than 20% lived in subsidized housing.

### **Youth Represent: City Council Criminal Justice Programs Initiative Support**

City Council funding, through the Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative, has allowed us to provide critical legal services and mental health services for youth. This year we have requested an additional \$50,000 – for a total request of \$125,000 – which would allow us to increase our support for young people under the funding by 50% and respond to the already overwhelming demand we are seeing for our legal and mental health services in neighborhoods with the highest needs level.

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<sup>1</sup> see Vital City, <https://www.vitalcitynyc.org/articles/who-gets-locked-up-and-why-a-data-story>

We hope that you will renew and expand funding for Youth Represent and that you will do so in the context of a just budget – investing in the full range of services and supports that young people and families rely on.

### **Conclusion**

Many young people who become involved in the criminal legal system do not have access to adequate legal representation or mental health services. By offering these services to youth who would otherwise go without, Youth Represent helps ensure that all members of the community have access to justice and support, regardless of their background or circumstances. Moreover, Youth involved in the criminal legal system often face significant mental health challenges, including trauma, depression, and anxiety. Through our trauma-informed and culturally responsive mental health services, Youth Represent helps improve the mental health and well-being of participants, which in turn benefits their families and strengthens the fabric of those communities. Ultimately, we are empowering young people to navigate the legal system, access essential services, and overcome barriers to positive wellbeing, allowing them to build stronger and more resilient communities.

We **thank the Council** for your support and for championing young people across the city impacted by the legal system.



# Dismantling Racism Team Congregation Beth Elohim

[REDACTED], Brooklyn, New York 11215  
[cbedismantlingracismteam@cbebk.org](mailto:cbedismantlingracismteam@cbebk.org)

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## Written Testimony of Congregation Beth Elohim's Dismantling Racism Team to New York City Council Committee on Criminal Justice for Executive Budget Hearing on May 17, 2024

Congregation Beth Elohim's Dismantling Racism Team engages in advocacy, in alliance with directly impacted groups, to reform the criminal legal system. Congregation Beth Elohim, with locations in Park Slope and Prospect Heights, is the largest Reform synagogue in Brooklyn, with about 1,200 households.

Mayor Adams' proposed budget perpetuates the Rikers crisis by largely maintaining the Department of Correction (DOC) budget<sup>1</sup> while cutting or failing to provide sufficient funds for programs proven to combat crime and stop people from going to Rikers in the first place: alternatives to incarceration (ATIs) and re-entry services, supportive housing, and community-based mental-health treatment. We need a budget that follows through on the legal and moral obligation to close Rikers by 2027. We urge you to work to:

- Allocate an additional \$21.3M to fulfill commitments in the Close Rikers plan and decrease the ineffective use of Rikers as a mental-health panacea — including:
  - Deliver on the City's promise to open 380 more units of Justice Involved Supportive Housing (JISH) by establishing a JISH line item in the DOHMH budget and [allocating an additional \\$6.4M](#) to increase service funding rates for existing and new units because long-time JISH providers are struggling at current rates;
  - Allocate \$2.9M more to enable 5 of the 22 newly funded state Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams to operate as Forensic ACT (FACT) teams (\$575K per team);
  - Allocate \$6M more to fully implement Local Law 118-2023, supporting the establishment of four new crisis respite centers, and \$6M more to fully implement Local Law 119-2023, supporting the establishment of five new clubhouses;
- Restore the additional \$3M that was cut from the Department of Correction funding for programming at Rikers (\$14M has already been restored), and increase the programming funding so DOC provides at least five hours of programming per weekday as mandated by City law; and
- Fully restore cuts to the Office of Criminal Justice budget for alternatives to incarceration (an additional \$2.1M) and re-entry programs (an additional \$2.6M), and add another \$1.1M for these programs as requested by the [ATI/Reentry Coalition](#).

Thank you for hearing us.

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<sup>1</sup> The Mayor's FY 2025 DOC budget, including personnel benefits and pensions, is \$2.6 billion, providing for 8,784 full-time employees. <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/erc4-24.pdf> (p.103E). The number of DOC officers per incarcerated person is multiple times the national average. <https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/a-look-inside-the-new-york-city-correction-budget.pdf>

Tiffany Ashley Cruz  
Teaching Artist, Drama Club  
[Tiffany@dramaclub.org](mailto:Tiffany@dramaclub.org)

**9:30 AM Friday May 17, 2024**

**Committee on Finance (Jointly with Committee on Criminal Justice)**

Everyone has their own story to tell – Mine begins with DRAMA.

In 2015, the number of young adults sitting on Rikers Island was tremendous, and I was a part of that count. In your journey of life, sometimes you make wrong turns but with the right support, you can eventually end up on the right path. The beginning of that “right path” for me was Drama Club.

At first I was uncertain, not knowing the impact and mission of the program until I dedicated my undivided attention to the facilitators. That’s when I was able to understand the power of the mind and improvisation. The day after my release, I attended my first Drama Club class on the outside. That's where I picked up my first job as an apprentice. Learning different skills and attending many different workshops made me want to strive to become a Teaching Artist. Continuing to progress within the program I moved up to an ATA (assistant teaching artist) taking in even more information and building more skills. I was later shadowing different teachers and trying to find my unique spin of how I would teach if I was to ever become one of them. As time passed, everyone saw my growth. I eventually moved into the Teaching Artist role, and began teaching in confinement. Working inside, I knew that was where I needed to be. I was able to give back to those who were just like me. Beginning as a participant, and now serving as a Teaching Artist who brings Drama Club into both secure (Crossroads, Horizons, soon Rikers Island) and Non-secure placements throughout the city, I have been able to turn my whole narrative around. I use my story to set an example for troubled youth who just need guidance to change their lives for the better.

Within the last year, we have provided over 400 classes and served over 600 youth. Programs like Drama Club provide what I was always looking for as an adolescent. Drama Club offers a consistent community that the youth we serve need to feel a sense of belonging to open up. Once that trust is built, we then use the power of play utilizing improvisation. As we play, we create scenes, we build skills, and we eventually put together a showcase where the participants can feel seen and celebrated. Participants are able to receive certificates, choose a special celebratory meal, and even receive an offer letter for a paid apprenticeship position upon release. Since July 1st 2023, we have engaged 15 apprentices. Members of our apprentice cohort come from neighborhoods that suffer from government and corporate underinvestment in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. My story, and this program, is proof that you can take control of your circumstances and empower yourself to be better. We need programs like these to continue inspiring and guiding those inside – and we depend on your support to keep going. Programs inside facilities bring a sense of community, hope, and motivation necessary to create positive change.

Good morning chair and committee,

My name is Christopher Jeffries and I am a youth advocate for BronxConnect which is under the umbrella of Urban Youth Alliance an organization that provides Alternative to Incarceration and Alternative to Detention services. We are proud partners in the close Rikers campaign as well as the ATI coalition. I am an impacted individual having served time on Rikers Island many years ago. Currently I also have a few loved ones being held there. In my experience there is no room for true rehabilitation on Rikers Island. People are coming home to, and with, the same issues they had before they went in, if not worse. The city spends \$556,539 to incarcerate 1 person for a full year, or \$1,525 per day. Imagine what can be done if those same funds were instead, funneled into the impoverished communities in the form of services that prevent recidivism. The average cost of a comprehensive ATI/ATD program is \$8,700 per person which means that 63 people could join the road to rehabilitation for what it costs to incarcerate one person on Rikers in a single year. What has been shown to work is providing investments into wrap-around services. At BronxConnect we have found that 97% of participants who complete our programs remain unarrested for up to 3 years. Rikers is a facility that leaves people in worse shape than they were and does nothing to help better the community. As shown by the record high numbers of lives lost on Rikers Island in the past few years it's actually decreasing public safety. In 2019 the city passed a law which required the Closure of Rikers Island by August 31, 2027. However, the current administration is making the deadline harder and harder to meet. With construction on the borough based jails moving at a snail's pace, the timeline for closing Rikers is estimated to be pushed back another 3 to 4 years. Until Rikers is closed for good, the city of New York will continue to suffer. We have to start divesting and redistributing DOC's budget to meet the legal and moral obligation of Closing Rikers in a

timely manner. It is a complete waste of taxpayer money to continue pouring money into a broken system. Thank you.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jim Sheehan <cjunior7@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 17, 2024 6:03 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Close Rikers Island ..NOW

[REDACTED]

ESTEEMED COUNCIL MEMBERS;

I am a R.Catholic priest who has been held up 3 times in my 71 yrs  
All perpetrators were graduates o.f Rikers

It is NOT Good To maintain Rikers in the richest city in the world .

We all.know that

I am chaplain for 25 years at  
Bronx Community College

Kalefl Boudier studied there

Was picked up by the.police.  
Thrown to Rikers,  
Never brought to trial .  
Was abused.

And committed suicide !

MAKE Mayor Adams stick to his campaign promises

HELP NY City DEVELOP A stellar place of options NOW.

.  
Not more negative punishment in the 21 st century ..

Sincerely Submitted.

For God.s sake,

Rev.James C Sheehan. Jr  
, MA

C/O Bronx Community College

2155 University Ave  
rbsc 301- campus ministry  
BRONX.ny 10453



My name is: Kai Fai Lo

I am an older adult participant at: Homecrest Community Services

Mayor Adam's proposed cuts of over \$100 million dollars will hurt me, and my community and I firmly stand against them. Aging services are important to me personally and to the older New Yorkers who work in the system and use all the services available. Closing older adult centers and cutting off funding to meals on wheels programs is both ageist and cruel, especially when the Mayor invests **less than half of one percent** of his budget on aging services in the first place. I am calling on the city to invest in the true needs of the existing system to make New York a better place to age. I am calling on the city to expand social work support for Older Adults.

**New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2025**

**New York City Council Committee on Aging -- Honorable Crystal Hudson, Chair**  
**New York City Council Committee on Finance – Honorable Justin Brannan, Chair**

**Submitted by: Colleen Kremer, Program Director of the Confucius Plaza and Chatham Green NORC**

**May 17, 2024**

Thank you, Chair Hudson, Chair Brannan and members of the Committee on Aging and the Committee on Finance for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is **Colleen Kremer, Program Director of the Confucius Plaza and Chatham Green NORC**, and my comments today will focus on the important supportive service programs that Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) and Neighborhood NORCs (NNORCs)<sup>1</sup> provide for older New Yorkers.

Thank you to the City Council for its ongoing commitment to the NORC program. Without your annual investment in the Neighborhood NORC program, there would be no city-funded Neighborhood NORCs at all, as NYC Aging funds only classic NORC programs.

Classic and Neighborhood NORCs are multi-age housing developments or neighborhoods, respectively, not originally developed for older adults but now home to many older people. They were founded with the goal of transforming residential complexes and neighborhoods to meet the needs of a growing cohort of older residents and enable them to remain living independently in their homes, thrive in their communities, and delay hospitalization or nursing home placement.

The density of older adults and their proximity to each other further fosters creative approaches to providing health and social services. N/NORC programs provide case management services; nursing services; recreational, social and cultural activities, and ancillary services tailored to meet the needs of each community. Programs actively encourage healthy aging by providing access to health care, promoting health and wellness activities, addressing disease prevention, and responding to chronic health conditions. NORC staff provide wellness checks to address mental health and social isolation; assist seniors in accessing food and other supplies, and coordinate services. Unfortunately, NORCs regularly lack funding for full-time Social Workers with the appropriate language capacities to provide these services, and leaves case managers with unsustainable caseloads.

Additionally, nursing and health care services, which N/NORC programs are required to provide, are not covered by city funded NORC contracts. While these services had previously been covered by healthcare providers, pro-bono, with changes to the healthcare system over the years, these agreements have eroded. N/NORCs now scramble to cover the hourly rates of their health and nursing providers, which can exceed \$90/hour.

The Confucius Plaza and Chatham Green NORC serves approximately 200 older adults in the Chinatown and Two Bridges community. We provide on around 107 older adults each month with Case Management, Case Assistance, Health Management and Health Assistance supportive services. Because of our close relationship to the community, these are services that our clients would not be getting otherwise. Additionally, because of the unique nature of the NORC program, we can easily conduct

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<sup>1</sup> N/NORCs refers to both classic and neighborhood NORCs.



these services directly from our clients' homes if they are unable to come to the center, enabling them to continue to age in place from the comfort of their home.

In addition to providing social and health related services, NORCs offer a range of classes geared at all levels of ability. Almost 50 unduplicated clients participate monthly in culturally appropriate activities such as Qi Gong, brush painting, both chair and mat yoga, walking groups, support groups, fall awareness, and arts and crafts, as well as weekly presentations on relevant topics such as long-term care, elder abuse, tax information for older adults etc., where participants learn about services and benefits that they would not be aware of, all offered for free and without having to leave their apartment complex. These services allow older adults to avoid hospitalization and institutionalization while preserving vital community resources.

Without the City Council's NORC Initiative, many programs would not be able to continue providing critical services to so many older adults in New York City. To sustain and strengthen the NORC program, **the FY25 budget must restore this Initiative to FY23 funding levels. This amounts to \$6.09 million, with \$1.3 million to directly support health and nursing services**, filling a funding gap for NORC providers. The restoration of these funds will help ensure these programs can continue to provide services to NORC residents.

NORC programs **cost as little as \$483 per older adult per year**, and help our society **avoid the enormous costs of nursing home care, which can be as high as \$142,350 per older adult per year**. It is sensible as our community ages to expand the service capacity of NORCs like ours, and justifies the funding we are requesting here.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please feel free to reach out Colleen Kremer (colleenkremer@hmonline.org) with any questions.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Sharon Brown <song51074@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 17, 2024 4:35 PM  
**To:** NYC Council Hearings  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Hearings on criminal justice, parole, aging Jesus Christ is Lord and God and Elohim The Holy Spirit is Elohim.

[REDACTED]

Rikers Island must be closed immediately forth with and the funding go to get people wrongfully held in other institutions and those people who are in rikers should be let out because they did not get to testify at the Grand jury and it dated not yet the proper redress and constitutional protections that they are guaranteed.

The funding for rikers should be going to a Tupac and biggie center at the former rikers Island rolls him finger center and other centers where singers and rappers are abused there because they are Jews or Judeo Christian and they have talent skill ability and great family history and prowess.

Doc funding should go to build studios : entertainment studios and record studios and information on the Constitution the Bible there should be a Bible amusement park there and many things that show where the law came from from; the Bible and we should outlaw homosexuality in all prisons because the Bible is the first legal document.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me for he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor to bind up the brokenhearted to preach the acceptable year of the Lord and set the captives free. That's the first reason I'm here so that the people that are held in prison can be freed from records and other places especially those who are guilty and some poor not guilty but are Innocent by the blood of Jesus because they are saved Judeo Christian or Jewish.

The Bible should be entered into evidence and I'm entering the Holy Bible the Old testament and New testament King James version and the Interlinear Bible in evidence as the law of the land first and foremost and then we can implement laws and ordinances that help the flow of society but not interfere with the Bible.

I enter [bible.com](http://bible.com) and every of an Interlinear Bible.com King James Bible and every other Bible into evidence.

Funding should be for people to go to schools not jail school and for people to go to work and not work in jail for abuse wages and abuse labor and for them not to be put in jobs that harm them and can cause them to be killed because the jobs are so dangerous. The financing for DOC also should go to those people who are working in the jail system who belong there or don't belong there and they should be paid a regular wage. The 13th amendment does not allow for abuse slavery.

I want to enter into evidence in front of the city council in City Hall that a slave is just a worker or a servant which means they should be paid regular wages and abused servant slave worker is just that abused. A public servant is a public slave or public worker when it gets to be problematic is when people practice abusive slavery

or abusive working conditions or sweatshop conditions like in some jails where people are paid 13 cents an hour.

People must have all the money they need to handle their legal case if they can't get it through the courts it has to be provided for them through DLC budget until some of these places are closed down. And some of the funding will be used to close some of these places down and problematic CEOs are going to be let go. Emory hires will be accomplished and the UN has to get out of American Business and law and doctors.

Most of the abuse comes through the defunct mental health system. That can't tell whether a baby is a human being but can rip off their arms and their legs and their head to decapitate in dismember them but still doesn't know it's a child with all the human attributes. And then when someone is pregnant with a baby they still don't know it's a baby we shouldn't have these people running mental health in a different mental health system.

This is why the hospital's often let people out after 10 20 years they realize they were doing the wrong thing but keeping people in forensic hospitals and hospitals. And they had to let them out legally after they stole years from their lives decades some even century almost. The defunct mental health system has been ended for a long time and will never resurrect but we will have the biblical mind. biblical MIND Moral Insistence Never Doubting. Faith. Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness and he was called the friend of God. God has not given us the spirit of fear he has given unto us the spirit of peace love power and a sound mind.

The Bible is right with scriptures about the mind and how to handle it. As a man thinketh so is he.

Criminal Justice Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget, and urge the Council to hold the line on #CareNotCuts.

I am demanding that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal – and if he does not, I demand that my council member, Speaker Adrienne Adams and Finance Chair Justin Brannan use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that a budget will not pass unless it reflects these priorities.

Mayor Adams has proposed more than \$2.55 billion of budget cuts that could have devastating consequences on essential services such as libraries (\$36M), early educational 3-K programs (\$567M), CUNY (\$60M), education (\$1B), adult literacy (\$24M) and more. Meanwhile, NYPD and DOC budgets go up. NYPD is slated to spend 2x its overtime budget at \$740M. DOC budget is going up by \$35M, and spending \$138M a year on staff mismanagement.

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

New Yorkers need #CareNotCuts at a minimum so they can continue to have access to the crucial city services they rely on. #CareNotCuts means:

\*No cuts to school budgets. Restore funding and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Invest in student mental health, community schools, and restorative justice programs.

\*No cuts to CUNY. Restore funding, faculty, and staff lost due to Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts. Increase funding for advisors, ASAP, and MetroCard access for student support and retention.

\*No cuts to libraries. Restore funding cut by Mayor Adams' prior budget cuts.

\*No cuts to adult literacy programs. Restore and baseline funding to keep programs whole

and invest in greater resources, services, and supports for adult literacy students.

\*No cuts to 3K. Recommit to universal 3K. Fulfill salary parity for the early childhood workforce.

\*No cuts to the provision of social services, such as housing services and health or mental health services. Invest in social safety net and housing solutions for low-income New Yorkers.

\*Reduce the NYPD's bloated budget. Cut vacant school police positions. Remove police from mental health, drug use, and homelessness response. Invest in community safety solutions.

\*Reduce DOC's bloated budget. Invest in supportive housing and alternatives to incarceration.

By taking these steps, we can create a safer, more equitable city that works for ALL of its residents. I urge you, City Council, to consider the well-being of all residents: reject proposed cuts to care-based programs and cut NYPD and DOC bloat instead. Thank you.

Bright Limm

[bdlimm@gmail.com](mailto:bdlimm@gmail.com)

Jamaica, New York 11435

Council General Testimony,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff,

I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget, and I believe safety means #CareNotCuts and cuts to DOC bloat.

We have a vision: one where every part of our city, every district, and every block, is a nurturing, stable home for all of its residents. But this vision and our current resources are under attack from a mayor determined to cut corners and slash essential services.

Instead of increasing funding for a department that subjects people in DOC custody to some of the worst jail conditions in the nation, we should be investing in social and housing services that will truly make New Yorkers safer. We demand Mayor Adams and the Council deliver a budget that eliminates DOC vacancies and budget waste, invests \$6.4M in supportive housing and \$18.9M in mental health resources, and restores \$28.5M to alternatives to incarceration, re-entry services, and board of corrections budgets.

Mayor Adams' priorities are upside down. The safest communities have the most resources, and the mayor's proposed cuts to our schools, libraries, and health care undermine public safety at the most basic level. Instead of increasing funding for a department that subjects people in DOC custody to some of the worst jail conditions in the nation, we should be investing in social and housing services that will truly make New Yorkers safer.

We obviously hope that the Mayor and Council can accomplish a people's budget through negotiations. BUT if not, we need Council to use its full budget powers of amending the budget and passing terms and conditions to make sure these key funding priorities are in any budget that passes. Thank you.

Caitlyn Passaretti  
[cdpassaretti@gmail.com](mailto:cdpassaretti@gmail.com)

NYC, New York 10031

Criminal Justice Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I support a #PeoplesBudget that is built on #CareNotCuts.

I believe all New Yorkers deserve access to housing, livelihood, and resources to thrive. And I am OUTRAGED that Mayor Eric Adams continues to slash the budgets of and underinvest in programs my neighbors and I depend on.

I demand that the Mayor fully fund the following programs in his budget proposal. If he does not, I demand that my council member and Speaker Adrienne Adams use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that any budget that passes reflects key People's Budget priorities.

This includes:

- Investing in capital infrastructure for public and affordable housing, schools, and CUNY colleges
- Investing in and protecting public education, CUNY, childcare, libraries, social safety nets, and housing from budget cuts and restoring previous cuts
- Divesting from wasteful spending at the NYPD and DOC, and directing funds to community safety, supportive housing, mental health, and alternatives to incarceration

Our full list of People's Budget demands are here: <https://peoplesplan.nyc/2024-peoples-budget-campaign/>

As we all know, education, social services, and housing programs create real safety for our communities. City services and workforces that provide critical support to individuals and families who are struggling to make ends meet. Mayor Adams' previous and proposed cuts means slower housing vouchers and food stamps processing, more hungry and unhoused New Yorkers, less parents with the childcare support they need to stay in the city, fewer after-school and youth programs, and a general degradation of city services.

Stand with me and my neighbors to defend our budget and services against Mayor Adams,  
and deliver a People's Budget that has #CareNotCuts. Thank you.

Kmea Jones

[Joneskmea@gmail.com](mailto:Joneskmea@gmail.com)

Staten Island, New York 10305



THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

49

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jason Alleyne

Address: 17 Battery Place Suite 305

I represent: Exult

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

Asing

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Budget Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Beth Finlay

Address: 750 Third Ave, 31<sup>st</sup> Fl NY, NY

I represent: AARP NY

Address: 750 Third Ave, 31<sup>st</sup> Fl NY, NY

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Criminal Justice

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dale Ventura

Address: [Redacted] 11 Park Place Suite 1512, NY, NY

I represent: Youth Represent

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

44

Appearance Card

Agency

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SONIA Smith

Address: [redacted] ST Marks Ave [redacted]

I represent: MT Ararat / Rev Brown Center

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

DFTA

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ashley Lightfoot

Address: [redacted] Thomas S Boyland St

I represent: Seniors [redacted]

Address: Bklyn NY 11233

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sharon Brown

Address: 130-10 140 Street Suite 1

I represent: Rose Of Sharon Enterprises

Address: Jamaica NY 11436  
South Ozone Park

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Essie Degnan

Address: [redacted] Chaucer St

I represent: Seniors Center

Address: [redacted] Chaucer St Bklyn NY 11233

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez, Commissioner

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYC Aging

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jose Mercado, Chief Financial Officer

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYC Aging

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ANDREW ~~SANTANA~~ SANTA AWA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: THE ASIAN AMERICAN FEDERATION

Address: 120 WALL ST, NY, NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

39

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eustacia Smith

Address: 39 W. 105th St

I represent: West Side Federation for Senior + Supportive Housing

Address: 2345 Broadway

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kevin Kiprowski

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Live on NY

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ariel Savransky

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: UJA - Federation

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

36

Appearance Card

Ageing

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Fiorella Caro Turin

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ NY, NY 10003

I represent: The Educational Alliance Older Adult Centers

Address: 197 East Broadway NY, NY 10002

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

Joint Finance Committee & Aging Committee  in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Linda Hoffman, President

Address: New York Foundation for Senior Citizens

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: 11 Park Place NY, NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

34

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jeanette Estrova

Address: 355 Lexington Ave

I represent: Citymeals on Wheels

Address: same

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tara Klein (Aging)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: United Neighborhood House

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

32

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/15/11

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Debra S. Miller

Address: NYC

I represent: Dept of Protection

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: May 17th

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rozwan Mirza

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Dept. of Probation

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: May 17th

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sharan Goodwin

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Dept. of Probation

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: May 17th

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joan Gardner

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Dept. of Probation

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: May 17<sup>th</sup>

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Andrew McGilbert

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Dept of Probation

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: May 17<sup>th</sup>

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Bridget Hamilton

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Dept of Probation

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: May 17<sup>th</sup>

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Juanita Holmes

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Dept. of Probation

Address: \_\_\_\_\_



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

25

Appearance Card

Agging

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Minnetta Brown

Address: [REDACTED] ST MARKS AVE, BKLYN NY 11233

I represent: Seniors

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

24

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sharon Brown Teter ROSE OF Sharon Enterprises

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: Jamaica Ny 11436

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

23

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jennifer Parish

Address: 40 Rector St, NY, NY

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ZACHARY KATZENELSON

Address: 121 6TH AVE NY, NY 10013

I represent: INDEPENDENT RIKERS Commission

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christopher Jettles

Address: [Redacted] Atlantic Ave

I represent: Bronx Council

Address: 432 E 149 Street Bronx, NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Darren Mack

Address: 40 Rector St. NY, NY 10006

I represent: Freedom Agenda

Address: same

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

19

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/21

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kenneth Cox

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Encore Community Services

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PAUL NAGLE

Address: [redacted] W 22nd St [redacted] 10011

I represent: Stonewall Community Development Corp

Address: 276 First Ave 8G 10009

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alexander Andersson

Address: [redacted] Grand Concourse, Bx NY

I represent: Reentry Theater of Harlem

Address: 1765 Madison Ave, NYC

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dale Ventura

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Youth Represent

Address: (Criminal Justice)

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Shannon Rockett

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Carnegie Hall

Address: (Criminal Justice)

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kimberly George

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Project Guardianship

Address: - Aging



Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Darcy Connor

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: SAGE

Address: - Aging

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tawana Atkins

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: katal Center

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Melanie Dominguez

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: katal Center

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jonathan Levine

Address: 75-20 Astoria Blvd

I represent: DOC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lynelle Maginelly Liddle

Address: 75-20 Astoria Blvd

I represent: DOC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mary Savasta

Address: 75-20 Astoria Blvd

I represent: POC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Francis Torres

Address: 95-20 Astoria Blvd

I represent: DOC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ISKHAKIYANKI FAMBARI

Address: 95-20 Astoria Blvd

I represent: DOC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Matthew Tarcabelli

Address: 95-20 Astoria Blvd

I represent: DOC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_



Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: James Sacramento

Address: 75-20 Astoria Blvd

I represent: DOC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jeremiah Johnson

Address: 75-20 Astoria Blvd

I represent: DOC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Patrick Bennett

Address: 95-20 Astoria Blvd

I represent: DOC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 5/17/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alexandria Maldonado

Address: 95-20 Astoria Blvd

I represent: DCC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms