

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY WITH
COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE JOINTLY WITH
COMMITTEE ON AGING

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY WITH
COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON AGING

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May 17, 2024
Start: 9:39 a.m.
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HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Justin L. Brannan, Chairperson of
the Committee on Finance

Sandy Nurse, Chairperson of the
Committee on Criminal Justice

Crystal Hudson, Chairperson of the
Committee on Aging

COUNCIL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE:

Diana Ayala
Gale A. Brewer
Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
David M. Carr
Kamillah Hanks
Crystal Hudson
Farrah N. Louis
Francisco P. Moya
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Keith Powers
Pierina Ana Sanchez
Althea V. Stevens

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COUNCIL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE: (cont.)
Nantasha M. Williams

COUNCIL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL
JUSTICE:

Shaun Abreu
Diana Ayala
Tiffany Cabán
Shahana Hanif
Christopher Marte
Mercedes Narcisse
Lincoln Restler
Althea V. Stevens

COUNCIL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGING:

Linda Lee
Darlene Mealy
Lynn C. Schulman
Susan Zhuang

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Lynelle Maginley-Liddie, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Correction

Nancy Savasta, Acting General Counsel of the New York City Department of Correction

Francis Torres, First Deputy Commissioner of the New York City Department of Correction

Sherrieann Rembert, Assistant Bureau Chief, Chief-of-Staff of the New York City Department of Correction

Matthew Pascarelli, Assistant Commissioner for Budget and Finance of the New York City Department of Correction

Alexandria Maldonado, Assistant Commissioner for Strategic Operations of the New York City Department of Correction

Patrick Benn, Deputy Commissioner of Facilities, Fleet, and Construction of the New York City Department of Correction

James Saunders, Deputy Commissioner of Health Affairs of the New York City Department of Correction

Jeremiah Johnson, Acting Deputy Commissioner of Training and Development of the New York City Department of Correction

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

Juanita Holmes, Commissioner of the New York City
Department of Probation

Sharun Goodwin, Deputy Commissioner of Adult
Operation of the New York City Department of
Probation

Joan Gardner, Acting Deputy Commissioner of
Juvenile Operations of the New York City
Department of Probation

Andrea McGill, Deputy Commissioner of
Administration of the New York City Department of
Probation

Bridget Hamblin, Deputy Commissioner for Legal
Affairs/General Counsel of the New York City
Department of Probation

Mathew Lynch, Director of Policy and Program
Innovation of the New York City Department of
Probation

Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, Commissioner of NYC
Aging

Jose Mercado, Chief Financial Officer of NYC
Aging

Kevin Kiproviski, Director of Public Policy at
LiveOn New York

Ariel Savransky, Senior Policy and Advocacy
Advisor at UJA Federation of New York

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

Jeanette Estima, Director of Policy and Advocacy
at City Meals on Wheels

Tara Klein, Deputy Director of Policy and
Advocacy for United Neighborhood Houses

Beth Finkel, State Director for AARP New York

Andrew Santa Ana, Deputy Director of Research and
Policy at Asian American Federation

Linda Hoffman, President of New York Foundation
for Senior Citizens

Eustacia Smith, Director of Advocacy at Westside
Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing

Fiorela Caro Turin, Associate Director at the
Educational Alliance's Sirovich Center for
Balanced Living

Kenneth Cox, Chief of Strategic Philanthropy for
Encore Community Services

Minnetta Brown, self

Cheri Lightfoot, self

Essie Duggan, self

Unidentified

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

Zachary Katznelson, Executive Director of the Independent Rikers Commission, commonly known as the Lippman Commission

Darren Mack, Co-Director of Freedom Agenda

Alexander Anderson, Art Director for Re-Entry Theater of Harlem as well as Ritual for Return

Jason Alleyne, Chief Program Officer at Exalt

Dale Ventura, Director of Community Legal Services at Youth Represent

Shannon Rockett, Carnegie Hall

Jennifer Parish, Director of Criminal Justice Advocacy at the Urban Justice Center Mental Health Project and member of the Jails Action Coalition and the Halt Solitary Campaign

Melanie Dominguez, Organizing Director at the Katal Center for Equity, Health and Justice

Tawana Atkins, Katal Community Equality Health

Sharon Brown, self

Rachel Bender, Chief Program Officer at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House

Rosemarie Salazar, University Settlements Director at the Meltzer Social Club Older Adult Center

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

Dr. Cynthia Maurer, Executive Director at
Visiting Neighbors

Sheremeer Chevannes, Senior Policy Associate at
the Fortune Society

Adiba Chowdhury, Senior Manager, Family Support
Services at South Asian Council for Social
Services

Melissa Vergara, member of Freedom Agenda and the
Close Rikers Campaign

Jay Edidin, Director of Advocacy at the Women's
Community Justice Association

Daniele Gerard, Senior Staff Attorney at
Children's Rights

Kai Fai Lo, self

Roy Waterman, Program Coordinator for the Arches
Program and Justice Initiative Division at Good
Shepherd Services

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone
3 check for the Committee on Finance joint with
4 Criminal Justice and Aging, recorded by Layla Lynch
5 in the Council Chambers on May 17, 2024.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning, and
7 welcome to today's New York City Council hearing for
8 Executive Budget on Criminal Justice, Finance, and
9 Aging.

10 At this time, we ask that you silence all
11 cell phones and electronic devices to minimize
12 disruptions throughout the hearing.

13 If you have testimony you wish to submit
14 for the record, you may do so via email at
15 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again, that is
16 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

17 At any time throughout the hearing, do
18 not approach the dais.

19 We thank you for your kind cooperation.

20 Chairs, we are ready to begin.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you,
22 Sergeant. [GAVEL] Okay, good morning, and welcome to
23 day nine of the FY25 Executive Budget hearings. I'm
24 Council Member Justin Brannan. I Chair the Committee
25 on Finance.

3 Today's hearing will begin with the
4 Department of Correction followed by the Department
5 of Probation and finally the Department for the
6 Aging.

7 I'm pleased to be joined this morning by
8 my friend and Colleague, Council Member Sandy Nurse,
9 who Chairs the Committee on Criminal Justice. We've
10 been joined this morning thus far by Council Members
11 Cabán, Williams, Carr, and Moya on Zoom.

12 Welcome, Commissioner and your team.

13 Thank you for joining us today to answer our
14 questions. As I start every hearing, I'd just like to
15 set the table of where we're at. On April 24, 2024,
16 the Administration released the Executive Financial
17 Plan for FY24 to FY28 with a proposed FY25 budget of
18 111.6 billion dollars. DOC's proposed FY25 budget of
19 1.05 billion represents less than 1 percent of the
20 Administration's proposed Fiscal '25 budget. This is
21 an increase of 4.1 million dollars from the less than
22 1 percent from the 1.04 billion that was originally
23 budgeted in the Prelim Plan. This increase results
24 mostly from adjustments for various collective
25 bargaining agreements partially offset by reductions
for utility costs. The Executive Plan also includes

2 an additional 40 million dollars for overtime costs
3 in FY24. As of March 2024, DOC had 1,149 vacancies
4 relative to its FY24 budgeted headcount. My questions
5 today will largely focus on DOC staffing and overtime
6 along with the agency capital and general budget
7 changes. In the Council's Preliminary response, we
8 identified 6.15 billion dollars in resources that
9 were unaccounted for in the Mayor's Preliminary
10 Budget. These are funds that can be used to both
11 restore and make key investments in public services
12 while still holding 3 billion dollars aside to
13 protect against risks from under-budgeting costs like
14 uniformed overtime. I believe if we're going to
15 deliver a budget that works for everyone in the city,
16 we need to all be operating under the same set of
17 numbers and facts.

18 I now want to turn to my Co-Chair for
19 this hearing, Council Member Nurse, for her opening
20 statement.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Good morning. Thank
22 you, Chair. Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the FY
23 2025 Executive Budget Hearing for the Committee of
24 Finance jointly with the Committee on Criminal
25

2 Justice. Thank you to Criminal Justice Committee
3 Members for being here.

4 I welcome back Commissioner Lynelle
5 Maginley-Liddie and later Commissioner Juanita Holmes
6 as well as additional leadership who have joined us
7 today. I'm honored to Co-Chair this portion of
8 today's hearing with the Chair of the Committee of
9 Finance, Justin Brannan.

10 I'm looking forward to receiving updates
11 from the two agencies today regarding the work they
12 have done since the March Preliminary hearing and
13 asking about concerns that have been brought to our
14 attention through the Mayor's Executive Budget. I'm
15 looking to see how the goals of this Administration
16 align with the goals of this Council to create
17 stability on The Island, provide much-needed
18 resources and support for those in the justice
19 system, and to create a strong path toward re-entry
20 and lower recidivism rates, leading to the ultimate
21 goal of closing Rikers Island and opening the
22 borough-based jail facilities in a timely manner.

23 In the Fiscal 2025 Executive Plan, the
24 Department of Correction has a total budget of 1
25 billion in Fiscal 2025, which is 1 percent of the

2 City's overall budget. The Department is tasked with
3 creating a safe environment for people in custody and
4 their staff while also creating a path for these
5 individuals to successfully reenter their
6 communities. Also in this plan, the Department of
7 Probation has an overall budget of 110 million for
8 Fiscal 2025. The DOP plays a crucial role working
9 within the criminal justice system to hold people on
10 probation accountable and reduce recidivism. The plan
11 includes minimal changes for these agencies, but
12 today I would like to dig into a few areas of
13 concern.

14 First, given the daily risk of harm,
15 injury, or death at Rikers, we should be coordinating
16 with providers to supply programs that offer life
17 skills and show a path forward and away from the
18 justice system. Expanding alternatives to
19 incarceration must be a commitment in the plan to
20 close Rikers. I remain in the opinion that the
21 decision to abruptly cut 17 million in funding to
22 trusted, credible organizations that provide ATI and
23 re-entry services was a mistake. These programs and
24 services are vital in the plan to reduce the jail
25 population to close Rikers Island. It further

2 increases my other concern that the Executive Plan
3 reflected no restorations of the Programs to
4 Eliminate the Gap that were included in the
5 Preliminary Plan. Having alternatives to
6 incarceration programs available, such as Arches and
7 Next Steps, is a necessity in diverting justice-
8 involved individuals off of Rikers Island and into
9 community-based programming. In the process of
10 closing Rikers, the jail population must be decreased
11 by over 50 percent in order to be housed in the
12 borough-based facilities. It is concerning to me that
13 while the Administration was reducing programming
14 that has proven to be successful in this goal, they
15 are also adding beds to accommodate the ever-growing
16 incarcerated population on Rikers. More concerning is
17 the increase in beds for the planned women's
18 facility. We know many cis women, self-identifying
19 women, and gender-expansive individuals often end up
20 in jail for surviving intimate partner violence and
21 gender-based violence. The City is falling short of
22 its commitments to alternative supportive housing
23 where women can safely heal and get the support they
24 need.

3 I want to thank our Committee Staff,
4 Financial Analyst Casey Lajszky, Counsel Jeremy
5 Whiteman, Legislative Policy Analyst Natalie Meltzer,
6 and thank you to my Chief-of-Staff, Samori Touré.

7 I'd also like to recognize my Colleagues
8 who are joining us today, which actually the Chair
9 already did, so I'm going to pass it back to our
10 Finance Chair for a few procedural items.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Chair.
12 Before we get started, I also want to take a moment
13 to thank the entire Council Finance Division who's
14 been working very, very hard the past two weeks
15 behind the scenes to make all these hearings
16 possible. Today, especially Jack Storey and Casey
17 Lajszky and my Committee Counsel, Mike Twomey.

18 As a reminder, for today's Executive
19 Budget joint hearings, we'll take public testimony on
20 an agency's budget the same day so after all the
21 agencies today have testified, instead of holding one
22 long day at the end of public testimony next week,
23 we'll hear from the public today on the Correction,
24 Probation, or the Department for the Aging budget so
25 if you're here today and you want to testify, just
make sure you fill out a witness slip with the

2 Sergeant-at-Arms. They're available on the back
3 table.

4 I'll now turn it over to Committee
5 Counsel Mike Twomey to swear in the witnesses, and we
6 can get started.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Good morning.
8 Could you raise your right hands, please?

9 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
10 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this
11 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member
12 questions? Lynelle Maginley-Liddie.

13 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: I do.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Nancy Savasta.

15 ACTING GENERAL COUNSEL SAVASTA: I do.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Francis Torres.

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: I do.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Cherianne
19 Rembert.

20 CHIEF-OF-STAFF REMBERT: I do.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Matthew
22 Pascarelli.

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: I do.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Alexandria
25 Maldonado.

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: I do.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Thank you. You
4 may begin.

5 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: Good
6 morning, Chair Nurse and Members of the Committee on
7 Criminal Justice. I am Lynelle Maginley-Liddie,
8 Commissioner of the New York City Department of
9 Correction. My colleagues and I are here to discuss
10 the Department's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year
11 2025 and what lies ahead for the agency in the coming
12 Fiscal Year.

13 I have spoken often in the past five
14 months about the importance of leading with empathy
15 and respect so that both staff and people in custody
16 feel seen and supported. My commitment to these
17 principles has not wavered, and our dedicated
18 workforce remains actively engaged in the difficult
19 work of change. All uniformed and non-uniformed
20 leadership continue to tour the jails on a regular
21 basis, myself included. Focus groups with both staff
22 and people in custody have provided us the
23 opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue and
24 feedback to address concerns and inefficiencies. We
25 have begun the important process of auditing our

2 compliance with minimum standards to ensure people in
3 our care have what they're entitled to and what they
4 deserve. I am confident that the insight and
5 recommendations born of this audit process will
6 inform a measurable change and contribute to safer
7 and more humane jails.

8 Though admissions continue to increase,
9 important violence indicators continue to trend in
10 the right direction. Our court production rate
11 remains at 98 percent, and we continue to work with
12 stakeholders throughout the criminal justice system
13 to address case processing to ensure people can move
14 through the justice process expediently and do not
15 linger in our jails.

16 We remain focused on recruiting and
17 promoting staff to do this important work. Two new
18 classes of captains began training since we appeared
19 at our Fiscal Year 2025 Preliminary Budget hearing,
20 and 50 captains are expected to graduate on the same
21 day as the 78 recruits in our current new recruit
22 correction officer class. We are proud to welcome our
23 new members of service to the boldest family and to
24 support their growth in the department, and we're
25

2 committed to mentoring and guiding those ascending in
3 ranks.

4 Last week was National Correctional
5 Officers and Employees Week, during which we honored
6 uniformed and non-uniformed staff and celebrated our
7 collective work and achievements. Together, with
8 humility and compassion, the men and women of DOC are
9 showing up every day to serve the people in our care
10 and to build safer and more humane jails. They
11 deserve to be recognized and celebrated.

12 Finally, before turning to the budget, I
13 would like to highlight an exciting project that we
14 recently completed at the Rose M. Singer Center. Just
15 last week, we opened a family-friendly, interactive
16 visitation space in RMSC designed in collaboration
17 with the Children's Museum of Manhattan. CMOM has
18 been a longtime partner in providing innovative,
19 family-friendly visitation opportunities for
20 individuals in custody and their loved ones. We are
21 very grateful for their ongoing support in this work.
22 The interactive installations in the visit area were
23 designed by CMOM and based on exhibits currently at
24 the museum. They are research-based and support
25 preschool learning while providing fun and engaging

2 bonding activities for mothers and their children.

3 Incarceration can leave lasting scars on families,

4 and my team and I are committed to lessening the

5 impacts of incarceration wherever we can.

6 Visitation areas like the one provided by

7 CMOM support parents and children in maintaining a

8 pivotal bond and provide elements of normalcy during

9 a very challenging time. This partnership is a

10 shining example of what we can achieve when we work

11 together for the benefit of those in our care.

12 Now, I will turn to the Fiscal Year 2025

13 Executive Budget. The Department's Fiscal Year 2025

14 budget is 1.05 billion, which is a 116.5-million-

15 dollar decrease from the Fiscal Year 2024 Adopted

16 Budget. The vast majority of our budget, 84 percent,

17 is allocated for personal services and 16 percent for

18 other-than-personal services. This budget decrease

19 was achieved through various PS PEGs the Department

20 realized in November and Preliminary Budgets.

21 Several items of note from this Executive

22 Budget. An addition of 358,000 in Fiscal Year 2025 to

23 purchase specialized transport vehicles for the

24 Bellevue Therapeutic Outpost Unit, an increase of 5

25 million in Fiscal Year 2024 for the Department's

2 Nutritional Services Division food budget, and an
3 additional 40 million in Fiscal Year 2024 to cover
4 anticipated PS expenses. The Fiscal Year 2025
5 Executive Capital Budget and Commitment Plan totals
6 13.7 billion, which covers Fiscal Years 2024 through
7 2033. This reflects a 2.8 billion increase from the
8 Preliminary Plan. As of the Fiscal Year 2025
9 Executive Budget, the majority of capital funding is
10 tied to the borough-based jails program, which totals
11 12.7 billion over the 10-year plan and is allocated
12 as follows: Brooklyn facility, 2.8 billion; Manhattan
13 facility, 2.2 billion; Bronx facility, 3.3 billion;
14 Queens facility, 4.4 billion.

15 We continue to work diligently to attract
16 and retain non-uniformed and uniformed staff. The
17 Department's authorized headcount remains effectively
18 unchanged from the Adopted Budget, totaling 8,787,
19 7,060 uniformed positions and 1,727 civilian
20 positions. Our actual staffing levels continue to
21 remain well below our authorized headcount, and the
22 Department intends to remain aggressive with
23 advertising and marketing strategies to promote
24 recruitment.

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

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

12 Commissioner.

13 We've been joined on Zoom by Council
14 Members Hanif and Ayala and here in the chambers by
15 Louis and Marte.

16 I want to start with the Mayor announced
17 back in March that 14 million dollars would be
18 included for programming in the DOC's budget to
19 replace program cuts that were included in last
20 year's Executive Budget. Could you confirm if these
21 funds are included in the Department's budget and, if
22 not, then when can we expect to see them reflected in
23 the budget?

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: Good
25 morning, Chair Brannan. I'm Matthew Pascarelli,
Assistant Commissioner for Budget and Finance for the

2 Department. The 14 million that you're referring to
3 are not currently reflected in the FY25 budget. Based
4 on the procurement timeline and when we'll actually
5 need the funding, we are working with our partners at
6 OMB to ensure that funding is there when necessary.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Is there a
8 timeline for the RFPs?

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: They
10 are being worked on currently, and we are planning to
11 get them out in the summer.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Will any of
13 those contracts be awarded on an emergency basis to
14 increase program offerings right away?

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: No.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I
17 understand that non-profit partners have been working
18 on Rikers on a volunteer basis. Will these additional
19 funds, the 14 million, be used to fund those non-
20 profits?

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: No.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, then what
23 are we using that money for?

24

25

3 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: I
4 would like to pass that to First Deputy Commissioner
5 Torres.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Hi, good morning.

7 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Good
8 morning. Francis Torres, First Deputy Commissioner
9 for the New York City Department of Correction. Thank
10 you so much, Chair Brannon, for your question. If I
11 may give you a little bit more detail. Currently, we
12 are in conversations through our Division of Budget
13 and Finance involving MOCS as well as OMB. In
14 essence, we have identified very specific program
15 needs that are going to be utilized by having that
16 allocation of 14.1 million dollars. It is true that
17 you say there are providers currently in existence at
18 Rikers Island. Those providers that are continuing
19 their services are contracted by MOCJ. In having a
20 presence at Rikers Island, two of those providers
21 have indeed expanded their footprint. It is clearly
22 our intention to follow up the guidance of MOCS in
23 order for us to embark in what is known as a
24 challenge-based procurement that would afford our
25 agency the opportunity for the first time in our
history to actually pose a challenge or a problem

2 that we may be experiencing, allowing those
3 community-based organizations to give us solutions
4 through a solicitation. The beauty about that process
5 is twofold. It reduces the amount spent to actually
6 be able to roll out the service. It allows any of
7 these community-based organizations the opportunity
8 to first have a demonstration period through a pilot,
9 which then, based on the outcomes throughout that
10 process, allow us to go into full contracts with
11 them. Any provider out there, whether they are the
12 largest of providers as well as smaller providers,
13 will have the opportunity to actually meet the
14 challenge by submitting innovative ways to address
15 the problems that we are presenting. Thank you.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, so how
17 similar are the services provided with this new
18 funding to those that were cut last year?

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: The
20 services that were cut last year are being done
21 currently by DOC members. We internally know that as
22 insourcing. The services that are going to be
23 targeted under this new challenge-based procurement
24 are transitional discharge planning, transportation,
25 substance misuse, trauma-informed, and supplemental

2 educational services. Some of these programs, and I'm
3 glad you asked that question, Chair, have not been in
4 existence in a number of years. For example, the
5 substance misuse, the last time our Department had
6 such service being afforded by our Department was
7 back in the '90s. The last time that we did an
8 expansion of supplemental educational services was
9 done in 2015, and so we are targeting different
10 programming needs based on recent findings, as we
11 have done focus groups with both staff and persons in
12 custody.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I'm assuming the
14 cut was made last year to find efficiencies or to get
15 more bang for your buck, so are you getting more
16 programming hours now that you've cut from the non-
17 profits and you're doing it in-house?

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: We're
19 doing it in-house, known as insourcing. Thank you
20 again for the question. We've had challenges, so I'm
21 not going to tell you right now that it's ideal, that
22 our programming has not been impacted. It has been
23 impacted. There are different reasons for the impact,
24 especially because the counseling staff assigned to
25 the Division of Programs and Community Partnerships

2 has had, number one, attrition. We've had also
3 counseling staff members that have assumed different
4 roles as a result of promotions, and also because we
5 are continuously working with external stakeholders
6 in bringing in new people.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Do you regret
8 making that decision last budget?

9 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Chair,
10 we responded to the request to reduce our budget by a
11 4 percent. It is true that we have been impacted, but
12 we have not been idled in ensuring that there are
13 other additional services, not necessarily through
14 contracted providers, but significantly by extending
15 and expanding our partnerships with other agencies to
16 include the Department of Youth as well as
17 volunteers.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Can you explain
19 the relation, I guess then, between the 14 million
20 for new programs in FY25 and the savings of 17
21 million from last Fiscal Year?

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Can you
23 repeat that question?

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sure. Can you
25 explain the relation between the 14 million for new

2 programs in FY25 and the savings of 17 million from
3 last year?

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Thank
5 you again for the question. What I could answer to
6 you is that last year our Department responded to a
7 request to reduce our PEG by 4 percent, which indeed
8 impacted the Division of Programs. What I can also
9 share with you is that early this year, February to
10 be exact, our Department was asked if we had any
11 additional programming needs. At that time, we
12 actually turned around and gathered a team of the
13 Division of Programs, and as a Division we submitted
14 nine financial statements. Out of those financial
15 statements, we've been able to secure the funding for
16 the five new programs that we will launch.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Is this
18 something, if you had the money, that you'd look to
19 reverse to put these programs back in the hands of
20 the skilled non-profit providers that were doing the
21 work before?

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: In
23 doing this new programming, we're targeting different
24 subject matters or different programming needs as
25 raised by staff and by persons in custody. We're not

2 reversing the 17.1, and the services that were
3 provided by the contracted providers are now in the
4 hands of our counseling staff members. They have
5 received the necessary training that is required to
6 conduct some of the life skills that are afforded.
7 They are dispersed throughout the jails to make sure
8 that the services that are done, whether they're
9 group services or one-on-one, continue, and so we are
10 retaining the insourcing portion of it.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I want to
12 move on to the commissary contracts. The
13 Administration recently approved a 33-million-dollar
14 contract with the Keefe Group to provide concessions
15 and commissary for people in DOC custody. This was
16 after the City Controller raised concerns that
17 multiple bids were not considered for the awarding of
18 this contract. It was found that the Keefe Group
19 often offers products at costs that are 10 percent to
20 20 percent higher than from local stores. Were there
21 other bidders considered for this contract?

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: Thank
23 you for the question, Chair. We decided to move ahead
24 with Keefe Group based on how they helped us during
25 their emergency procurement that they went through

2 and, for the current procurement that we are actively
3 under, we went through a negotiated acquisition to
4 move ahead with Keefe Group.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, were
6 multiple bids considered, or was there an RFP, or how
7 did it work?

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: No.
9 Through a negotiated acquisition, we went directly to
10 Keefe.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So what was Keefe
12 doing for you before that you knew?

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: So at
14 the end of the de Blasio Administration, there was an
15 emergency Mayoral declaration that allowed the
16 Department to try and modernize the commissary
17 operation to alleviate staff that was currently doing
18 it, that was doing it back then, so we went ahead
19 with that, and we had that registered, and they did
20 12 months of work from April 2022 through March 2023
21 under an emergency contract so they were doing the
22 work. There was a lot of infrastructure-type work,
23 data systems, a lot of work went into getting them to
24 be able to operate and provide the services and,
25 based on that, we wanted to try and not delay that

2 and impact any services that the people in custody
3 are now used to.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: The Comptroller
5 report found that the Keefe Group often offers
6 products that are 10 percent to 20 percent higher
7 than what you'd get from a local store. How would you
8 respond to that?

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: I know
10 that there are hundreds of items that are provided by
11 Keefe. There may be some prices that other
12 stakeholders believe are higher. I think that the
13 items provided on the menu to our people in custody
14 and their loved ones are comparable to what we have
15 throughout the New York City five boroughs.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And will there be
17 caps built into the contract to limit price increases
18 and to prevent price gouging?

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: In the
20 contract, the Department has final say on any price
21 movements.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Say that again?

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: The
24 Department has final say on any price increases or
25 decreases.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: You do have final
3 say?

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: Yes.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, so will
6 caps be worked into that contract to prevent price
7 gouging?

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: Yes.

9 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: And, Chair,
10 I just want to add that when we worked with Keefe to
11 sort of look at the pricing, we also did an analysis
12 across the board at all of the other providers
13 throughout jail facilities, and by far Keefe was
14 lower than that so we negotiated prices. We also
15 looked in the community as to the pricing in
16 community, and we looked across the board at other
17 jurisdictions as to what they were getting, and Keefe
18 was comparably lower when we did our analysis.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I see 5
20 million has been included as a new need for the
21 Department to cover the increased cost of food
22 products and the increasing incarcerated population.
23 Historically, the Department has underspent on food
24 over the last few years, and there were calls to
25 right-size the food budget in the other direction.

2 Can you explain why the Department is asking for a
3 food increase?

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: Thank
5 you, Chair, for the question. Based on the price
6 increases that all of us are experiencing and the
7 increasing population of our incarcerated peoples,
8 the Department needed to make this request. Also in
9 our budget, we had several grant-funded things when
10 we had the adolescents here, where we were getting
11 grant-funded for essentially school lunches, right,
12 and that was in our budget. We have not had
13 adolescents here for many, many years. That remained
14 in the budget, so we did take down some expense
15 funding in that sense, but both of those factors are
16 really why we think we needed the extra 5 million
17 dollars here.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I want to
19 talk about overtime and staffing. Can you describe
20 how the Department's analysis of its staffing needs
21 have formed the basis for the budgeted headcount in
22 the Executive Plan?

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: Can
24 you repeat the question? Sorry.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sure. Can you
3 describe how the Department's analysis of its
4 staffing needs forms the basis for the budgeted
5 headcount in the Executive Plan?

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: Yeah.
7 I would say that every day the Department is
8 analyzing the needs of our uniformed staff and the
9 population based on footprint and square footage that
10 needs to be covered in posts so that type of analysis
11 happens every day in real time and, based on that, we
12 work with our partners and oversights throughout the
13 city to ensure that we have an adequate amount of
14 authorized staff.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: The Department
16 currently has a 13 percent vacancy rate, so could you
17 talk about what hiring strategies you're employing to
18 fill those positions, and is that correct, 13 percent
19 vacancy?

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: One
21 second, Chair. I believe that is accurate. As of the
22 5-10 payroll, yeah, approximately 13 percent.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, so what are
24 we doing to fill those vacancies?

2 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: I can speak
3 to what we've employed in terms of our Recruitment
4 Unit. Our Recruitment Unit, that's a unit that was
5 created in 2022. We have a group of uniformed staff
6 members who go out to various events and raises the
7 profile of the Department and also engages with
8 members in the community in terms of joining the
9 boldest. We also just recently started our new
10 advertisement campaign, recruitment campaign. It
11 started on May 1st, and it goes through June 6th. We
12 have advertisements throughout. We have bus shelters.
13 We have commercials running. We have radio.
14 Everything you can think of, we are trying to employ
15 so that we're able to onboard new staff members. We
16 are also working with members in the community. If
17 there are events, community events, that our
18 recruitment unit can attend, that's what we are
19 doing. What we've seen, for our last exam, we had
20 2,266 individuals register to take the exam, and we
21 had approximately 766 passers. With our Applicant
22 Investigation Unit, what they've seen post-pandemic,
23 the yield rate is somewhere between 8 percent and 12
24 percent, so they anticipate maybe we'd just have 84
25 people coming into the door so we've been really

2 trying to increase our recruitment efforts and
3 increase our visibility throughout the community in
4 engaging people to join the Department.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How many
6 uniformed and civilian staff do you plan to hire for
7 the rest of this Fiscal and next Fiscal? Do you have
8 a goal?

9 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: Well, to
10 meet our headcount. I mean, now we're at 6,000 for
11 uniformed staff, and our headcount for uniformed is
12 7,060 so that is the goal. That is what we strive for
13 every single day, and so that's what we'll continue
14 to do.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How many hours of
16 overtime does an officer put in average during one
17 pay period?

18 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: I'm not
19 sure we have that information, but we can get that to
20 you.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How much has the
22 Department spent on overtime overall on FY24?

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: Give
24 me one second, Chair.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And what's your
3 projection of where you'll land for June 30th?

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: For
5 FY24 to date, we're anticipated to spend on FY24 279
6 million dollars.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: 279?

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: Yes,
9 sir.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How much overtime
11 is allocated in the FY25 budget?

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: We
13 have 134 million dollars. You said FY25, correct?

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah.

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: Yes.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So it sounds like
17 you're going to need more than that.

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: I
19 would agree.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. You
21 mentioned attrition before. What's the current
22 monthly and annual rate of attrition in the
23 Department for all staff, uniformed and civilian?
24
25

2 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: Good morning.
3 Sherieann Rembert, Assistant Chief. Can you repeat
4 your question again, please, sir?

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, sure. The
6 current monthly and annual rate of attrition in the
7 Department for all staff, uniformed and civilian?

8 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: Well, I would be
9 able to answer the uniformed staff. Thus far, we have
10 attrited 1,900 staff members since 2022. For this
11 year alone, we have eligible to retire close to 800
12 members of service.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: If people are
14 eligible to retire, they usually retire?

15 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: They have the
16 option. and they're eligible to retire. Sometimes
17 they do, sometimes they do not, but we are trying to
18 retain and recruit.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So out of that
20 800, what do you project will be retained?

21 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: Only about 350,
22 because as of 2004, we hired plus 800 members and, as
23 of this date, Calendar Year to date, we only lost
24 122, so we are looking at about 300.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I just have
3 a few more then I'm going to turn it over to Chair
4 Nurse.

5 I want to talk about the Capital Budget a
6 little bit. Although the Department's Capital
7 Commitment Plan is almost totally dedicated to the
8 borough-based jails project, the plan also includes
9 225 million in planned commitments for a new training
10 academy, most of the funding rolled out to FY27.
11 Could you tell us the status of this project, and has
12 a site been identified?

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: Good
14 morning, sir.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Good morning.

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: My name
17 is Alex Maldonado, and I am the Assistant
18 Commissioner for Strategic Operations on behalf of
19 the Department of Correction. What I can tell you
20 about the Correction Academy is that we are working
21 with the Mayor's Office and the Deputy Mayor of
22 Public Safety to figure out what is next for training
23 for all public safety agencies throughout the city,
24 and so we hope to share more details soon.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, so the
3 money is there, but we don't know where we're putting
4 it yet.

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: I think
6 we'll be able to share more information soon, and the
7 Administration hopes to make an announcement.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. In prior
9 years, the Administration has provided expense
10 funding to DDC for critical repairs to Rikers. Can
11 you describe the current critical repair needs for
12 your facilities?

13 Just have to swear you in.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: State your
15 name, please.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENN: Patrick Benn.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Do you affirm
18 to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but
19 the truth before this Committee and to respond
20 honestly to Council Member questions?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENN: I do.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Thank you.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENN: Good morning,
24 Chair.

25 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Good morning.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENN: I'm Patrick
3 Benn, Deputy Commissioner of Facilities, Fleet, and
4 Construction. Our critical needs are basically all
5 infrastructure repairs throughout The Island. I mean,
6 everybody knows The Island has been through a lot,
7 and in order to keep it safe for everybody and up to
8 snuff, we need to make repairs to piping, heating,
9 steam lines, air conditioning, roofs, walkways,
10 everything.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And can you speak
12 to if the FY25 plan addresses those needs?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENN: It addresses
14 part of the needs.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. How much is
16 there for critical repairs?

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: Are
18 you specifically asking about the Capital Plan?

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah.

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: We
21 have several infrastructure projects that I would say
22 a year ago, we've been working with DCAS, it's kind
23 of co-certified work that's essential to Rikers
24 Island major, like operating, even once DCAS takes
25 over, so they were capitally eligible. There are

2 several projects within the plan that total 57
3 million.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And do you
5 anticipate needing more than that?

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: There
7 are ongoing conversations. Depending on which may pop
8 up and be kind of triaged by the working group, there
9 possibly could be.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Last for me
11 is going to be to zoom out a bit. The FY24 Adopted
12 Budget was 1.16 billion. Since then, the FY24 budget
13 has increased by about 83 million dollars while the
14 FY25 budget decreased by 106 million so, other than
15 increases to uniform overtime, what's driving these
16 changes in the budget?

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: Thanks
18 for the question. What you noted is correct, a lot of
19 the PEGS and PS type things are driving the majority
20 of it. Another big chunk, at least on the OTPS side,
21 where the Department had funding in FY23 and FY24
22 explicitly to put new cell doors in at certain
23 facilities throughout the Department, that money was
24 in the '23 and '24 budget and is not in the '25
25 budget so that's, I think it was about 10.8 million

2 dollars in '23 and almost 10 million in '24 so that's
3 no longer in our budget. That's one of the larger
4 OTPS items that are driving the decrease.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Would you assume
6 that the FY25 budget would need to be increased as
7 well because of those projections?

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: No,
9 and those projects that I was talking about earlier,
10 they have been completed so there'll be no more
11 expense fund need for those particular things but, as
12 operations continue, we're going to try and
13 anticipate things that may pop up and work with our
14 oversights and stakeholders and partners to address.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, I'm going
16 to turn it over to Chair Nurse. Thank you.

17 We've also been joined by Council Members
18 Restler, Abreu, and Sanchez on Zoom.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you, Chair. I
20 just wanted to back up to programming. I just had a
21 couple follow-up questions. When the cut was
22 originally made, my understanding was that a hiring
23 plan was presented to many of the providers who were
24 assured that the Department had the capacity to
25 deliver programming to those in custody and, in

2 March, you testified that you were currently
3 onboarding staff, that programming was offered in all
4 facilities at the minimum standard, and that you were
5 drafting language for new RFPs. Can you confirm today
6 that there is the minimum standard of programming in
7 all facilities?

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Thank
9 you so much, Chair Nurse. Programming is impacted by
10 different challenges. Programming could be impacted
11 by escorting. Programming could be impacted by any
12 type of security search that will be done.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: No, I understand
14 the variations that happen during the day, but just
15 in all facilities, is there programming happening?

16 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Minimum
17 standards are being afforded. What has been impacted
18 is the insourcing, as I described to Chair Brannan.
19 Our counseling staff had had issues and had changes
20 in the staffing, and yet we are onboarding staff.
21 Just yesterday, we were able to get confirmation that
22 there are 15 program staff members that have been
23 approved for onboarding, which makes our Division of
24 Programs extremely happy, because those are members
25 that will be part of the insourcing.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, thank you for
3 that. Can you confirm how many program positions
4 there are that work in the jails directly with people
5 in custody?

6 I have 223, but I just want to make sure
7 that's right.

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: So give
9 me a second, please.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yep.

11 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: When we
12 take a look at the overall staffing that is assigned
13 to the Division of Programs, it is a total of 345
14 staff members. Of those, we have 198 active members.
15 It is important for me to share with you the
16 following, that when we talk about Divisional
17 Programming staff, we divide between uniform and non-
18 uniform. We also go into subdivisions, meaning staff
19 members that are assigned to counseling, fine and
20 performing arts, enhanced recreation, reintegration,
21 and other subdivisions.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So 345 is how many
23 that you would be at the maximum that you could have
24 on at one time, or are you saying 345 is what you
25 have, and 198 is what are actively filled positions?

2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: So I
3 can give you the breakdown.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yes, please.

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: All
6 right, so it's 198 active members. Then we'll take a
7 look at the 45 pending new hires, meaning that are in
8 the pipeline, then we look at the true vacancies. We
9 account for the 68 uniform lines to include 12
10 captains, 28 other officers, and then 107 facility
11 programs, and I could go into details as to what each
12 of these represent and what it is they do.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So given the
14 challenges that you're facing in terms of your
15 onboarding, your recruiting, issues with your
16 escorting, things like that you mentioned, you're
17 saying that you are able to meet the minimum standard
18 of five hours per day of programming in all
19 facilities?

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: No, I'm
21 not saying that.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So how much would
23 it cost for you to be able to do that?

24 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Chair,
25 I would not be able to give you a response on that.

2 It would be disrespectful of me to actually tell you
3 that by tomorrow we're going to be able to...

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: That's fine, I just
5 was hoping for a general number.

6 Okay, just a little bit more on staffing
7 since Finance Chair spoke about it. In March, we had
8 asked about how many people were at AMKC and VCBC,
9 which are now decommissioned. You did provide
10 followup on May 2nd. Thank you for providing that.

11 Can you confirm how many uniformed staff are
12 currently working at VCBC and AMKC?

13 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: Good morning.
14 Thank you for the question. Staff that's working at
15 VCBC is two captains and 10 officers.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: At VCBC? Okay.

17 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: Yes.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, and at AMKC?

19 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: At AMKC, staff
20 that's working is four captains and 34 officers.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. AMKC is a
22 kitchen production.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yes, so in the
24 followup, you had given 50 at AMKC and 15 at VCBC, so
25 we're pretty much in that area.

2 I just want to also recheck in on chronic
3 absenteeism. In March, you testified, you had, I
4 believe you testified from my notes, 362 staff were
5 currently out, 200 total for indefinite sick time.
6 Can you provide an update on those numbers?

7 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: Yes, one moment,
8 please. Would you like me to break down the total
9 sick and go into that as well?

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: If you would, yeah,
11 sure.

12 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: Yes, ma'am.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: That'd be great. We
14 have some of that, but it would be great to confirm.

15 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: As of Wednesday,
16 May 15th, we have the total sick of 378 uniformed
17 staff members. Indefinite sick is 227.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And since we've
19 spoken, let me see, how many staff on payroll are
20 currently prohibited from working directly with
21 people in custody for disciplinary reasons?

22 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: One moment,
23 please. As of 5-15-2004, 13, I'm sorry, you're asking
24 prohibited to work?

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, they cannot
3 work because of disciplinary reasons. They can't work
4 with people in custody directly.

5 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: I don't have
6 that information.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Well, we can
8 request it for the followup.

9 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: Yes, ma'am.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, moving
11 forward.

12 The Federal Monitor reported that up to
13 1,600 or about a quarter of DOC's uniformed workforce
14 may be assigned awarded posts outside of housing
15 units. Can you please clarify how many staff are
16 working in these posts and how are they awarded?

17 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: Yes, currently
18 right now, it is plus 800 members working awarded
19 posts and that is on a budgeted post.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I'm not sure how
21 exhaustive the list is of awarded posts, but do you
22 have a list of what they are?

23 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: Yes, ma'am. One
24 second, please. There's 844 awarded posts currently
25 right now. In housing area is 24 percent; facility

2 support area, which is a control room, sanitation and
3 programs is 8 percent; the intake and general office,
4 17 percent; the clinic and medical service is 10
5 percent; food service is 2 percent; and the ancillary
6 areas which consists of our courts, special operation
7 division, transportation and hospital, prison ward is
8 39 percent.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, thank you. Is
10 doing laundry among the list of awarded posts?

11 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: That would be
12 part of sanitation.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Is there a
14 reason why this role would be performed by a
15 uniformed officer rather than civilian staff?

16 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: Repeat the
17 question again.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: For the laundry
19 awarded post, is there a reason that a uniformed
20 officer would be doing this task versus civilian
21 staff? An Associate Commissioner had testified in
22 January at a BOC meeting about this.

23 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: If I
24 may provide clarity, thank you so much. The way in
25 which we actually are running our major laundry

2 requires us to bring out persons in custody who are
3 assigned to that work task. As a way for us to ensure
4 that those services are afforded, we require officers
5 to provide that security detail, escort to and from
6 the facility in which we draw them out of.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, thank you for
8 that clarification.

9 Do you have a specific goal for reducing
10 awarded posts so that you're incentivizing officers
11 to work actually in the housing units directly with
12 people who are in custody?

13 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: Not at this
14 time. I do not have the number, but we do incentivize
15 officers to work in housing area posts, yes, we do.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Is there an
17 update from DOC on staffing analysis for staff
18 required in the new borough-based jails? I know that
19 you had testified last time you thought you were
20 confident you were at a place you could start that
21 analysis.

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: Good
23 morning, ma'am. Thank you for the question. Yes, we
24 have started the process, but we're not comfortable
25 sharing just yet. We're trying to make the final

2 design touches, if you will, to the design documents
3 working with the Department of Design and
4 Construction as well as the hired design build team.
5 This is something that impacts, obviously, the
6 individuals in custody and the surrounding community
7 so we want to make sure we get it right, and we're
8 really looking to maximize staffing efficiencies in
9 the analysis, so it's ongoing currently. I'm
10 confident that we will be able to provide information
11 soon.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, and related,
13 has DOC begun planning for how to transition excess
14 corrections officers or staff once the jails are
15 completed, so starting to think about smaller
16 facilities, there's going to be less staff required.
17 What is the plan for some of these folks who are
18 working under DOC? How are you going to transition
19 them into other options?

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: In our
21 staffing analysis, again, we're focusing on
22 maximizing those efficiencies, minimizing posts but
23 maximizing security and safety as well as moving
24 towards a direct supervision model that encourages
25 staff to be on the floor, in the housing area floors

2 with our individuals, and create relationships, for
3 lack of a better word. I say all that to say that as
4 we move towards the future, we are building four
5 borough-based jails as well as three outposted units.
6 With the rates of attrition as they are, we are doing
7 our best to retain and recruit, but we are also
8 trying to prepare for the future to make sure that
9 these facilities are properly staffed. I hope that
10 answers your question.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, I think it's
12 important to start thinking about that now given
13 there might be time needed to identify education
14 opportunities for folks to learn new skill sets and
15 get that actual training, and then we know how long
16 it takes for anything to happen in the City so I
17 imagine this is something that will be a couple years
18 process so I was just wondering if there was anything
19 you could share about that.

20 I had one last programming question I
21 forgot to ask, and it was a clarifying question. You
22 had mentioned with regards to substance abuse
23 programs, I wanted you to clarify what you meant with
24 regards to not having had substance abuse programs
25

2 since 2015, is that that you haven't had one or that
3 you haven't expanded them?

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: I am so
5 grateful that you have asked that question. I would
6 like to establish that our partners at CHS do provide
7 treatment and clinical substance use programming and
8 services. When we talk about programming, is
9 programming afforded through any other community-
10 based organization? The last time we ran as a
11 Department, through our own funding sources, a robust
12 programming on substance misuse was in the '90s.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, thank you for
14 that clarification.

15 I'm going to turn to the borough-based
16 jails. Yesterday, the Department of Design and
17 Construction held a public hearing to announce a
18 proposed contract for the Queens Borough-Based Jail
19 facility. Commissioner, can you please provide an
20 update on what this contract agreement means in
21 regards to completion timeline for this facility?

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: Good
23 morning, ma'am. Again, Alex Maldonado, and I oversee
24 the Borough-Based Jail program on behalf of the
25 Department. The Department of Design and Construction

2 solely manages the contracts with the design-build
3 teams for the Queens and the Bronx facilities as well
4 as the others, and they are also responsible for
5 managing the schedule so, at this time, we know what
6 you know, which is that the contract came in for
7 Queens in particular, I believe at 3.9, and that it
8 is anticipated completion between 2030 and 2031 for
9 substantial completion.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, so what is
11 the status of DOC's plan to close Rikers by 2027 per
12 the law passed by the Council?

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: We are
14 working with the Administration as well as the
15 Lippman Commission to determine next best steps.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, has there
17 been discussions around contingency planning?

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO:
19 Absolutely, ma'am.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: There's nothing you
21 can share with us today?

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO:
23 Unfortunately, no.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Have you begun the
25 process of that?

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO:

3 Constant communication with our agency partners and
4 the Administration as well as members of the Lippman
5 Commission on how best to move forward but we, as an
6 Administration and this Department, remains committed
7 to the borough-based jail program.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Commissioner,
9 given your lengthy tenure at DOC, do you personally
10 believe that this Administration has made every
11 effort to use all the tools, programs,
12 recommendations put forth by organizations identified
13 in the points of agreement in the Lippman Commission
14 to safely draw down the current jail population?

15 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: I believe
16 the Administration is doing everything possible that
17 they can. At the Department of Correction, we utilize
18 the 6-A powers. That's something that I've been
19 working closely with the First Deputy Commissioner on
20 in safely transitioning people who I have
21 jurisdiction over and making that decision.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. You mentioned
23 6-A so I wanted to touch upon it. Cuts to the early
24 release 6-A program remain in the budget, and it
25 appears from the data that we have, at least as we're

2 interpreting it, that DOC is not fully utilizing this
3 program, which allows, for the record, individuals to
4 be released early from a jail sentence and be under
5 the supervision of the City's supervised release
6 program so we asked in March how many women and
7 gender non-conforming people have been reviewed for
8 6-A. In your followup that we got on May 2nd, you
9 noted that between May 2022 and April 10, 2024, DOC
10 released 80 individuals to 6-A, eight of whom were
11 housed at Rosie's at the time they were assessed so
12 how many individuals in custody are currently
13 eligible for this program?

14 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: I'll give
15 you that number one second. It's approximately 400,
16 but I'll give you the actual number.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, I think from
18 our analysis, we have approximately 500 people so can
19 you tell us a little bit more about why this program
20 is not being fully utilized and why there would be
21 cuts to this program if this is a main strategy for
22 safely reducing the jail population?

23 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: We have
24 been utilizing the 6-A program. As I mentioned
25 earlier, the First Deputy Commissioner and her team,

2 they evaluate individuals on a daily basis who are
3 eligible based on our criteria to be released. Upon
4 review, I make the determination. One of the things
5 that it's important to note that we have to ensure
6 that people have ties to the community and the
7 partners that we work with, the community provider
8 partners that we work with, so that they will be
9 successful so they don't end up coming back into
10 custody. That's a critical piece, and sometimes
11 that's not something people actually want to adhere
12 to prior to being released, but that's one of our
13 main criteria. FDC, do you want to just touch on
14 anything else?

15 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Thank
16 you. Yes, we do assess the sentenced population. We
17 take a look at their criminal history. We take a look
18 also at the current charges, whether they have had
19 misconduct while assigned to our care and custody,
20 and then we take into account what their direct needs
21 upon discharge. In doing so, we ensure that any
22 person who is being released to the 6-A program has a
23 direct contact with one of the providers linked to
24 the community.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: No, I'm fully aware
3 of the program. I think it's great. We want to
4 champion this program, so can you give us some
5 numbers? How many people have you been able to
6 release into this program, even this year or last
7 year? Some data we could have?

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Sure.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yes, please.

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Here we
11 go, ma'am.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you.

13 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: For the
14 total for 2022, we were able to release 62 into the
15 community. The total for 2023, 10. Currently, as of
16 probably a week ago, we've been able to release 15
17 into the 6-A program.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you for those
19 numbers.

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Sure.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I'm going to pause
22 for one second.

23 One, we've been joined by Council Member
24 Powers, Hanks, I think Abreu, Brewer, Restler, and
25 now the class of Notre Dame High School from Staten

2 Island. Thanks for being here. We really appreciate
3 you being here. We're talking about closing Rikers.
4 We're talking about the jail population on Rikers
5 Island, so tune in. Heavy stuff.

6 Thank you for those answers. I just have
7 a few more questions on the average daily population,
8 and then I'm going to open it up for Members who
9 probably have busy Fridays.

10 Commissioner, in response to a FOIL
11 request, the public policy journal, Vital City,
12 published the internal memo that formed the basis of
13 former Commissioner Molina's assertions about
14 population growth. I think they dubbed it napkin
15 math. They also reported that the memo had undergone
16 multiple revisions to improve DOC's approach. Can you
17 please describe the nature of the revisions to your
18 jail population forecast and whether you now have a
19 different conclusion regarding the expected jail
20 population?

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: Good
22 morning, ma'am. Our Operations Research Team is
23 actively working on that model. You know, the
24 population projection forecast was used during the
25 previous Administration and continues to be used to

2 determine, again, our next best steps with the
3 borough-based jail program. That being said, it's
4 just a tool in a toolbox, and so I know it was sort
5 of flippant to call it napkin math, but it is a very
6 serious matter and, again, our Operations Research
7 Team handles that and they continuously work to
8 improve that model to make sure that we're striving,
9 again, and moving forward in the right direction.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Examining the
11 memo that was released to the public, DOC's model
12 produced predictions for the average jail population
13 two years into the future, starting in September
14 2022. The model estimated between 4,400 and about
15 10,000 people in DOC custody in September 2024. That
16 range of potential outcomes consists of nearly 6,000
17 people, which is just about the current size of the
18 jail population so why would the Department use these
19 numbers that your model concedes is extremely hard to
20 predict with any certainty to cast doubt on the
21 ability of the City to fulfill its legal mandate to
22 close Rikers?

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: Thank
24 you, ma'am. This Department and this Administration
25 has an obligation to create a responsible plan for

2 the future, and that population forecast, while it's
3 not what everyone wants to hear, is a possibility and
4 we have to be prepared for the worst because what
5 happens otherwise is that the borough-based jail
6 program fails and we have overcrowded facilities or
7 we'd be forced to keep Rikers Island open.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Right, so do you
9 think, in your opinion, that the number of people
10 jailed at Rikers is outside of the control of the
11 City?

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: I think
13 the Administration is working, again, with all State
14 and City agency partners to do what it can to reduce
15 the incarcerated population.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Why does the
17 financial plan keep DOC's budget relatively flat if
18 there is a projected population increase?

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: Thank
20 you for the question, Chair Nurse. The Department, as
21 we are currently funded and as the plan describes,
22 has the resources within it for us to move forward
23 and accomplish our mission. We continue to have
24 conversations with our oversights as things arise and
25 we hope to have our budget aligned if necessary.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I have three other
3 questions. We asked about, in March, the length of
4 stay for sentenced people in custody awaiting
5 transfer to upstate facilities. For the record, you
6 followed up and you noted that the average length of
7 stay has gone down from 44 days in 2022 to 38 in
8 2023. Can you describe any additional hurdles for
9 reducing that length of stay even further?

10 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: What we do
11 in terms of the length of stay for people who are
12 sentenced, we work closely with our partners in the
13 State so that when individuals are sentenced, we have
14 communication with them indicating when it's time for
15 them to go upstate. That's something that's ongoing
16 with our partners in the State.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So you don't see
18 any hurdles in the way for reducing that time? If
19 they're sentenced, they're waiting to go upstate,
20 there's no additional hurdles in the way for reducing
21 the amount of time that they're stuck on Rikers.

22 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: So you're
23 asking the question in terms of how can we lessen
24 that time?

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: How can you reduce
3 the length of stay?

4 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: Well, we're
5 working with our partners in the State because if
6 someone's sentenced, we ultimately need them to go
7 upstate and so, as soon as we know that that person
8 is going to be sentenced, we're communicating with
9 the State in real time to let them know individuals
10 are State-ready and that they can be picked up to go
11 upstate.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. I understand
13 you're working with State partners, but what are you
14 asking them to do besides communicating they're ready
15 and there's...

16 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: Well, we're
17 asking them to pick them up as soon as possible.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: That's fine. I was
19 hoping you would illustrate a little bit more what
20 the issues are, maybe even what the State is failing
21 to do.

22 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: Well, I
23 think for the State, and we're in communication with
24 them, sometimes they're having delays on their end,
25 and so we're working closely with them. That's

2 something that our Custody Management Unit does on a
3 frequent basis. Happy to talk with the Deputy Warden
4 to see how we can sort of facilitate that process,
5 but that's an ongoing conversation that they have
6 with the State.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. May last
8 question is, you also provided followup on the length
9 of stay for individuals who are found not competent
10 to stand trial before going to a state mental
11 hospital for treatment. You reported that in the
12 Calendar Year 2023, the average wait time is between
13 61 and 66 days so, for that period of time, they're
14 on Rikers, they're not competent to stand trial
15 before they are being transferred to some form of
16 state mental health hospital. What are the challenges
17 to reducing that wait time?

18 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: Well,
19 that's something that we would have to work with our
20 partners at CHS, right, because they're communicating
21 with the State facility in terms of getting those
22 people to those beds.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, great. I'm
24 going to turn it over to Chair Brannan.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Chair
3 Nurse.

4 We've got questions first from Council
5 Member Cabán followed by Louis.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you and bear
7 with me because I'm going to be jumping around a
8 little bit.

9 I'd like to ask some followup questions
10 on the questions asked by Chair Nurse earlier, but I
11 did want to make a comment on the exchange around
12 commissary. That was a bit disturbing to me, and I
13 think knowing that the markups are up to 20 percent
14 and then you add that to the fact that we are paying
15 incarcerated folks slave wages, pennies on the
16 dollar, the number of hours of work it takes to buy a
17 basic need in commissary, it is really the definition
18 of exploitation at the expense of dignity, and it
19 does not sound like y'all did due diligence in making
20 sure that those prices were as low as they could be
21 and should be.

22 I wanted to follow up on a question
23 around just the sick day questions. From what I
24 understood, the questions that were asked and
25 answered were on daily sick numbers, and I want to

2 move into a different category, because the Nunez
3 Federal Monitor reported that there were serious gaps
4 and delays in processing staff as chronically absent.
5 Separate thing from your daily sick day numbers. I
6 want to know, so far in 2024, how many staff have
7 been identified as chronically absent?

8 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: One second. When
9 you ask the question chronically absent, I can't
10 necessarily answer that question like that?
11 Indefinite sick is 30 or more sick days, so 227
12 members of service are indefinite sick, which would
13 count up to 30 or more sick days. The definition of
14 the people that are medical (INAUDIBLE) is that 40 or
15 more workdays, they utilize a sick day on 15 or more
16 occasions.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Okay, but then how
18 many staff were identified as chronically absent
19 because they're, I mean, the Federal Monitor
20 continues to report on this, right? There were staff
21 that was identified as chronically absent under that
22 category, but they were never processed as such
23 because of the six-month applicability of the
24 designation expired before the processing occurred So
25 can you explain why that's happening?

2 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: One moment, let
3 me see if I can get the information.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Okay, and then
5 just, Chair, if I could have a little bit of extra
6 time while they're looking up information.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, go ahead.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you.

9 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: So the term
10 chronic absent is for anyone who's out sick 12 days
11 in a 12 month rolling period. I just want to be clear
12 on that.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Yes.

14 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: Okay.

15 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: Ma'am, I cannot
16 answer that question as far as chronic. We do not
17 break it down as such. We have for total sick, we
18 have daily sick, we have continued sick, and then we
19 have indefinite sick, and indefinite is 30 or more
20 sick days so, as the Commissioner stated, when we
21 talk about...

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Again, I want to be
23 mindful of my time, I am a little bit frustrated that
24 you don't have those answers because they are
25 specifically information that is being asked to be

2 provided to the monitor and so, if you're complying
3 with the monitor, those numbers exist, and therefore
4 you should be able to give them to us today.

5 I just want to move on to just a couple
6 of quick questions on staff management. I'll ask them
7 all at once so that you can answer. The first are
8 going to start with court staffing in the courthouses
9 and then the second will just have to do with the
10 staffing questions that the Chair had asked. The
11 Executive Budget documents show that the following
12 number of officers are assigned to court pens. 333 in
13 Manhattan, 226 in the Bronx, 187 in Queens, and 150
14 in Brooklyn, and so I'd like to know what's the
15 explanation for these numbers and how many people are
16 in custody are typical in the court pens at any given
17 time? I spent a decade working in those courtrooms.
18 The staffing ratio is quite high so a lot of people
19 sitting around, and then the other is, the Chair
20 asked a really, really important question about
21 what's the transition plan, because in theory, with a
22 lower population, there would be a need for less Cos,
23 and there's evidence to support that there should be
24 anyway, right, because the Executive Budget documents
25 are showing that a plan uniform headcount of over

2 7,000 through FY28 with no plans for those vacancy
3 reductions, but research from the Vera Institute
4 shows that the DOC's ratio of staff to people in
5 custody is four times the national average and also
6 that the research shows that the greater number of
7 corrections officers relative to incarcerated people
8 correlate with higher rates of violence, and so
9 there's two things to consider here that data
10 research, empirical evidence, shows that that number
11 needs to be down anyway and, if we're going to get
12 incarceration down, what is the plan for
13 transitioning, and I will close by saying that, and
14 this is connected to it, the census on Rikers is a
15 function of policy and politics period. It does not
16 correlate with crime rates and so, if we can't close
17 Rikers by the deadline, to make it very, very clear,
18 that is a conscious deliberate decision by this Mayor
19 not to close Rikers, to continue investing in
20 incarceration and not investing in the continuum of
21 care that would reduce our incarcerated population,
22 and I will leave it at that, but I'm looking forward
23 to the answers to the questions.

24 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: Can you repeat
25 your question as far as the staffing?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Sure, so the
3 staffing in the courts, right? You have 333 in
4 Manhattan, 226 in the Bronx, 187 in Queens, 150 in
5 Brooklyn. Can you give an explanation for those
6 staffing numbers in those courthouses and, then
7 alongside of that, for the proper context, how many
8 people are in custody on a typical day in those pens
9 so that we get an idea of how you're making these
10 staffing decisions?

11 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: Yes, let's start
12 with Queens. We have 101 staff members, correctional
13 officers in Queens, seven captains and one executive
14 officer. For Manhattan, we have correctional officers
15 199, captains are 13, one executive officer. For
16 Bronx Courts, there's 129 officers, captains is 14,
17 and one assistant deputy warden. For Brooklyn
18 Detention Complex, we have 116 officers, 10 captains,
19 and one ADW. I'm uncertain as to the 399.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Those were just
21 what's listed in the Mayor's Executive Budget
22 documents, but I want to know, can you explain how
23 you decide to have that number of folks in the courts
24 on any given day?

2 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: The courts, on
3 any given day, we don't use the number of staff
4 versus the number of persons in custody that's
5 coming. That's not what we do. We're doing a staff
6 analysis, and we have determined that 199 officers
7 are needed to fulfill...

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: How do you
9 determine it? Because you're saying it's not based on
10 ratio, so how did you determine it?

11 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: I don't have
12 that answer for you, and I'll tell you why, because
13 at different times, because our sick, when we
14 calculate our sick, we calculate post-analysis. We
15 also calculate the need of, people have their days
16 off, vacation coming up. We have to forecast, but
17 199, even for Manhattan House, is not even enough, as
18 well as with Bronx Courts. That's not enough, because
19 we do supreme and criminal, so there's two different
20 areas.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Supreme and
22 criminal is the same building. The pens are just on
23 different floors but, again, how many people are in
24 custody on those days, on average, in each borough?
25

2 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: I don't have
3 that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Okay, and then the
5 other one was about that, the uniform staffer, when
6 Rikers is presumably closed, and the statistics
7 around increased violence with the higher ratios. Can
8 you guys address that?

9 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: I cannot answer
10 that. I don't have that response at this time.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Okay.

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: Good
13 morning, ma'am. I can help a little bit. My name is
14 Alex Maldonado, and I oversee, again, the Borough-
15 Based Jail Program for the Department of Correction,
16 and what we've established is a transition team, an
17 internal transition team that is working on the
18 staffing analysis, that is working on all of the
19 logistical considerations for the program and the
20 eventual move off of Rikers Island, and so everything
21 that we've heard today will, of course, be considered
22 as we move ahead.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you. Thank
24 you, Chairs. The DOC should not be a jobs program,
25 but okay.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have
3 questions from Council Member Louis followed by
4 Restler.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you, Chairs,
6 and good morning, Commissioner, to you and your and
7 team.

8 I have questions on capital, mental
9 health, and one additional one, so I'll start on
10 capital. Regarding the Borough-Based Jail's projects,
11 as the Administration proposes an expenditure of over
12 12 billion dollars through FY30, is there a reason
13 why the construction of these sites were not
14 considered for a design-build process to save time
15 and costs? Many employees, both uniformed and
16 civilian, have reported to the City Council about the
17 deplorable conditions of restrooms, locker rooms, and
18 the DOC facilities. How much funding is included in
19 the capital budget for maintenance and upkeep of
20 facilities, and do you feel it's enough to address
21 the needs? This is about staffing. Considering the
22 inordinate amount of overtime budgeted in the FY25
23 Executive Budget, what steps is the agency taking to
24 analyze and reduce the factors that are driving women
25 out of the job at DOC? Has the Department identified

2 lack of support and harassment of women officers as a
3 reason for the heightened attrition in the agency?

4 The last is on mental health. In 2022, Erin Merdy, a
5 30-year-old single mom from Coney Island, Brooklyn,
6 was indicted in the drowning of her three children.
7 Merdy had a history of mental illness. After Merdy
8 was arraigned and placed in general population, she
9 was stabbed and assaulted so I wanted to know if you
10 all could share with us today how many people are
11 admitted to the jails each year who have a serious
12 mental illness, how many people are currently at
13 Rikers who have serious mental illness, what is the
14 average length of stay for people with serious mental
15 illness, how many PACE and mental observation beds
16 are currently open now for folks with mental illness,
17 and if you could break that down by women and men,
18 and what is the budget per year for mental health
19 care for people with serious mental illness in jails,
20 and if you could share also what's forecasted for
21 FY25.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sir, we just have
23 to swear you in.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: State your
25 name, please.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: James
3 Saunders.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Do you affirm
5 to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but
6 the truth before this Committee and to respond
7 honestly to Council Member questions?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: I do.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Thank you.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: All right,
11 Council Member, you asked a lot of questions.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: I know.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: All right,
14 so let's start with the first one.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Let me know if you
16 need me to review anything, but I am being timed.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: All right,
18 I will answer them as quickly as I can. What was your
19 first question?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Are you the
21 representative for capital, mental health, or
22 attrition?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: Mental
24 health and health affairs.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Okay, thank you. If
3 you could give, I don't know, we could talk about
4 that later, but just to break down, how many people
5 at Rikers are admitted that have serious mental
6 illness? If you could break it down by the
7 population.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: So a little
9 more than 50 percent of persons in custody have been
10 identified as accessing mental health services.
11 Around 20 percent have been diagnosed with serious
12 mental illness.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Average stay?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: Average
15 length of stay, I don't have that data. We can get
16 that to you later.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: How many PACE and
18 mental observation beds are currently open, and how
19 many people are in each types of those units? If you
20 could break that down by men and women.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: So I don't
22 have the gender breakdown, but I do have the total
23 count. At our highest level of acuity, PACE and CAPS,
24 we have currently a count of 276, and they're spread
25 across 11 housing units. We currently have 87 vacant

2 beds. Mental observation, we currently have 598
3 individuals, and that's spread across 15 different
4 housing units, and we currently have 52 vacant cells
5 or beds. With respect to substance abuse, we have a
6 (INAUDIBLE) program and (INAUDIBLE). There are 40
7 individuals in that, and that's located in one
8 housing unit with 10 vacant beds.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: And what is the
10 budget per year for mental healthcare for people with
11 serious mental illness? What's forecasted for FY25?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: With
13 respect to the clinical aspect, I would defer to our
14 colleagues at Correctional Health Service to speak to
15 that issue.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: That's all for
17 mental health. If we want to talk quickly about
18 attrition, reduction of female officers. I don't know
19 if anybody wants to answer that.

20 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: Can you ask
21 the question again, please?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: You want it asked
23 again? All right. Chair, how much time do I have?

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: You're good.
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: All right.

3 Considering the inordinate amount of overtime
4 budgeted for FY25, what steps is the agency taking to
5 analyze and reduce the factors that are driving women
6 out of the job of DOC? Has the Department identified
7 the lack of support of harassment of women officers
8 as a reason for the heightened attrition in the
9 agency?

10 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: The
11 Department is undergoing an assessment throughout. I
12 can tell you when I started at the beginning, I held
13 a lot of focus groups to talk to staff and also
14 persons in our care to find out sort of like what
15 they were going through and how we could meet their
16 needs, and one of the things that people talked about
17 was the fact that childcare and issues that are
18 impacting them so there are things that we're looking
19 as a Department to see how we can assist and provide
20 them with the care that they need. We also have a
21 Care and Wellness Team that comprises of fellow
22 correction officers. They go out to support their
23 peers. There's a lot of things we're sort of looking
24 at internally and, in terms of the sexual harassment,
25 we work with our internal unit, CIB. If there are any

2 instances within our jails, they work to ensure the
3 individuals in custody are held accountable, but this
4 is an ongoing conversation, this is an ongoing issue,
5 and we are committed to addressing it and to making
6 sure our staff know that they are supported and
7 they're safe.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you for
9 sharing that. I do want to share with you
10 specifically within my District, I have a female
11 officer who's been sexually harassed by her
12 superiors, and I'm hoping to have a hearing one day
13 in regards to female officers that are not only being
14 harassed by superiors but also by detainees because
15 of the conditions of the jails, but I don't have that
16 much time.

17 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: Can I say
18 something..

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Yes, sure.

20 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: With
21 respect to the officer who's being harassed by the
22 supervisor, please encourage her to report it.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: She has, and she's
24 been ignored, and I've been working on this for over
25 a year.

2 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: She's been
3 ignored by our EEO office?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Yes.

5 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: Okay.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: She's been ignored
7 both by your agency and the Mayor's Office so, if you
8 want me to follow up with you on that, we can, and
9 she's the daughter of a pastor in my District.

10 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: Please do.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: And just if we
12 could just go back on the design build process and
13 how to save time and cost on capital for borough-
14 based jails.

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: Good
16 morning, ma'am. All four borough-based jail
17 facilities are using that design build model to
18 hasten the time period that is allotted for design
19 and construction.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Perfect. All right.
21 Thank you, Chair. Sorry for taking so much time.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we've been
23 joined by Council Member Stevens.

24 Now, we've got questions from Council
25 Member Restler followed by Brewer.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Great. Thank you
3 so much to the Chairs and thank you to the DOC team
4 for joining us, and I do want to say at the front
5 end, Commissioner, I feel like there's been a
6 positive shift in tone, both in your approach to the
7 Council and other stakeholders since your
8 appointment, and I want to express gratitude for
9 that.

10 I'd like to focus my question today on
11 the borough-based jail, and I think that somebody
12 from the panel just testified that over 50 percent of
13 the people have a mental health designation, a Brad H
14 designation. Could you give us the exact number in
15 DOC custody today, percentage? Okay, I'm on the
16 clock.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: I believe
18 today's headcount or census is about 6,300 persons in
19 custody.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Brad H
21 designation? 3,510, correct?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS:
23 Approximately, yeah.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: 55.6 percent of
25 the DOC...

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: Who are
3 known to mental health, correct?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yes, so 55.6, 56
5 percent of the DOC population today, over 3,500
6 people have a Brad H designation and the percentage
7 of therapeutic beds in the Brooklyn-based jail in the
8 plan today is?

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: Just
10 over 20 percent.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So 20 percent.
12 How is it possible that we are designing a jail
13 system where just 40 percent of the need is met for
14 people with mental health needs?

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: The
16 number of therapeutic beds that will ultimately be
17 included in the borough-based jail program also
18 considers the outposted units, the three outposted
19 units in the hospitals and so what I will say..

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But excuse me,
21 when the borough-based jail plan was initially
22 proposed until Mayor Adams made changes to it, what
23 was the previous percentage of proposed therapeutic
24 beds in the borough-based jails?

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: I
3 believe it was just about 50 percent.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Just about 50
5 percent so we had previously designed a system where
6 we were essentially meeting the needs of people with
7 mental health needs in our borough-based jails with
8 enhanced services and support and now we are not.
9 That's an enormous reduction. That initial plan for
10 the borough-based jails included the outposted units
11 as well so I don't understand how you could claim
12 that the outposted units are solving for that.

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: I'm
14 just saying, sir, that the decision to reduce the
15 number of therapeutic beds was made in consideration
16 of moving forward with all three outposted units.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: That's not
18 accurate though. I mean, I'm sorry to say, the
19 decision to reduce the number of therapeutic beds by
20 half was made months before there was any commitment
21 from this Administration to move forward on the
22 outposted therapeutic units. They were made totally
23 separately, and to say that they were done together
24 is inaccurate.

3 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: The
4 determination to reduce the number of therapeutic
5 beds was made in consultation and in collaboration
6 with this Administration as well as Correctional
7 Health Services and the Mayor's Office of Criminal
8 Justice so I will say that every single borough-based
9 jail we anticipate to meet the needs of our
10 population.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But how could you
12 claim that you're meeting the needs of the population
13 when we have 55 percent of the people have a mental
14 health need and only 20 percent of the beds are
15 designed to actually meet their needs? How could you
16 explain that to me, and give me any explanation that
17 could make it make sense.

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: So
19 every single floor in the borough-based jails has a
20 clinical space that is designated for individuals on
21 that floor. There are counseling rooms attached to
22 every single housing area. There are multipurpose
23 rooms that are utilized for group therapy on every
24 single housing area. The only distinction between the
25 therapeutic housing is that there is clinical staff
right on the unit. However, we plan to have clinical

2 staff in collaboration with our partners at CHS
3 throughout the building providing services for
4 individuals who are assigned..

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But Miss
6 Maldonado, I don't understand if we acknowledge that
7 these people have a notable mental health need, that
8 these are individuals who are in need of real
9 assistance, why would we not think it's appropriate
10 to have clinical staff on hand available to them in
11 real time? That is what the previous design was just
12 a year ago. Why is that no longer a need for this
13 population? Do they no longer have significant mental
14 health needs? Did that change in the last year?

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: There
16 are different levels of acuity, sir, and we are
17 confident that with our partners at CHS, we will meet
18 the needs of our population in the borough-based jail
19 program.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Do you think it's
21 safe for staff for there to be therapeutic beds on
22 two-tiered housing units?

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: I
24 believe that the Department made the careful decision
25

2 to include therapeutic housing areas that had double
3 tiers, and we will ensure that they..

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: There are
5 therapeutic units currently in double-tiered units?

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO:
7 Currently on Rikers Island?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: No, in the
9 borough-based jail plan. I'm just focused on the
10 borough-based jail plan.

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: Yes,
12 sir.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: There are
14 therapeutic units in two-tiered housing units in the
15 borough-based jail plan.

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO:
17 Correct, and we are confident that we will be able to
18 maintain the safety and security.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: That is not what
20 I've been briefed on previously, so there's a
21 disconnect in the information that you're testifying
22 to today.

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: No, I
24 apologize, sir, if I'm mis-stating, but there are
25

2 single-tier and double-tier therapeutic units planned
3 for the borough-based jail program.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So then why not
5 expand and actually have an adequate number of
6 therapeutic beds to meet the demand of the
7 population? I don't understand why you wouldn't
8 commit to having enough therapeutic beds to meet the
9 needs of people with mental health needs.

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: Access
11 to medical care and mental healthcare will be greatly
12 enhanced in the borough-based jail program.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I've been a big
14 champion and advocate for this plan over many years,
15 and I believe in the urgency of closing Rikers Island
16 and that there's a moral imperative to do so. We
17 cannot create the absolute disaster and dumpster fire
18 that Rikers Island is in our communities in the
19 borough-based jail plan and, by failing to provide
20 the mental health needs that the detainees at Rikers,
21 that in the DOC system, clearly have is a disservice
22 to them and it's a disservice to the entirety of the
23 borough-based jail plan, and so I am extremely
24 agitated and concerned about the Administration's
25

2 lack of commitment to providing necessary mental
3 health care to the people in the DOC system.

4 I just, if I may, on one final question,
5 the other major concern I have about the borough-
6 based jail plan is the lack of access to outdoor
7 space. Could you confirm, will detainees in the
8 Brooklyn borough-based jail have consistent daily
9 access to outdoor space?

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO:

11 Absolutely, sir. Every single housing area has an
12 outdoor space, an outdoor recreation space...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: That outdoor
14 space, is there a ceiling in that outdoor space?

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: There
16 is a ceiling, sir, but the walls that contain it are
17 a mesh, and so the individual has...

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Meshed walls is
19 your determination of outdoors, an indoor room with
20 meshed walls is your definition of outdoors?

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: The
22 individuals...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Is that right?

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: Will
25 have access to daylight and air.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Daylight and air
3 is not outdoors.

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: In
5 every single housing area.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Daylight and air
7 is not outdoors, and outdoor space, and I don't
8 believe there's going to be consistent access to the
9 roof where there could be outdoor space. The extent
10 of the outdoor space, and the average length of stay
11 right now in DOC custody is, average length of stay?

12 UNIDENTIFIED: Approximately 103 days.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: 103 days, so
14 somebody's spending over average, and there are
15 definitely, we have far too many people spending two
16 years in DOC custody, three years in DOC custody,
17 waiting for trial, but average of going three months
18 and 10 days without having any access to the
19 outdoors, an indoor room with meshed walls is your
20 definition of outdoor space? That undermines people's
21 mental health, it limits their ability to exercise,
22 it limits their ability to manage the challenges of
23 incarceration so I am greatly concerned about the
24 failures of the design plan as it relates to access
25 to the outdoors and provision of mental healthcare,

2 and I really, really hope that the Department of
3 Corrections will acknowledge that these issues need
4 to be addressed and addressed now so that we can make
5 improvements on the plan to close Rikers Island.

6 Thank you.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. We've been
8 joined by Council Member Narcisse.

9 Now, we've got questions from Council
10 Member Brewer followed by Williams.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
12 much, and I'm really excited about CMOM, Children's
13 Museum of Manhattan. They're in my District, I know
14 them well, was there since they started, and also
15 love the parenting room that I've visited a couple of
16 times and, thank you, Commissioner, for being
17 responsive to the requests of oversight and
18 investigation. I appreciate that very much.

19 So childcare, I know you mentioned it,
20 it's not listed in the new needs. I was wondering,
21 many, many correction officers, women whom I know,
22 are dying for childcare because it would, I think,
23 reduce your absenteeism, etc., where are we, if at
24 all, on thinking about childcare for your employees?

2 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: We are
3 exploring that option. We're actually reaching out to
4 childcare centers close to the Department to see if
5 we can facilitate officers bring in their kids there.
6 I believe the First Deputy Commissioner has a meeting
7 with one of the providers next week, and we can
8 provide updates on that.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, because I
10 think you probably need more than whatever that
11 center can experience for their vacancies, but I do
12 think it should be a real focus, maybe even building
13 something from scratch, because you need 24-hour, I
14 don't know that that childcare does 24-hour, you need
15 shifts. Okay, well, you need to do more, with all due
16 respect.

17 You testified earlier today that there
18 were 844 awarded posts, I think that was the number,
19 and the federal monitor reported a month ago that the
20 department did not have a reliable number for awarded
21 posts. I just was wondering how you came up with that
22 number.

23 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: By (INAUDIBLE),
24 it's on the budget. We have 844 budgeted awarded
25 posts.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so the
3 federal monitor, I guess, didn't know that. The
4 monitor also reported that multiple plans to reduce
5 awarded posts did not go forward so I just was
6 wondering who is responsible for reducing awarded
7 posts, because I know this is a different way of
8 doing things compared to other jails around the
9 country, so that's what I'm asking.

10 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: The Office
11 of Administration is responsible for doing that, and
12 that's something that should have been sort of looked
13 at, but we're looking at it now.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. We've done
15 some studies of individuals going from Rikers to
16 court, which, of course, is incredibly important, and
17 I was just wondering on that particular situation,
18 what is the percentage. I think there are about 1,000
19 missed appointments because people are going to court
20 dates. Again, how do you coordinate medical with
21 court? It's not easy, so I wanted to know if the
22 court dates are scheduled well in advance, why
23 Correctional Health can't obviously schedule medical
24 appointments that are not conflicting. 1,000 medical
25

2 appointments are missed, and there may be other
3 reasons also, I'm aware.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: We work
5 closely with our colleagues at CHS, and the evening
6 before a scheduled court visit, we share that list of
7 detainees who are going to court so there is close
8 coordination with our colleagues with respect to
9 court and clinic visits.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, but I'm just
11 saying when 1,000 missed medical appointments, that's
12 not the only reason, so I would love to get followup
13 as to why 1,000 are missed because obviously medical
14 is important, and I know some people don't want to
15 go. I've been doing this work for a very long time,
16 but I would like to understand how you end up with
17 1,000 medical missed.

18 Okay. Just finally, I want to understand
19 about the food. I noticed in the new needs, you need
20 more money for food because, of course, prices have
21 increased. Do you use a scratch kitchen? Obviously,
22 everybody complains about food. They complain about
23 food in the schools, they complain about food at
24 Rikers, so I just wanted to know if there are any
25 improvements to the food that are in the mix.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: Yes, I
3 think we testified earlier that the Mayor's Fund
4 received a grant from the Carbon Neutral Cities
5 Alliance to fund a five-week plant-based culinary
6 training program.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I hate plant-based
8 food. Nobody's going to eat that food. I'm just
9 saying.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: So noted.
11 So it does help DOC reduce its carbon footprint.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Oh, please.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: So that's
14 one issue.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: The grant is to
16 have more plant-based food? Oh, God.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: So, right,
18 so we are going to be training over 100 cooks at DOC
19 in addition to cooks at ACS as well, so the plan is
20 to improve the menu and hopefully reduce food waste.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, if it's not
22 fresh, it's not going to be eaten any more than
23 what's eaten now.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: It will be
3 fresh. We want to incorporate more fresh vegetables
4 and healthier vegetables.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'd like to hear
6 more about that, not at this moment. Are you working
7 with Grow NYC? Where are they coming from, etc.?
8 Who's your distributor? The food is awful, and I
9 don't know that this is going to make it any better.
10 I'd like to understand that.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: Thank you
12 for that, but we do work closely with DCAS on
13 purchasing the food.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That doesn't mean
15 it's going to be good. I'm talking about Grow NYC,
16 Farmers Upstate. You need to be, I mean, I could go
17 on. I've been spending many, many years on this. Need
18 to be purchasing as a City from the New York State
19 Farmers, and I don't think that, I know it doesn't
20 happen now, and I'd like to see exactly what DCAS and
21 you are doing. I have a bill that says to the best of
22 ability, the City of New York must purchase from the
23 New York State Farmers, and Riker should be doing
24 this on a regular basis. DOE tries, but you have a
25

2 much smaller population, steady population, you
3 should be able to do it, plant-based or not.

4 Just finally, I want to understand, I am
5 a big supporter of the psychiatric care at Bellevue,
6 East Elmhurst, and wherever else you are planning for
7 these beds in the future. I'm a big supporter. Can
8 you just update us, maybe you did it earlier, I'm
9 sorry, I was on a Zoom, exactly the timeframe and the
10 dollars associated with getting these beds up and
11 running. I actually believe that they will be better,
12 perhaps, than being in the borough-based jails,
13 personally, because I think the psychiatric support
14 there will be better, but what's the timing on that
15 because it should be happening now, even before
16 borough-based.

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: Sure,
18 thank you, ma'am. We anticipate Bellevue will open
19 close to the end of this year, or hopefully at the
20 start of...

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And how many beds
22 is that?

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: It's
24 approximately 104 beds at the Bellevue facility, and
25 we are actively working with our partners at CHS to

2 make that happen. As far as the Woodhull and North
3 Central Bronx, we are in active consultation and
4 collaboration with CHS for the designs of those jail
5 facilities, also speaking with our partners at the
6 State Commission of Correction to make sure we get it
7 right, and so that we are on target, and I believe
8 CHS made the announcement that those two facilities
9 would be substantially complete sometime in 2027.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: 2027, not until
11 then. Okay, that's a long time. Why does it take so
12 long?

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: It's a
14 lot of work, ma'am, and the details of the
15 construction are better left to those experts, but I
16 can tell you that we are working tirelessly to
17 support both the borough-based jail program and the
18 OTHU, or Outposted Unit Program.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And then just
20 finally, I think, Commissioner, you said in the
21 paper, thank you, that you're working with Stanley on
22 the Fortune contract. Is that happening? I love
23 Stanley.

24 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: So,
25 Fortune, they actually came back. They have a

2 footprint on Rikers, but they came back and expanded
3 their footprint, so we've been working closely with
4 them. They are currently focused in our Eric M.
5 Taylor Center and providing our sentence and
6 detaining population with services there.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: All right. Thank
8 you.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Sorry, I just had a
10 quick followup about that. Is Fortune, do they have a
11 contract or is this volunteer work?

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: It's a
13 combination of both, thank you. Fortune is one of the
14 providers that has a contract with MOCJ. They've had
15 a presence. In listening to our request, they've
16 added additional staff, and they have assumed the
17 responsibility of providing services at one of our
18 jails, EMTC.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, and some of
20 that involves volunteer work from them?

21 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: It is
22 more of them re-shifting the allocation of staff and
23 creating a balance between the staffing that they
24 have assigned to the community to ensure that that
25

2 same staffing is affording services combined with
3 those that are also contracted through MOCJ.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, so just for
5 clarification, and to put it plainly, none of the
6 services that Fortune Society's providing are
7 volunteer services. Is that correct? Would I be
8 correct in saying that?

9 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: I
10 wouldn't want to speak for Fortune because I know
11 that they have different type of funding sources, the
12 contracted services through MOCJ. To them, it might
13 be defined as volunteering, because they've taken and
14 created a balance, but they have responded to our
15 request.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, and for the
17 record, do you think that rehabilitative social work
18 should be done on a voluntary basis at Rikers?

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: No,
20 ma'am.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, that's great
22 to know, because the Mayor had said otherwise
23 publicly so, okay.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I wanted to just
25 follow up on something that Council Member Brewer

2 brought up. I wrote an op-ed with Eric Adams back in
3 2018, and the quote from the op-ed is, "to combat
4 climate change, cities need to do more than just
5 mandate cleaner fuels and buildings," etc., etc.,
6 "since cities are centers of consumption, government
7 must also look at the foods it purchases for schools,
8 jails, and hospitals." Can you tell me, as far as
9 food purchasing, what is DOC doing to reduce the
10 amount of meat that's purchased and focus more on
11 plant-based foods?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: Hi, Deputy
13 Commissioner James Saunders, so we are working with
14 our colleagues at DCAS and the Mayor's Office of Food
15 Policy to incorporate more healthier vegetables and
16 fruits into our menus. We are also attempting to
17 reduce our carbon footprint by reducing the
18 purchasing of red meat and dairy. We're substituting,
19 again, plant-based products for those meat and dairy
20 items. I think DOC has a pretty good track record
21 with respect to that reduction so I think that's what
22 we're doing. Also, by virtue of certain facilities
23 being closed, there's less truck traffic for food
24 deliveries around the boroughs. Now, when we go to
25

2 the borough-based model, we will have to look at that
3 carbon emissions, but okay.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, thank you.
5 Now, we have questions from Council Member Williams
6 followed by Stevens. Thank you.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you. Good
8 afternoon/morning.

9 I had a question about re-entry. What
10 proportion of the Rikers population receives re-entry
11 planning before discharge?

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Good
13 morning.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Good morning.

15 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: If you
16 allow me, I would like to do a followup with you. I
17 would like to send you a response breaking it down
18 specifically.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, yeah, and
20 then in the response, if you just include any plans
21 to increase the percentage and how much would it cost
22 to offer re-entry planning to everyone leaving
23 Rikers, and whether or not this calculation is
24 reflected in the budget, that would be great. Thank
25 you so much.

2 The next question I have is around
3 contraband. So, about a month ago, several DOC staff
4 and one detainee were caught bringing illicit drugs
5 into one of the housing units in exchange for money
6 and favors. The DOI report showed that these deals
7 were made over Instagram and through text messages
8 between detainees and involved DOC staff. Do the
9 detainees have access to social media while in DOC
10 custody and, if so, how is this possible?

11 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: Thank you
12 for that question. With respect to the report that
13 you're referring to, I can tell you that the
14 Department takes every, entrance of contraband is a
15 very serious issue because it goes to the safety and
16 security of everyone in our care. We work closely
17 with our partners in our Special Investigation Unit.
18 We operate body scanners throughout four facilities.
19 We have them at OBCC, EMTC, RNDC, and GRVC. We work
20 closely with our security teams. As people are coming
21 in, you go through the body scanner, and it's
22 randomized. You go through the magnetometer, and if you
23 are indicated as someone who needs to go through the
24 scanner, you will go through the scanner. We take
25 these issues very seriously. Our teams are on-site

2 looking, and we do tactical search operations,
3 constantly going through on a daily basis to ensure
4 that contraband does not enter our facilities. In the
5 event that it does, we are working with our partners
6 at DOI. If there are investigations, we work
7 collaboratively with them to ensure that that is
8 meted out through our facilities.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I don't think I
10 heard any, did you answer the question around use of
11 social media?

12 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: So the
13 individuals in custody should not have access to
14 social media.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: DOI has several
16 recommendations to avoid future incidents such as
17 moving staff lockers outside of the jail facilities
18 and hiring outside contractors to be security at
19 front entrances. Has the Department begun to make any
20 of these changes?

21 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: We are
22 reviewing DOI's recommendations and will provide DOI
23 with an update.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, just one
25 more question. Thank you so much, Chairs.

3 This is about the use of chemical agents.
4 In the preliminary hearing, the Department stated
5 that they were still in the process of reviewing the
6 use of chemical agents, and the report released by
7 the Board of Corrections in February where
8 investigators found that chemical agents were used
9 2,972 times during the first 10 months of 2023. Now
10 that I would hope you had time to review this report,
11 what is the Department's current budget for chemical
12 agents, and is the Department concerned that over-
13 reliance on chemical agents is an inefficient use of
14 agency resources?

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: Good
16 morning. AC Pascarelli, Budget. As for a specific
17 amount in our budget, we have a large security and I
18 guess overall operational budget that we do fund the
19 chemical agents from, but we do not have a specific
20 slot in our budget for that, but we can purchase it
21 as necessary.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. You know,
23 I know the DOC responded to the report saying that
24 they agree and recognize that spraying individuals
25 who are already struggling to breathe is exceedingly
problematic, and Department officials agreed that the

2 use of chemical agents was unnecessary and that other
3 steps should have been taken to de-escalate
4 situations so if you could just explain to us if any
5 changes have happened in the Department, or will
6 happen moving forward, to avoid unnecessary use of
7 chemical agents.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: The
9 Department recently received a grant of 250,000 to
10 provide training covering crisis intervention and de-
11 escalation so there's a concerted effort around that
12 area, and I can turn it over to my colleague who's in
13 charge of training and development to discuss other
14 training that's provided.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah, I
16 apologize, Chairs, because you just mentioned the
17 crisis intervention training so, while you're
18 speaking about it, if you could just share with us
19 how many current uniformed staff have already
20 received the training and how many of those staff are
21 assigned on a steady basis to the facilities that a
22 previous Council Member mentioned that house folks
23 with serious mental illnesses.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: I don't
25 have those numbers in front of me, but we can get

2 them to you at a later time, and what was your last
3 question? I apologize.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Just wanted to
5 know how many staff are assigned on a regular basis
6 to any of the facilities where something like this
7 probably would be most beneficial.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: We'll have
9 to get back to you on that.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you.
11 I just want to say that was like a little
12 disingenuous to like throw out this training that you
13 can't really sort of articulate what you're doing
14 there, how many people have been trained as a way to
15 kind of combat the question around the Department's
16 agreeance that using chemical agents instead of a de-
17 escalation strategy as a better strategy but you
18 can't really articulate how you've actually
19 implemented that strategy, so I just want to note
20 that was like a little, it was like nice, something
21 to say, but I think it was like a hint of like
22 disingenuous there.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: Well, I'm
24 being very transparent and nothing but honest...

25 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: And I would
3 like to turn over some more detail to my colleague
4 who actually provides the training, but I can tell
5 you that all of the individuals who graduate from the
6 academy undergo specialized training to reduce
7 violence.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Just need to
9 swear you in.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: State your
11 name, please.

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER JOHNSON: Jeremiah
13 Johnson.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Do you affirm
15 to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but
16 the truth before this Committee and to respond
17 honestly to Council Member questions?

18 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOHNSON: I do.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Thank you.

20 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOHNSON: Good
21 morning, Council Member. My name is Dr. Jeremiah
22 Johnson. I'm the Acting Deputy Commissioner of
23 Training and Development. The Training and
24 Development Division is responsible for providing
25 both initial and in-service trainings to our uniform

2 staff. We are taking and have taken a deep dive into
3 the Board of Correction report that you referenced,
4 and the Training and Development Division is working
5 proactively to assess some of those recommendations
6 that have been made that pertain particularly to
7 training, both of correction officers and of
8 supervisors. We do have a Curriculum Review Committee
9 that meets monthly. It has both internal subject
10 matter experts and external members that have agreed
11 to serve on this Committee, and we are taking very
12 seriously these matters that have been raised by the
13 report and plan to make revisions of that curriculum
14 so that we can improve our training to achieve the
15 outcomes that need to happen to ensure that both our
16 officers and persons in custody are safe and to limit
17 any unnecessary uses of chemical agents.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you for
19 your answers. I look forward to getting answers
20 around re-entry. Thank you so much, Chairs.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I just have a quick
22 followup on that while you're here. In March, we
23 asked about what precautions you're taking to ensure
24 the officers are following proper de-escalation
25 protocols and proper protocols for use of chemical

2 agents. We asked if you had read the BOC report
3 around it. You said you were still going through it,
4 it's about seven or eight pages, and that you were
5 going to be presenting at a BOC hearing that would
6 have been the following week some of your responses
7 to that. I don't know if you have an update or what
8 responses were provided at that hearing, if you could
9 share some of that.

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Can you
11 refresh our memories...

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, I'm just
13 going literally by the transcripts from March's
14 Preliminary Budget hearing. We had talked about the
15 chemical agents piece. There was the BOC report. It
16 was about seven or eight pages, outlined both
17 incidents that had recently happened, including an
18 individual who was sprayed with a chemical agent
19 while handcuffed to a wheelchair, I think, and we
20 brought it up. You said you were still reading
21 through it. You were going to present a report at a
22 following BOC hearing that would be the next week
23 from the March hearing so I was just wondering if you
24 had presented anything at that hearing, if you could
25 provide an update on what you presented there.

2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: We'll
3 be more than happy to share the update with you.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, I know that
5 you mentioned, so great, we're looking forward to
6 that followup, but I know that you mentioned some
7 training. Some of the other recommendations in that
8 report were to use a less intense, I don't know the
9 right word for the chemical, but less intense or less
10 harsh version of the chemical agent so in your
11 current budget, are you planning to change the, I
12 don't know the right terminology, degree or intensity
13 of chemical agent that you are purchasing moving
14 forward?

15 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: Not at this
16 time.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Some of the
18 other recommendations were around staffing protocols
19 and having certain staff at the right time. Have you
20 made any changes to your deployment around the issue
21 of chemical agents, particularly in the area where
22 there's the mental health observation units.

23 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: That's
24 ongoing. I don't believe we've rolled that out just
25 yet.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: You did roll it out
3 or you will roll it out?

4 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: No, we have
5 not rolled that out just yet.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, so, yeah,
7 it's been a couple months. Those were pretty
8 egregious incidents where I think one person was on
9 suicide watch. Most of these incidents happened in
10 the mental health observation units where people were
11 sprayed. There wasn't proper staffing in line to
12 follow any form of protocol so I'm just curious why
13 that hasn't been implemented to create safety, I
14 mean, especially for people on suicide watch.

15 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: I'll be
16 able to give you an update following this meeting.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Additionally,
18 a lot of this was found, I mean, a lot of what
19 actually happened was able to be kind of debunked
20 because of body-worn cameras. Are our officers
21 currently wearing body-worn cameras?

22 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE:
23 Approximately two weeks ago today, we had a captain
24 on duty who suffered injuries as a result of the
25 body-worn camera that she had on her person. As a

2 result, at the time looking at the incident, my
3 initial response was to probably take that particular
4 model offline. Upon learning that's the only model in
5 operation, out of an abundance of caution, we removed
6 all of the body-worn cameras offline, and we are
7 working with the manufacturer. They're looking into
8 what caused the body-worn camera to ignite. We
9 anticipate hearing back from the manufacturer
10 tomorrow. Upon learning the results, I'll make a
11 determination on next steps with respect to the body-
12 worn camera.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, so...

14 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: In the
15 absence of a body-worn camera, I just want to
16 reiterate that we have over 12,000 cameras throughout
17 Department-wide, and we also have handheld cameras
18 that we are utilizing to capture any of these
19 incidents.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, just one
21 other question related to it while we're on topic. I
22 mean, prior to that incident, many officers were not
23 wearing their body-worn cameras and the Department
24 had attributed this to the...

2 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: The back
3 ends.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: The mounting
5 plates, so have you all purchased the mounting
6 plates? I mean, given this new information about the
7 body-worn cameras, will you be moving forward with
8 that same mounting plate model? Is there a budget
9 line for that?

10 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: Yes, so
11 we've identified the mounting plate that would be
12 best used, and we're in the process of purchasing
13 those plates.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, great. I'm
15 going to turn it back over, Chair.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, now
17 questions from Council Member Stevens followed by
18 Narcisse.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Good morning,
20 good morning/afternoon, or like brunch time.

21 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: Still
22 morning.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: It's definitely
24 (INAUDIBLE) brunch.

3 I just have a couple of questions and,
4 one, I just want to start off by saying, this week I
5 got a very frantic call from a mom who was very
6 concerned about her son who was in custody and, one,
7 to even start off, I think your team was super
8 responsive. I reached out to, I think it was John
9 Carlos, and my team reached out to Intergov and
10 things were taken care of expeditiously. However, I'm
11 always concerned when people have to call my office
12 to get services, and I'm happy that the mother knew
13 to reach out to my office so that we could help, but
14 we had an incident where her son was in custody. He's
15 a diabetic. He wasn't getting access to food, and she
16 was very scared that he was going to die, and she
17 wasn't getting any response from anyone in the
18 facility and she couldn't get access to him, and she
19 was getting no answers, and it literally took her
20 calling my office for her to get answers, and so I'm
21 trying to figure out like what's the protocol and
22 what's the responsiveness around these issues when
23 you have someone in your custody that is diabetic and
24 sick and need access to medicine, and apparently no
25 one was listening to him and no one was being
responsive to the mom until my office intervened so

2 I'm just trying to get a better understanding of what
3 this process looks like. No one knows? Oh, you're
4 coming? Okay, hi.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: James
6 Saunders again. With respect to access to care, the
7 Department makes sure that all detainees have access
8 to care through CHS and sick call. Individuals who
9 have high acuity needs are placed in the most
10 appropriate setting.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And so I hear
12 what you're saying even having access and blah, blah,
13 blah, because access is, that's subjective, but the
14 question is more around like no one was listening to
15 him. He was telling them that he was diabetic. He
16 needed food. His mom was calling. She wasn't getting
17 answers, and so saying you have access, again, that's
18 kind of subjective because, yeah, it could be a
19 facility there and the things could be there but, if
20 he's not getting the care, then he's not getting it.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: I
22 understand. I don't really want to get into the
23 details.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: But I need you to
25 get into details.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: Out of
3 respect for this person's privacy.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: No, I'm not
5 asking you to talk about him specifically. I'm asking
6 you to get into the details of what is the protocol,
7 because that's the question. I'm not asking about
8 this individual. What I'm saying is we have people in
9 custody and their parents are saying that they're
10 calling. They're not getting access and you're saying
11 they're getting access. They're not, so it's there,
12 but they're not getting it, and so I need to get
13 details on the protocol and what that looks like.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: We receive
15 a lot of grievances and complaints from Legal Aid,
16 other attorneys that are representing clients in our
17 care and custody, from parents and loved ones about
18 individuals who are in our care. All those complaints
19 are routed through...

20 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: How long does
21 that take? So if a lawyer or parent or someone
22 complains, how long does that take?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: The routing
24 of it?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, how long
3 does that take?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: As soon as
5 we get the...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I'm in custody
7 right now. I'm in your custody. A parent calls and
8 say that there's a complaint. How long does that
9 process take? She called on Saturday. We reached out
10 on Monday and it took my office, it took a full day
11 or two to get it done so, if it took my office two
12 days and she was saying he was in custody since the
13 following week, how long does it take for a complaint
14 to go through the process? Because at that point,
15 they could be dead. I just want to point that out.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: I would
17 have to defer to our colleagues who handle those
18 types of grievances, but I can tell you that anytime
19 we receive an urgent message about a loved one in our
20 custody, we immediately transfer that information to
21 our colleagues at CHS so that that individual can be
22 produced to the clinic immediately so we don't sit on
23 any of these complaints or concerns.

24 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Council
25 Member Stevens, if I may. As the former Deputy

2 Commissioner for the Division of Programs, internally
3 we've identified staff that can receive the phone
4 calls, not just from your Staff Members, but from
5 parents, advocates, and attorneys. I would like to
6 send an internal contact information sheet for the
7 Members of Council in order for us to better tackle
8 that because I cannot imagine the feeling of anyone
9 having a family member seeking treatment or care so,
10 if you allow me, I would like to send you..

11 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Absolutely, and
12 again, I said, when my office reached out, you guys
13 were super responsive. Like, you guys were giving us
14 updates. The mother was then called and it was a
15 response, but that should not be the case.

16 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: Well, do
17 you know what outreach the parent did, like..

18 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yes, they said
19 that they were called in a facility, they were
20 getting in contact with the lawyers. There was a
21 number of things that they did before they got to me,
22 and so that is my issue, that it should not take that
23 long because if you're saying that a complaint comes
24 in, what's the process, how long does that complaint
25 take, where does it go? Like, I would love to hear

2 what that looks like and not just like very like,
3 well, we take them all serious. Of course, okay,
4 well, what does that look like? What's the process?
5 What's the timeline? If a complaint comes in today,
6 how long does that take for it to actually be
7 compliant because I know that there's different
8 channels, it has to be transferred, all those things.
9 On average, how long does that take?

10 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: Well,
11 typically when someone reaches out to the facility,
12 they are responsive in addressing the need. I can
13 tell you personally, I get emails, calls daily from
14 parents, just as you've described, and that outreach
15 is done instantaneously. If it's something where I
16 need our CHS partners to assist, I mean, DC Saunders
17 is copied along with CHS operations to ensure that
18 people are seen right away. I think what it sounds
19 like here too is we would possibly also need to let
20 you know like CHS's information if there's, if
21 someone wants to reach out to them directly as well,
22 but our Offices of Grievances, once they get a
23 complaint in, that's something that's routed to the
24 stakeholder right away. I can tell you working in
25 legal, if I got that that came in on a legal intake

2 email, that's something I would look into right away,
3 especially as it pertains to medical care.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, I mean, I'm
5 still a bit concerned because if saying that it
6 happens instantly and I have this mother on the phone
7 crying and very concerned that her child's going to
8 die because she's not being responsive, there's
9 clearly a glitch in the matrix, and so we have to
10 figure that out to make sure that's not happening.
11 Again, I have no problem reaching out and I'd love
12 when folks are reaching out to our office and
13 understand and see us as a resource but, for me, it's
14 always a spotlight, like, well, there's something
15 must be going on so now we have to dig and so, one, I
16 would definitely love to follow up to figure out what
17 the protocol looks like, how does that make sure that
18 people who are being detained, their family, and
19 lawyers and folks have access to make sure that
20 they're getting the care that they're getting because
21 her biggest fear was that he was going to die. He was
22 not getting the proper food, he had not had medical
23 treatment, and she thought that he was going to die
24 and, again, like I said, when we called and
25 intervened, things moved very quickly but, when she

2 was reaching out, there was no movement and she did
3 not feel like there was any movement. I know there's
4 my time.

5 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: I'd like to
6 just get a little bit more information as to who she
7 contacted so we can look into it on our end so that
8 this doesn't occur again.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Okay, thank you.
10 Thank you, Chairs.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Questions from
12 Council Member Narcisse.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Sorry, thank
14 you. Thank you, Chairs, and thank you for being here.

15 My question, if a detainee is brought to
16 Bellevue Hospital Ward, they primarily reside on
17 DOC's medical unit on the 19th floor, is that true?
18 What symptoms, please take notes, I'm using my time
19 wisely, what symptoms would be necessary for a
20 detainee to be assigned to a private room in the ICU?
21 Are there funds in the Department's budget to account
22 for hospital stays of such nature, to have private
23 rooms with television and private phone lines? If
24 it's not, then what funds are used to pay such stays?
25 My following question, missed medical appointments

2 have been an issue. We know that. Can you share your
3 data from last year to this year on missed
4 appointments and why they missed their appointment?

5 Let me tell you, I'm very much interested, especially
6 for the mental health, so I'm going to let you answer
7 those. If I have more time, then I'll come back.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: Hi. Thank
9 you for the question. Again, James Saunders, Deputy
10 Commissioner of Health Affairs, Compliance and
11 Quality. With respect to admission to the Bellevue
12 Hospital Prison Ward, the decision to admit someone
13 to the hospital is made by the clinical provider, the
14 health authority, Correctional Health Service. When
15 they indicate that a person is suffering from some
16 acute medical issue, they are the ones who make that
17 determination to transfer that individual from Rikers
18 or from a court setting over into the hospital
19 setting, and that person could be routed to the
20 medical emergency room or to the CPEP, Mental Health
21 Emergency Room.

22 With respect to a private room with the
23 TV and those other things, if an individual needs to
24 be outposted outside of 19 in Bellevue Hospital,
25 again, that's a clinical determination based on the

2 individual's symptoms and clinical needs and so, for
3 example, if a person has to be put on the 10th floor
4 of Bellevue, which is the intensive care unit, that
5 is a clinical decision made by the providers in the
6 hospital. With respect to clinic production, give me
7 a moment to pull up some data from last year, but I
8 think we're doing pretty well with respect to non-
9 production.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: The thing is, I
11 understand the medical, because I'm a nurse, I
12 understand the medical have to make the medical
13 decision but, now, if they have to be to the floor, I
14 got that. Are there funds in the department budget on
15 the account to have in the private room if they have
16 to be in the private room?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: I'm not
18 sure how that billing occurs. I know that it is a
19 hospital stay. They're not in the jail setting and
20 so, I believe that, well, not speaking for the H and
21 H fiscal folks but, if you're in the hospital, the
22 hospital will be able to bill for those services.
23 That person should qualify for an insurance product,
24 either Medicaid or...

2 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: So, because
3 don't they, like to have a telephone, to have those
4 kind of things, television and phone line, usually
5 it's the family, but now families are not paying so
6 do you have that into budget because I'm sure the
7 hospital is not paying for those. I used to be in the
8 hospital too. They don't pay for those private
9 things.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: Correct. I
11 don't think that those amenities are provided.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: They're not
13 provided.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: I don't
15 believe they are, but I can certainly check and just
16 confirm.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay. Now we're
18 going back to the missed appointment. Who's answering
19 that for me?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: With
21 respect to missed appointments, in 2022, there were
22 approximately 6,000 instances of missed clinic
23 encounters due to a lack of escort out of over
24 575,000 scheduled clinic encounters so no escort
25 accounted for about 5.2 percent of all non-production

2 Calendar Year 2022. Moving to Calendar Year 2023,
3 that number dropped significantly to approximately
4 3,900 out of over 600...

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: 3,900?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: 3,900 out
7 of over approximately 620 scheduled clinic
8 encounters. That means that a lack of escort occurred
9 in less than 1 percent of all scheduled clinic
10 encounters so that's approximately 3.4 percent of all
11 non-productions in Calendar Year 2023. I can tell you
12 that in the last two months, February and March, I
13 think our numbers have been pretty good in that it's
14 approximately only 1 percent of non-productions are
15 related to no escorts, but no escorts, lockdowns, and
16 other matters could prevent the individual from being
17 produced to the clinic, but we can tell you that
18 right now it's only about 1 percent of non-
19 production.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I can say in the
21 real world, because I understand we're in a
22 challenging time, but what other steps are you taking
23 to make sure that we have enough escorts because
24 we're talking about medical, things that cannot wait,
25 and then I'm interested in the mental health part,

2 because mental health part that have appointment, I
3 cannot see that missing, because the fact is people
4 are not functional when you have mental problem.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: Based on
6 your level of mental acuity, you would be placed in a
7 PACE, CAPS, or an MO unit. Clinical services are
8 provided directly on those units. Those individuals
9 do not need to be brought to the clinic for mental
10 health services.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: So most of those
12 mental, they don't need to go outside for checkup, or
13 they have a psychiatrist outside, or the psychiatrist
14 is within?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: The mental
16 health providers are on that unit. With respect, if
17 it's a PACE unit, they have offices on that unit, and
18 I think with respect to PACE, there are two
19 encounters a day on the PACE units and CAPS units. In
20 MO housing, I think it's a lower level of acuity.
21 Again, the mental health providers are on those
22 units. They go there directly so, this idea, and I
23 just want to make sure that we remove any concept of
24 people missing mental health appointments. For people
25

2 who are acute or have high acuity needs with respect
3 to mental health, those services are brought to them.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay. So,
5 they're not missing any appointment when it comes to
6 mental health? They are being seen on 100 percent?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: Correct.
8 So, if you're on a MO, a mental observation house,
9 the services are brought there. Now, if they have a
10 non-mental health or a medical issue, let's say they
11 need some wound care followup, that service would
12 require transport or production to the clinic, from
13 the unit to the clinic for followup care.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: So, within those
15 that are missing the medical part, anyone that have
16 acute, why they're missing the appointment, why we
17 don't have, I mean, is there some of them that they
18 are, I mean, that's the decision not going? What's
19 that percentage? I didn't get that percentage on that
20 one.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: We produce
22 a report pursuant to Local Law 132 of 2019 that
23 actually discusses, that monitors the percentage of
24 non-production, and I can tell you that the
25 overwhelming majority of non-production relates to

2 individuals refusing to attend their appointments. Of
3 the data that we measure, it could be because I don't
4 want to go, I'll go later, or other reasons.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: All right, I'm
6 going to leave it as that. Thank you, Chairs.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Chair Nurse.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you, Chair. I
9 just have a few other questions, and then that's it
10 for me.

11 I did want to go back to, just quickly,
12 on the 6-A program. You mentioned in 2022, you
13 released 62 people, and in 2023, 10, and I was just
14 curious what accounts for such a drastic difference.

15 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Thank
16 you, Chair. I know that for 2022, we had an internal
17 switch of staff that impacted how quickly we were
18 doing the assessments. We have since addressed the
19 matter and, in fact, are training an additional staff
20 member to broaden our scope and to ensure that
21 assessments are done quicker.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So, sometime in
23 2022, you had a change in staff in order to make it
24 faster, but then in the next year, you'd only
25 released 10 people. So in 2023, you just..

2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: I meant
3 2023.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Sorry.
6 Okay, so in 2023, you had a staff change that jammed
7 up the process, and now you've addressed that. How
8 many staff are working on the 6-A program or doing
9 the assessments?

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Okay,
11 so the assessment was being done by one person. Right
12 now, we are transitioning two.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, and so what's
14 their caseload? Like, what is their day like, in
15 terms of, you know, how many people they're looking
16 at?

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: The
18 process is ongoing because any sentenced person's
19 case or scenario could change. It can also be as a
20 number of days left in the sentence. Presently, I
21 have two staff members looking at approximately 152.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Do you think you
23 could benefit from additional staff?

24 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: We
25 always welcome additional staff.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, will you be
4 seeking additional resources for additional staff?

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: We are
6 currently evaluating. We'll see how having the second
7 staff member is able to speed up the process. We'll
8 be more than happy to discuss after we've done that
9 analysis.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Do you think you'll
11 be able to achieve more than 62 releases this year?
12 What are you projecting?

13 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: We've
14 projected 30 so far. There's always room for
15 improvement but, as I mentioned, we always adhere to
16 our internal assessment, but it's contingent on the
17 number of sentenced individuals so, on an ongoing
18 basis, we're always looking at what is happening to
19 that specific population.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, I'm going to
21 move now. On April 18th, the Federal Monitor's report
22 described a new unit, the General Population Max.
23 This unit was to address gaps in the Department's
24 options for managing people with "a propensity for
25 violence in the Department's custody." Can you give

2 us an update on this program? We asked about it in
3 March. Can we get a status update?

4 ACTING GENERAL COUNSEL SAVASTA: Thank
5 you, Chair Nurse. Nancy Savasta, Acting General
6 Counsel. We are finalizing working on those plans
7 with the monitor, and they're currently under review,
8 and we'll be happy to provide them to the Council as
9 soon as they are finalized.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, do you
11 anticipate that unit opening up in the next three
12 months, this year?

13 ACTING GENERAL COUNSEL SAVASTA: We are
14 hoping to see that unit open within this Fiscal Year.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Within this fiscal
16 year. Thank you.

17 Okay, I just had a question about the
18 Renewable Rikers Act. I asked this at the last March
19 hearing. Every six months, under the law, every six
20 months, you're supposed to be transferring land or
21 buildings over to DCAS. As of yet, this
22 Administration has not transferred a single parcel of
23 land over so what are the plans to be in compliance
24 with the law?

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: Every
3 six months, we do an evaluation of any land that is
4 available for possible transfer and, to date, we have
5 not found any land that is not in active use.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: You have not found
7 land that is not in active use?

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: For
9 possible transfer, that's correct.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Last summer, we
11 went, myself, Council Member Gutiérrez, Gennaro, we
12 did a whole tour outside the facilities and stood
13 outside giant, felt like football fields of
14 underutilized land that was not currently
15 transitioned to DCAS. Some of this was adjacent to
16 RDNC. I mean, what is your criteria for determining
17 whether land is underutilized or not being used
18 because what I saw was just open grass fields.

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: Sure.
20 We take into account whether or not the land may be
21 utilized in the immediate future or whether it's part
22 of our secure perimeter, but we can follow up with
23 more details.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: These weren't part
25 of the secure perimeter because some of them were in

2 interior of The Island. This wasn't the shoreline so
3 my understanding is we're closing the facilities.
4 We're not building new facilities so what does it
5 mean to have future use of a completely open field?

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: We'll
7 get back to you with more information about
8 evaluation criteria.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, I mean, we've
10 asked about this multiple times. I've asked about
11 this over the last two years at every single DOC
12 hearing I've been to so I'm just not understanding
13 the rationale. It would be really helpful to get in
14 writing what is your criteria for future use,
15 underutilization and why can't these parcels that are
16 just sitting there empty be transferred over? I mean,
17 this is now moving into five times of noncompliance.
18 This Administration says they are willing to follow
19 the law as they're obligated to, but yet they are not
20 so I don't understand what's happening.

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: The law
22 requires us to evaluate and determine whether or not
23 the land is in active use, and we will follow up
24 certainly.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: But the land is not
3 in active use.

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: Ma'am,
5 I don't know exactly which parcel you're referring to
6 so we can follow up.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: We can walk it
8 together.

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MALDONADO: I would
10 love to.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I mean, you can
12 look on a Google map. Most of it is empty. A lot of
13 it is empty, just sitting there.

14 Okay. Also, in March, we asked about the
15 cost of operating the energy generators on Rikers
16 Island that continue to burn gas and diesel fuel. DOC
17 has filed an application to remove the pollution
18 limits. In the followup, you said DOC is paying a
19 consultant 680,000 dollars to do the permit
20 paperwork. What exactly is the consultant doing for
21 680,000?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENN: This really
23 refers to our cogeneration plant on The Island so
24 they do all studies, surveys, air sampling,
25 monitoring, and they come in with a team of people

2 and basically sample everything, get all of our fuels
3 and air qualities tested, sent off, and then
4 certified. That's all part of the permit process. We
5 have to provide a ton of documents.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, how long is
7 the contract period for the consultant?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENN: It's through
9 DCAS, and I believe it's an ongoing five-year
10 contract.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, thank you.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENN: And, again,
13 this is in partnership with DCAS and the renewable
14 energy...

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, the followup
16 we got didn't really have much detail so it said that
17 DOC hired a consultant to renew its Title V air
18 permit, which is just pretty vague with a large
19 number so I was asking what are the details of that?

20 A few more questions. This is kind of
21 followup to our hearing in April on the grievances
22 system. When we spoke, we spent several hours going
23 through some of the concerns and issues with the
24 grievance process. You all testified that you were
25 currently in the process of reviewing your system and

2 that you would be able to give us some kind of
3 assessment or outcomes or plan. What's the status of
4 your review?

5 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: Good afternoon.
6 We did conduct a review as stated. One of the reviews
7 is redefining the definition that you requested
8 (INAUDIBLE) went out for that. We also are continuing
9 to review it, and we should have something very, very
10 soon to give you an update.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So you said you did
12 do a review?

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We did conduct a
14 review.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: The review is
16 completed?

17 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: Yes.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, and do you
19 have any recommendations or changes that you can
20 share with us today?

21 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: No, I do not
22 have any recommendations. I will update you.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, I think it's
24 pretty urgent that we see some of those changes given
25 the volume of sexual assault allegations, abuse

2 allegations that have come out. We discussed at the
3 hearing that many of these were known about and
4 simply unaddressed so it'll be really, really
5 important to see some of those changes soon.

6 When do you think you'd be able to give
7 something to the Council since the review is
8 completed?

9 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: We should
10 be able to give something to the Council in the
11 coming weeks.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: That would be very
13 helpful. Thank you.

14 Lastly, we also spoke at the hearing
15 about some of the reporting that you all provide to
16 us. You committed to us to provide reporting in
17 machine readable format and we got PDFs so just
18 trying to understand what's up with that. You guys
19 said you would help us out.

20 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: Yes, Chair
21 Nurse. We did commit to provide you the Excel sheet.
22 We will take care of that.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, that would be
24 very, very helpful.

25 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: And I apologize.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: It's a Charter
3 mandate. We're not asking for a favor.

4 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: You are
5 absolutely right, yes ma'am.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, thank you so
7 much. Chair.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I just have two
9 final things with regard to staffing. I know we
10 talked a little bit before about the uniform
11 positions versus civilian positions. Has the
12 Department analyzed how many uniform positions could
13 be safely performed by civilians and, if you did that
14 analysis, what did it find?

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: Hey,
16 Chair Brannan. The Department does actively review
17 what we like to call civilianization. We, in our
18 attempt to comply with the Mayor's Office reduction
19 for overtime this year, we put that analysis together
20 and have been working with them so we identified
21 approximately 200 roles that we were trying to
22 civilianize, which is, as you noted, roles or posts
23 that uniform staff are undertaking that civilians can
24 do. We are actively trying to do that, and we are
25 recruiting in the same form.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Is any of that
3 reflected in the Executive Budget?

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: From a
5 budget standpoint, it is not.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Is there a reason
7 why?

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER PASCARELLI: We are
9 working to utilize the resources that we currently
10 have in the budget to fulfill those. There are plenty
11 of heads in the 13 percent vacancy rate you noted
12 earlier today. We're attempting to utilize that.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. A final
14 question from me. I know the Department previously
15 testified that new staff scheduling software had been
16 under development. Has that been completed?

17 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: Yes, the
18 Department did procure electronic scheduling software
19 system.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, and how's
21 it going?

22 ASSISTANT CHIEF REMBERT: It's going
23 pretty good. It gives us a broader aspect of the
24 number of staff members we have in each facility at
25 any given time so we can deploy efficiently.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay,
3 Commissioner and your team, thank you very much for
4 your testimony today. We look forward to working with
5 you to pass this budget.

6 COMMISSIONER MAGINLEY-LIDDIE: Thank you.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: All right, we'll
8 take a 10-minute break, and then we're going to hear
9 from the Department of Probation.

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon, ladies
11 and gentlemen. Please find your seats. Once again,
12 please find your seats.

13 Please ensure that all cell phones and
14 electronic devices are placed to silent.

15 We shall reconvene momentarily. Thank
16 you.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Sarge.
18 Okay, is it afternoon yet? It is.

19 Good afternoon. We're now ready to begin
20 the second Executive Budget hearing of the day where
21 we focus on the Department of Probation.

22 I am Council Member Justin Brannan, I
23 Chair the Finance Committee, and I'm still joined by
24 Council Member Nurse, Chair of the Committee on
25 Criminal Justice. In addition to those that joined us

2 previously, we've been joined by Council Member
3 Hudson.

4 I welcome Commissioner Holmes and your
5 team. Thank you all for joining us today to answer
6 our questions.

7 As I mentioned previously, on April 24,
8 2024, the Administration released the Executive
9 Financial Plan for FY24 to FY28 with a proposed FY25
10 budget of 111.6 billion dollars. Department of
11 Probation's proposed FY25 budget of 110.6 million
12 dollars represents less than 1 percent of the
13 Administration's total FY25 budget. This is an
14 increase of 4.9 million or 4.7 percent from the 105.7
15 million dollars that was originally budgeted in the
16 FY25 Preliminary Plan. This increase results from
17 several actions, mostly 3.2 million dollars in
18 federal funds for the NYCHA Work Readiness Program.
19 As of March 2024, DOP had 209 vacancies relative to
20 their FY24 budgeted headcount.

21 In the Council's Preliminary Response, we
22 called on the Mayor to add 9.2 million dollars for
23 new investments to youth alternative to incarceration
24 and detention programs as well as to undo the PEGs to
25 the Next Steps and Arches youth intervention and

2 safety programs. The Administration instead chose to
3 continue these cuts and reject the Council's call for
4 new investment in our at-risk youth. This is an
5 example of the Mayor's restorations in the Executive
6 Plan touching just a fraction of the cuts made to key
7 programs, which we found were never necessary to
8 begin with. After setting aside nearly 3 billion
9 dollars to protect against economic risks and under
10 budgeting and 500 million for the Rainy Day Fund, the
11 Council's analysis still identified 1.63 billion in
12 resources unaccounted for in the Mayor's Preliminary
13 Budget for programs and restorations and investments,
14 just like we called for here. Never mind being the
15 better financial choice, it's morally better to
16 intervene to prevent at-risk youth from falling into
17 the justice system in the first place, rather than to
18 increase incarceration. My questions today will
19 largely focus on the Local Conditional Release
20 Commission and the ATIs.

21 I now want to turn to my Co-Chair for
22 this hearing, Council Member Nurse, for her opening
23 statement.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you, Chair
25 Brannan. Good afternoon, good to see you again,

2 Commissioner Holmes and the rest of your leadership
3 team.

4 I'm not going to give a whole statement,
5 but just want to say that I think Probation has such
6 a critical role to play moving forward so we can
7 achieve the legal mandate of closing Rikers. This is
8 the strongest pillar we have in an institution, and
9 so the scrutiny and focus on this that I suspect
10 we'll get into today is because we care about it so
11 much and we see it as the pathway, especially taking
12 care of our younger folks so I'm looking forward to
13 hearing updates and some followups from the questions
14 we had, particularly around Next Steps, Arches, the
15 NeON program so we are going to dive into all of that
16 today, but just thank you for being here and we look
17 forward to the discussion. Thank you, Chair.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Chair,
19 and now I'll turn it over to Committee Counsel to
20 swear in the witnesses for their testimony.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Good afternoon,
22 if you'd raise your right hands, please?

23 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
24 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this
25

2 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member
3 questions? Juanita Holmes.

4 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Yes.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Sharun Goodwin.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: Yes.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Joan Gardner.

8 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GARDNER: Yes.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Andrea McGill.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MCGILL: Yes.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Bridget

12 Hamblin.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HAMBLIN: Yes.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Mathew Lynch.

15 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Yes.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Thank you, you
17 may begin.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Just make sure
19 your mic's on.

20 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Good afternoon,
21 Chair Brannan, Chair Nurse, and Members of the
22 Council. I am Juanita N. Holmes, Commissioner of the
23 New York City Department of Probation. Accompanying
24 me today are Deputy Commissioners Bridget Hamblin and
25 Andrea McGill as well as other members of our

2 executive team. I would like to thank you for the
3 opportunity to discuss the important undertaking by
4 the Department of Probation and our Executive Budget
5 for the Fiscal Year 2025.

6 The New York City Department of Probation
7 stands in the forefront of community corrections,
8 committed to a transformative mission. We are
9 dedicated to integrating accountability with a robust
10 support system that enhances community and family
11 ties for those under Probation supervision. By
12 providing tailored education and employment
13 opportunities, we aim to improve our clients' life
14 skills. Our probation officers craft personalized
15 interventions and supervision plans, deeply informed
16 by an understanding of each client's unique
17 circumstances and support networks. While cultivating
18 trust and fostering positive relationships, it is the
19 Department of Probation's responsibility to ensure
20 effective supervision that significantly contributes
21 to the safety and well-being of our city. For Fiscal
22 Year 2025, the Department of Probation has an
23 Executive Budget of 110.6 million dollars as compared
24 to our Fiscal Year 2024 Adopted Budget of 119.9
25 million dollars. This is an 8.4 percent or 9.3-

2 million-dollar reduction. Of the Executive Budget,
3 72.6 million is for personal services and 37.9
4 million is for other-than-personal services. 86.2
5 million are City tax levy funds, 14.9 million are
6 state funds, 6.3 million are intra-city funds, and
7 3.15 million are grant funds.

8 The Department of Probation has a total
9 budgeted headcount of 1,081 individuals, of which 611
10 are in the title of probation officers and 183 are in
11 the title of supervising probation officers. However,
12 the Department of Probation's total actual headcount
13 is at 832, down 23 percent or 249 members. In the
14 title of probation officer, our actual headcount is
15 389, down 36 percent or 222, and, in the title of
16 supervising probation officers, our actual headcount
17 is 169, down 8 percent or 14.

18 As it stands, workforce attrition
19 presents a challenge to the Department. However, we
20 are steadfastly prepared to overcome it. In contrast,
21 with Fiscal Year to date 2024, the Department of
22 Probation has provided supervision to an additional
23 3,378 adult clients, which is in the 17 percent
24 increase from the 2,828 in Fiscal Year to date 2023.
25 Fiscal Year to date 2024, Department of Probation has

2 provided supervision to 955 juveniles, which is a 28
3 percent increase from 688 in Fiscal Year to date
4 2023.

5 Despite these hurdles, we continue to
6 prioritize our mission and our clients through
7 effective case management and programming. Our
8 probation officers oversee adult clients, typically
9 handled around 50 cases on average. Each of these
10 cases are unique, requiring different court mandate
11 conditions and supervision levels. Consequently, our
12 probation officers are required to continually
13 evaluate and prioritize their cases. For this reason,
14 the Department of Probation has placed an emphasis on
15 strengthening case management within our agency. We
16 have created branches within our Operations Division,
17 specifically for individuals who were sentenced to
18 probation as a result of a firearm or sex offense
19 charges and require intense engagement supervision.
20 Additionally, we have integrated our ICM program
21 across every borough, expanding our ability to handle
22 more cases. Assigning cases to specific branches and
23 highlighting their priority level assist in
24 streamlining the management of our caseload.

3 Department of Probation is also intent on
4 upgrading our case management system to reflect the
5 information and data that is helpful in determining
6 resource allocation, compliance, and outcomes. These
7 efforts aid DOP in managing internal efficiencies and
8 promote effective supervision. Notably, the
9 Department of Probation has secured approval to hire
10 an additional 100 probation officers and has recently
11 submitted a PAR for an additional 150 more. To
12 enhance probation officers' recruitment, Department
13 of Probation is engaging in ongoing discussions with
14 DCAS to increase the frequency of the probation
15 officer exam. Additionally, the Department of
16 Probation plans to refine the notice of exam to
17 reflect clearer job requirements. Our recruitment
18 strategy has also become more focused with efforts
19 including attendance to hiring halls, schools, and
20 career fairs. We are also modernizing recruitment
21 methods by integrating approaches such as the use of
22 QR codes and tablets, allowing for the Department of
23 Probation to assist individuals wanting to apply on-

24 site.
25 We are also strengthening the skills of
our probation officers by revolutionizing the

2 training probation officers receive in our academy.

3 The new curriculum crafted from feedback of

4 Department of Probation employees focus groups

5 emphasizes case management, compliance with code of

6 conduct, and technologically proficiencies along with

7 other State-required peace officers courses. Each

8 recruit is now provided with a laptop to facilitate

9 access to the Department's Caseload Explorer Training

10 site where they gain insight into case management

11 protocols and are receiving firsthand experience of

12 an officer's daily operations, all while still

13 learning and training at our academy. By integrating

14 laptops into the training curriculum, we now have the

15 ability to replicate every technical function and

16 standard of an officer's task and are strengthening

17 recruits with the tools and resources necessary to

18 excel in their future roles.

19 Recruits are also learning chain of

20 command, accountability, integrity and structure, all

21 of which are essential to our Department's mission.

22 Our new training curriculum will produce a more well-

23 rounded probation officer by enhancing their

24 technical skills and character traits vital to

25 supporting our clients and the Department. We

2 recently sworn a class of probation officers who are
3 the first to receive the enhanced five-month
4 training.

5 Department of Probation is also focusing
6 on professional development of our current workforce.
7 Particularly, we have created promotional
8 opportunities that have not been presented to our
9 current employees in over a decade. This month, our
10 supervising probation officers will be able to take
11 the administrative probation officer's exam, which
12 creates a highly sought-after path to promotion. This
13 is in addition to adding in-service training for our
14 existing probation officers. This training will be
15 offered through the academy and will present a strong
16 correlation to the job duties and functions of a
17 probation officer.

18 Department of Probation is committed to
19 ensuring that the best services are provided to our
20 clients. Two months ago, we discussed our role in
21 NeON expansion. Our live RFP went unanswered and,
22 after many discussions with our approved list of
23 vendors, unfortunately, the RFP remains unanswered.
24 However, the Department of Probation has and
25

2 continues to provide assistance and support in
3 obtaining any and all governmental services.

4 Department of Probation also offers and
5 is exploring many other vocational programs for our
6 clients, such as CDL license courses, welding
7 courses, drone operations, and specialty
8 certifications. We have also developed a yearly
9 schedule where we will be able to offer various
10 programming at multiple locations several times
11 throughout the year. Increased programming and
12 services ensure our allocated budget will be used to
13 support our clients through programming and the
14 offering of educational and employment opportunities,
15 thereby improving public safety.

16 Department of Probation is pleased to
17 announce that we have soft-launched our new Program
18 Locator, which can be found in our Department of
19 Probation website. This Locator will allow clients
20 and community members to locate programs and
21 resources in and around their neighborhood or current
22 location. This function also provides users with the
23 opportunity to sign up for programs as well. Our
24 Program Locator offers individuals anywhere in the
25 city the opportunity to find services or discover

2 programs in their area with the click of a button.
3 Our Program and Evaluation Team continues to engage
4 in communication and collaboration with our program
5 partners, which in turn has elevated performance and
6 increased community engagement. Over the last Fiscal
7 Year, our Arches program has seen an increase in new
8 enrollees from 221 in Fiscal Year 2023 to 281 in
9 Fiscal Year 2024. We have also seen an increase in
10 the total number of individuals served by Arches from
11 299 in Fiscal Year 2023 to 343 in Fiscal Year 2024,
12 placing the program at a 75 percent of its max
13 capacity. Through innovative partnerships with
14 individuals and organizations across the city,
15 Department of Probation is committed to
16 revolutionizing the support system for those on
17 probation, providing not just services, but
18 transformative support that positively impacts their
19 lives. Credible Messengers are at the heart of this
20 revolutionary approach, forming unique relationships
21 with individuals under probation supervision and
22 inspiring them to change their thinking, attitudes,
23 and actions.

24 Since the Preliminary Budget hearing,
25 Department of Probation has taken a groundbreaking

2 step by hiring two Credible Messengers as community
3 coordinators. This title reflects the central
4 qualifications and skills needed to elevate their
5 roles within our agency. Our Credible Messengers are
6 drafting and delivering powerful, scripted messages
7 to our clients about the services, programs, and
8 support available under the Department of Probation
9 supervision. They also collaborate closely with our
10 probation officers and violence interrupters to
11 foster lasting positive change within our
12 communities. This collaborative effort is a testament
13 to our belief that working together makes stronger
14 and more effective relationships. We recognize the
15 importance of focusing our efforts on education,
16 employment, and restorative programs as they play a
17 pivotal role in reducing recidivism and promoting
18 long-term success. Therefore, creating programs,
19 experiences, and using innovations that will generate
20 enthusiasm and capture the interests of our youth
21 plays an important role in their engagement with the
22 Department of Probation programs, while further
23 reducing recidivism and leading to a safer city. This
24 is one of the many reasons why we will be introducing
25 virtual reality into our array of resources. We

2 anticipate that virtual reality will offer
3 multifaceted benefits as we further our mission.
4 Virtual reality will serve as an interactive tool to
5 assist our clients in developing communication, anger
6 management, and conflict resolution skills by
7 incorporating themes of personal responsibility,
8 teamwork, and resilience. The virtual reality
9 experience aims to work to develop their decision-
10 making skills by presenting them with an opportunity
11 to explore options in real-time scenarios and
12 equipping them with essential life skills, making our
13 clients less vulnerable to circumstances when faced
14 with similar situations throughout their daily lives.
15 Virtual reality will help promote positive, positive
16 values for our clients and help them build stronger
17 community relations in a way we are all excited
18 about.

19 In addition, we are excited to report
20 that our NeON photography program will be expanding
21 as well. NeON photography offers vocational training
22 in classes modeled after college-level courses.
23 Participants receive work readiness training,
24 technical photography skills, and access to
25 professional photography equipment in preparation to

2 work as professional photographers. Some of our
3 graduates have been hired for events such as the Met
4 Gala, Tribeca Film Festival, New York Fashion Week,
5 John McEnroe Tennis Tournament, and Carnegie Hall. We
6 have just hired a new videographer to join our team,
7 and we are eager to expand the program from six
8 locations with 100 participants to 10 locations
9 servicing 200 participants across all boroughs this
10 summer. We would like to thank Council Member Powers
11 and Council Member Holden for your continued support
12 of this initiative as well as invite you to our NeON
13 photography's latest solo exposition opening at the
14 Kente Royal Gallery in Harlem this July.

15 With summer right around the corner, I
16 would be remiss if I did not highlight the impressive
17 work being done by the Department of Probation for
18 the Summer Youth Employment Program. Our probation
19 officers are extremely active in supporting every
20 young person who is eligible for Summer Youth
21 Employment by assisting them in gathering documents,
22 applying for the program, and guiding them throughout
23 the process. This Calendar Year, Department of
24 Probation has helped submit 1,008 emerging leader
25 Summer Youth Employment applications. This is over

2 200 more than the 798 we helped submit in Calendar
3 Year 2023. Our probation officers' involvement does
4 not end once the application is submitted. We are in
5 constant communication with DYCD throughout the
6 summer youth about each of our youths and use the
7 information gathered to build on conversations with
8 young people under supervision to ensure they are
9 meeting program expectations as well as goals of
10 their own.

11 Our probation officers are dedicated to
12 building trust and creating connections with our
13 clients and the community. Our unwavering commitment
14 to enhance the quality of services and support
15 provided to our clients are a testament towards
16 positive change within the Department. Speaking of
17 positive change, the Department has recently
18 eliminated the process that caused clients to change
19 probation officers every time their risk level
20 changes. This protocol was not beneficial to the
21 client or the probation officer establishing a
22 meaningful relationship. Department of Probation will
23 always be guided by our mission to divert individuals
24 away from the criminal justice system and towards the
25 path of positive change. We are fostering individual

2 growth while simultaneously promoting public safety
3 throughout our city. Thank you for the opportunity to
4 testify this afternoon, and I will be happy to answer
5 any questions you may have.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you,
7 Commissioner, for your testimony. I want to jump
8 right into it.

9 The Mayor's Preliminary Management Report
10 describes the Department of Probation as the largest
11 and most robust alternative to incarceration in New
12 York City. In addition, the DOP has long provided
13 innovative and multi-pronged services to communities
14 around the city as well as New Yorkers on probation.
15 However, many of the city's ATIs, re-entry and other
16 criminal justice programs are not budgeted in DOP,
17 but are part of the miscellaneous budget administered
18 through the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice among
19 other agencies. Would DOP be able to take more
20 responsibility for managing, administering, and
21 overseeing the City's criminal justice and public
22 safety programs?

23 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: DOP as it stands
24 now, naturally we spoke about our headcount reduction
25 and our efforts as far as recruitment and hiring and

2 the additional academy classes that are going in in
3 the near future so, with the right amount of
4 individuals serving as probation officers and
5 supervising probation officers, we're able to handle
6 any additional challenges, programs, services that we
7 are met with.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So basically, if
9 you were able to fill all your vacancies, you feel
10 you'd be able to handle all that?

11 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Yes.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, and what
13 additional resources would DOP need to effectively
14 expand your ATI programming?

15 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: People. People. I
16 mean, that's where we're down and we have...

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What's your
18 current vacancy rate?

19 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: My current vacancy
20 rate now is 249 headcount, which 222 are probation
21 officers.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And what's your
23 total staff?

2 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Total actual staff
3 is 832 as it stands. Total budgeted headcount is
4 1,081.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Talk about
6 the Local Conditional Release Commission. Could you
7 update the Committee on the work of this Commission?
8 How much funding is allocated in the Executive Plan
9 for the Commission? How many people are employed
10 under it?

11 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I'll defer to my
12 Deputy Commissioner of Legal.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HAMBLIN: Good
14 afternoon. There is no line budget for the
15 Conditional Release. The operations of the Department
16 will support what's needed for the Conditional
17 Release. Currently, we have two members who are
18 assigned to support the Commission, a director and a
19 coordinator, and the supervision functions of the
20 Conditional Release will be handled by our Operations
21 Bureau.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So you're
23 confident you can absorb this new task with what you
24 have, with the budget you've got?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HAMBLIN: As the
3 Commissioner has stated, that is the anticipated hope
4 but, as she stated, we do need people.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Have
6 probation officers received any special training? Are
7 you actively trying to hire more probation officers
8 specifically for this new responsibility?

9 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: All probation
10 officers will be trained for the responsibility. The
11 supervision's not going to be different than any
12 supervision that we're met with now. It's just a
13 matter of having more probation officers to be
14 handling the increasing cases that we're anticipating
15 as a result of the Commission.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What is the
17 eligibility criteria currently to be considered for
18 release?

19 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: For release as it
20 stands now, you have to be sentenced to a year, so
21 you do have to be sentenced and have served three
22 months of that year. There are some other
23 eligibilities that the DC of Legal can go over.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How many
3 individuals who've been incarcerated have been then
4 released by this Commission?

5 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: The Commission has
6 not begun yet. We just had the final confirmation on
7 April 24th. The Council has confirmed the final two
8 members so we are scheduled to meet. We're just
9 getting times and dates from the members of the
10 Commission. Some have vacations, weddings, etc. We're
11 going into the summer months, but we're scheduled to
12 meet with Corrections Tuesday on the 21st, so we
13 anticipate next week to be meeting also with the
14 Commission. Just going over some of the trainings and
15 protocols. Most members are familiar with it. They
16 have the criteria, the statute that's related to
17 that. Also, we have forwarded the application to the
18 Department of Corrections. Naturally, they have 6-A.
19 I think this corresponds somewhat with that but, with
20 that, we want to make sure that the applications are
21 getting to the members so logistically we'll be
22 ironing that out on the 21st, I believe it is, of
23 May. We have a meeting pertaining to that.

24

25

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Once the
3 Commission is up and running, how long will those
4 released remain under your supervision?

5 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: How long will the
6 release remain under..

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HAMBLIN: There will
8 be a period of one year. That's what's required.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: One year?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HAMBLIN: Yes.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, I'm going
12 to turn it over to Chair Nurse for some questions,
13 and we've been joined by Council Member Banks on
14 Zoom.

15 Chair Nurse.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you, Chair
17 Brannon.

18 Okay, I also want to talk a little bit
19 about agency staffing. According to the New York
20 State Comptroller's 2024 update on New York City
21 staffing trends, the Department has experienced, on
22 average, 67 separations from payroll from July
23 through January of each year prior to the pandemic.
24 In FY24, the number of separations from payroll
25 totaled 152 employees. Additionally, the Department

2 currently has over 200 vacancies when compared to its
3 budgeted headcount so can you speak to a little bit
4 of what's driving this separation for so many people
5 in comparison to previous years?

6 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: And we have the
7 number. The attrition is, the number one reason is
8 retirement, and I think that's followed by relocation
9 or leaving the state. I'll turn it over to Deputy
10 Commissioner of Administration. She has the exact
11 breakdown.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you.

13 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: You're welcome.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MCGILL: Good
15 afternoon, Chair. The attrition rate continues to
16 rise as you stated. The number one reason that we are
17 seeing is within retirement and, also, we looked at
18 also individuals leaving for better-paying jobs as
19 well.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, and in your
21 recruitment processes, I mean, from my understanding,
22 with the average starting salary is 50,000. Is that
23 accurate?

24 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: So the average
25 salary.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MCGILL: Average
3 salary...

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Not including all
5 the benefits.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MCGILL: The average
7 salary for a probation officer is 55,000. However,
8 the starting salary is 45,000.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Has there been any
10 effort to try to push this up or negotiate for hire?

11 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I know that the
12 negotiation is currently ongoing with the union as
13 well as OLR. I am in support of it. They deserve more
14 money for sure. They do a lot of work, and a lot is
15 expected of them.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I mean, given that
17 this agency is going to carry so much of the casework
18 for diverting people from Rikers, it would seem like
19 that should be a clear call to action from the
20 Administration to meet that demand.

21 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Absolutely,
22 absolutely.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: You testified that
24 the average caseload is about 50. What about in high-

2 risk units where you're supervising gun offenders? Is
3 that the same average caseload?

4 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Right, it's of the
5 same average caseload. That's the average for adult
6 caseloads. That's why we parsed out those that need
7 that intense supervision, that we want to keep out of
8 the system so we created a separate branch just to
9 oversee firearm offense individuals, sex offenses,
10 because that requires special training, being able to
11 peel back the onion when it comes to their social
12 media platforms, which is a lot of times where
13 victims are tempted to be located.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And what's the
15 caseload for officers in that particular unit? How
16 many people are they normally working with?

17 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I'll turn it over to
18 DC of Adult Services.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: Yes, good
20 afternoon. Their caseload ranges between 25 and 30.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: 25 and 30. Okay.
22 You mentioned you had, maybe you mentioned, trying to
23 keep up, some community coordinators. Can you explain
24 the role of the community coordinator and how their
25 responsibilities differ from a probation officer?

2 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Right, so community
3 coordinators are, they pretty much deliver the
4 program. We have what we call a RAW program, which
5 are our clients under supervision for robbery,
6 assaults, and weapons. What we wanted to do was kind
7 of revolutionize the community coordinators. Instead
8 of just having someone up there kind of freelancing,
9 we want it more structured, right? Scriptive as far
10 as the opening, but naturally the dialogue would be
11 very diverse so, as a result of such, we found that
12 they weren't being paid much. You know, I mean, some
13 were as low as 30-something-thousand, 40-something so
14 by converting over to community coordinator, we can
15 afford to pay them a higher range of salary and
16 therefore be attractive to a different selection of
17 individuals applying for that particular job, but
18 they will also be working with some of our violence
19 interrupters, especially in RAW programs, but we want
20 to see a more robust delivery, thought-provoking,
21 facilitated where they're actually engaging our
22 clients to participate, and so we were fortunate
23 enough to hire at least two. We were able to hire
24 since the last time we were here.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, and do you
3 have a sense of what the average age of your POs are
4 in the field?

5 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I guess Adults, you
6 can speak to yours, DC of Adults, and then DC of
7 Juvenile, you can speak to your average age.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: Is it the
9 average age of POs, you're asking?

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah. Right. The
11 officers who are out in the field, folks who are
12 doing house visits, things like that.

13 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: She doesn't have the
14 data...

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MCGILL: I don't have
16 that available, but I will follow up with you.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: In general, would
18 you say this is a particular group of folks that are
19 closer to retirement, or?

20 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I would say that.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

22 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I was going to say
23 that based on what I'm experiencing and seeing them,
24 yes.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Right, okay. We
3 noticed that at the CityJobs website, there are
4 pretty serious vacancies for very senior leadership.
5 I could read off a ton of roles, but there's a lot of
6 them and then, of course, high turnover in your
7 general counsel, deputy commissioners, executive
8 agency, counsel for family court, director of HR so
9 can you speak to what's fueling this turnover?

10 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Yeah, so it's not
11 really a turnover so I like to think succession,
12 right, and because we have people that are close to
13 the age of retirement, I like to keep a pool of
14 individuals. I don't want it last minute. We can't
15 afford to have a position of vacant in probation and,
16 you know, from what I'm seeing, experiencing that
17 with the probation officers, we have to function so
18 we actually put, those positions were posted as a
19 result of being able to forecast and think succession
20 with interviewing several people. We just currently
21 experienced two vacancies for assistant
22 commissioners, which we have pretty much already
23 filled. It's just now the onboarding process.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. I have some
25 questions regarding recent changes to probation

2 officer shifts, which my understanding now
3 incorporates two shifts. There's a 6 a.m. to 2 p.m.
4 and a 1 p.m. to 10 p.m. Is that correct?

5 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Right, no, that's
6 probably just rumors. You know, we've been exploring
7 what works for them because when I first walked in
8 the door, I got numerous complaints about the tour as
9 it exists. They want family work-life balance, so
10 people were complaining that they do, currently now I
11 think at adult services, there's three tours of early
12 tours, and then there's these two late tours during
13 the week, 1 to 10, I believe it is so, based on that,
14 we were exploring and asked supervisors to kind of
15 put it out to the officers to see if having a steady
16 tour may work for them because they already encompass
17 part of the weekend, and then with the steady tour,
18 whichever one they prefer, if they have to do an
19 earlier tour or a later tour to meet the curfew check
20 needs, or they can't reach a client because a
21 client's working during the day or work during the
22 evening, then they can do what we call a tour change,
23 you know, on a particular day to meet with those
24 requirements, but there's nothing, that's all
25 exploratory, it's nothing that's been put in place.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So this is an
3 exploratory, I mean, would you call it a pilot? I
4 mean, how did this?

5 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: No, there's no
6 pilot, there's no hours that's been changed.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So was there any
8 communication to employees that there would be a
9 shift change?

10 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: No, there was
11 communication to management to speak with their
12 employees to see would they prefer an early tour
13 shift or a late tour shift? I think it was probably
14 not communicated correctly.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. So as of this
16 moment, there is not a shift change?

17 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: No.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. The rest of
19 my questions have to deal with program restoration
20 and then I'll pass it on. I was going to talk about
21 NeON, Next Steps and Arches. In March, when we asked
22 about NeON, you said it didn't launch. You testified
23 that you didn't get any responses back to the RFP,
24 that you were kind of targeting vendors that you
25 thought would be able to provide the right service.

2 You're testifying again that it remains unanswered.

3 So just for clarity, are you saying that no entities
4 have responded to the RFP at all?

5 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: We've been speaking
6 with them. So this particular RFP, just to make clear
7 what it's designed to do is what we're already doing.
8 It's designed to be able to access government funds
9 or services and, as a result of such, we do that
10 already in the NeONs and, in addition to that, I
11 believe it was HRA during some of the meetings who
12 stated that not only are we providing those services,
13 but they have in close proximity to the NeONs their
14 own office that does the same, and that could be the
15 reason why we can't get a vendor to pick up this
16 particular service. This particular service was a
17 discussion with the Gun Violence Prevention Task
18 Force. I was not part of Probation then. I think I
19 would go a different route. We're currently in
20 discussions now to think about reappropriating this
21 money to more programs and services so I'm just
22 waiting for some feedback to see if we can do that.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, that's fine.
24 Just for clarity, so no one has picked this up? No
25 one has even attempted?

2 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: No.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, and what is
4 the value of the RFP?

5 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I believe it's 800
6 and something thousand. Do you have the exact value?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MCGILL: 855,000
8 dollars.

9 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: But that's for three
10 locations.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MCGILL: That's for
12 three locations. Sorry, Commissioner.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, and what is
14 the current status of the NeON Plus Navigators
15 Program?

16 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I'm sorry, I didn't
17 hear you.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: The NeON Plus
19 Navigators Program?

20 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: It's the same thing.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. What is the
22 current status of the Made in New York Animation
23 Project?

24 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Matt.

25

2 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Thank you, Council
3 Member. The Made in New York Animation Project has
4 served as one of our summer program providers for
5 several years now. Typically, we received funding
6 outside of Department's budget to cover the Animation
7 Project. This year, we didn't receive and aren't
8 planning to receive any of that money. We know how
9 important Animation has been and how supportive
10 they've been to our mission, how they've delivered
11 really great services, and so we've been innovative
12 in ways to find money to support the program. They
13 are going to launch a summer session. We're really
14 excited about it. We're providing upwards of 200,000
15 to them to provide that so it's a portion of what
16 they would've received previously, but they're going
17 to be delivering summer services for nearly 200 young
18 people that way.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: 200 young people.
20 My understanding is this project typically serves
21 1,800 youth per year. What is your projection for the
22 coming Fiscal Year for serving?

23 DIRECTOR LYNCH: I can speak to what we're
24 doing this summer. We are in conversations with
25 Animation and other City partners who have helped

2 support this in the past to identify ways that we can
3 continue this for the remainder of the '25 Fiscal
4 Year but, as of right now, we only have summer
5 planning.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: You only have
7 enough for 200 participants.

8 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Correct.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. What about
10 the East Harlem Satellite in partnership with Exodus
11 and West Harlem Satellite? Are those currently
12 operational?

13 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Yeah, the NeONs?
14 They're operational.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, and how many
16 people are these programs serving?

17 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Oh, we're at 75
18 percent capacity now, are we? Matt, you can give the
19 numbers, which are great. We did have an increase in
20 participants.

21 DIRECTOR LYNCH: I just want to clarify
22 your question. The NeONs themselves are physical
23 locations where we co-locate with community partners
24 and deliver services. The NeON programming portion is
25 something that's quite different so I could speak to

2 the programs that live in and around and support
3 those, but the operational locations, the
4 Commissioner just spoke directly to.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And the programs
6 that are running out of those, those are operational?
7 Those are up and running?

8 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Yes. Currently, there is
9 one program that is not running out of the Harlem
10 location. That is our NeON Works, which we are trying
11 to identify a vendor for currently, but the
12 remainders of where our officers are present are
13 delivering those services directly.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And you are able to
15 give me or not give me participant numbers or impact
16 numbers?

17 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Not specifically broken
18 down by borough at this time.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, I'll request
20 that in the followup.

21 The Citywide NeON Director, is that
22 position currently filled?

23 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I'm sorry?

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: The Citywide NeON
25 Director, is that position currently filled?

2 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Yes, that's filled.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, it was listed
4 on the website.

5 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Oh, no, that's
6 filled. That was filled right after the other person
7 left immediately.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Can you give
9 us an update on Next Steps? I know that we talked
10 about it at length in March. You had testified that
11 Next Steps participants were going to be successfully
12 connected to other programs, including Arches, Girls
13 Talk, and Blue Chips, so can you update us on if all
14 of those participants or how many were successfully
15 connected to the program?

16 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: All participants
17 were connected to the program with the exception, I
18 think it was maybe about 35 individuals that, because
19 of personal reasons, school, work, things of that
20 nature, didn't accept the program. I believe the
21 original number was 210.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And what are those
23 35 folks doing now?

24 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I'm sorry?
25

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: What was put in
3 place for those 35 folks?

4 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: They are part of the
5 programs that we were making mention of, Arches. I
6 can turn it over to Matt to speak. He's our program
7 evaluator.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

9 DIRECTOR LYNCH: There were 210 people
10 that were connected to Next Steps at the time of non-
11 renewal. Over 50 percent of them, or just about 50
12 percent of them were connected to Arches. Nearly 25
13 percent were connected to, or had graduated, so they
14 were, they completed the program in real time, and
15 the remainder are between our team and the Next Steps
16 provider agencies, and the other City agency partners
17 that we've worked with reached out to them, the
18 remaining folks, to find out what they were
19 interested in if they wanted to be connected to other
20 programming, and the 30 or so that the Commissioner
21 mentioned at the time of the non-renewal had yet to
22 be, the outreach had been made, but they hadn't yet
23 to be connected or contacted directly so phone calls
24 had gone unanswered, but we are confident that our
25 providers, because we've had conversations around

2 since, continue that outreach to engage that
3 population.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, so 50 percent
5 of folks who were Next Steps went into Arches is what
6 you're saying. My understanding is that one of the
7 key differences between Arches and Next Steps is the
8 way the cases are managed. In Arches, the PO serves
9 as the case manager but, in Next Steps, the case
10 management is provided by the program and so when
11 we're folding one into the other plus having PEGs to
12 Arches, how are you able to absorb that effectively?
13 Are there any impacts to your program?

14 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: You said that the
15 probation officers serve? I didn't, I'm apologize.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I mean, it's not
17 really a sticking point. The question is that Arches
18 also is not fully restored and so there were PEGs to
19 it yet you're folding in a pre-existing program that
20 you shut down into it, 50 percent of the
21 participants, so I'm just wondering the impact, how
22 is Arches, which already had impacts with a PEG, now
23 it's adding more, how is that impacting the program?

24 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Well, what we do
25 with programs, we always over-forecast so Arches was

2 one of those programs where we saw where, I never say
3 extra money, I don't even like to say that, but we
4 saw where what was being used, and we saw that we had
5 some over-funding, I like to say, because we
6 forecast, and we always over-forecast when it comes
7 to programs to make sure everybody has programs and
8 services so when you look at that cut that we had,
9 which might have been 1.6 million, I believe, as a
10 result of such, we still had several other million
11 related to the program so there was no cuts to
12 services or anything of that sort. As a matter of
13 fact, we were under our headcount as far as capacity
14 in Arches and, as we testify to today, we now have an
15 increase, and we're almost at 75 percent capacity
16 when it comes to those particular programs served
17 under the Arches umbrella.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So you're saying
19 you over-estimated so you will not be seeking
20 additional funding for Arches?

21 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I'm always seeking
22 additional funding. I'm always seeking additional
23 funding, but being that we were met with all hands-on
24 deck PEG, and we had to give up something, because we
25 over-forecast and, with that projection, we were able

2 to give up in that particular area without affecting
3 the program and services, whether we onboarded new
4 clients or not so we have plenty of room there.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. I just have
6 one more question around the Programs and Evaluation
7 Team, and then I'll open it up.

8 The followup letter that we got after the
9 preliminary hearing, you referenced the Programs and
10 Evaluation Team, which was created to review and
11 evaluate programs run by DOP to ensure they are
12 effective and leading to successful outcomes. I know
13 also Council Member Stevens had asked very plainly,
14 are we engaging the participants to understand what
15 kinds of programs that they want that they would
16 actively participate in so I'm wondering if you could
17 give us an update on the work that this team has done
18 since implementation.

19 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Yes, no, absolutely.
20 Matt, do you want to speak to that? Okay, great,
21 thanks.

22 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Yeah, thank you for that
23 question. The Program and Evaluation Team has
24 formally been in place since early this year. We've
25 transitioned many of our traditional program managers

2 to take on an evaluation mechanism in their work so
3 that we're no longer just being the supporters for
4 the program, the managers of the program, the fiscal
5 reviewers of the program, but enhancing that to fully
6 understand kind of what it takes to assess outcomes
7 effectively. We have two new program evaluators that
8 have come on deck in the last week, which we're
9 really excited about. But your question specifically
10 around how the Program and Evaluation Team, and I
11 would say even broadly across the Department of
12 Probation, has incorporated feedback from clients,
13 from program participants, on the services that they
14 want and need. We have, across many of our programs,
15 you mentioned Animation Project, at the end of every
16 single one of their program sessions would deliver a
17 program evaluation survey. That was before the
18 program and evaluation team took part and
19 implemented. The NeON stakeholder teams, as a part of
20 their mandate, regularly build in focus groups and
21 surveys to get a sense, not just on how we
22 participatory budget, but how we would develop the
23 next version of our NeON services, whether it's small
24 versions or expanded contracts for multiple years.
25 The Program and Evaluation Team recently worked with

2 two of our seasonal programs, one specifically our
3 Youth WRAP rep program, where we provide services on
4 Saturday, work readiness and work experience services
5 for young people, that not only do we have an
6 increase because of the Program and Evaluation Team's
7 involvement in the overall engagement and support,
8 but we were also able to collect surveys from nearly
9 70 young people on their overall experience within
10 the program and their wants for followup program.

11 This is really a part of the vision of the
12 Commissioner to really enhance educational and
13 employment growth, and what we found was that they
14 loved the program, they loved the stipends that they
15 received, they wish they could be a little bit more,
16 and they thought that creating different kinds of
17 sectors that these kinds of employment-based
18 experiences could be based in, would be one of their
19 recommendations so we're going to take that to heart
20 and, in our fall service session, we're going to look
21 for providers that not only live in those sectors,
22 but are willing to hire our young people afterwards.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: It's great to hear
24 that you were surveying the young people as part of
25

2 this project. What's the budget for the team? How
3 many people are on the team?

4 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: For the Evaluation
5 Team?

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: For the Program and
7 Evaluations Team. How many people do you have on
8 that?

9 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: We just onboarded 2.
10 12.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: 12 people in total?

12 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I think it's been
13 working phenomenally. We want to be good partners. I
14 don't want to cut programs. I don't want to cut
15 services. I know what we were met with earlier
16 because I'm a metric person. I need information to
17 support what's going right, like everybody else,
18 right? We want to see what's going right, and we want
19 to make sure that our clients have exactly what they
20 need. That's done with our individual action plan.
21 It's done the minute a client sits down with us, that
22 assessment is made but, still, it should be done
23 throughout their time with us because circumstances
24 change so I'm very happy to see the outcomes. I know
25 Matt spoke about it, but if you actually see on paper

2 certifications now, people graduate, they are key
3 performance indicators. I think should have always
4 been part of it. I know attendance, getting them in
5 the room is important, but I believe equally keeping
6 them there and especially keeping them in a space or
7 identifying their needs and them being able to leave,
8 it puts them on a great path.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I mean, I think
10 this is a great step from the last conversation we
11 had, or well, the first conversation we had together
12 and, like I said, it's great to hear that you're
13 actively surveying the program participants. I guess
14 just to follow along that, and one of the things that
15 you really talked about was the lack of indicators to
16 evaluate these programs in March, so what are the new
17 indicators that are helping you continue doing
18 ongoing evaluation and assessment?

19 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Right, so that was
20 always just whether they received employment, whether
21 they are up to par in school, if they weren't
22 attending school, or part of a high school
23 equivalency program, and so Matt, when he speaks
24 about the Youth WRAP program, which is headed by an
25 employee, Deldrina (phonetic), she's very good at it,

2 she's passionate about it, and I look at her reports
3 that she sends me on a monthly basis, and you see
4 that it's definitely improved as far as the outcomes,
5 and I like to publicly thank our vendors for being
6 receptive of it, because we meet with them on a
7 regular, and we pretty much, they have meetings, and
8 Matt has meetings with them, and whatever program
9 evaluators meets with them on a regular basis, and I
10 think we all want what's best for the client.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Absolutely. How
12 often is this Programs and Evaluation Team meeting
13 with providers to discuss expectations?

14 DIRECTOR LYNCH: It really depends on the
15 program that we're talking about. We have 13
16 contracts that have 26 total CBOs servicing those
17 contracts, and the non-seasonal, just our contracted
18 sites, nearly 80, so currently it's based upon a
19 model where we assess the needs of that program and
20 the scope of work of that program and define a
21 schedule but, minimally, one time a month, our
22 Program Evaluation Team is on-site conducting
23 administrative and full observational site visits so
24 we can better assess and understand how the program's
25 being delivered and make recommendations and,

2 ultimately, that's not much different than what the
3 Program Management Team did prior to this, but it's
4 the enhancements on the outcomes. It's the focus
5 messaging towards those programs that really has
6 taken it a step further. Chairperson, you had
7 mentioned the Next Steps taking on the case
8 management as being the unique difference between
9 that and Arches. One of the things that Arches has
10 taken on community now, so has been able to be a
11 pathway for folks who would have maybe previously
12 gone to Next Steps. In 2023, the Arches program did
13 not facilitate direct goal plans. They did, it was
14 informal, but not formally. Since then, this Calendar
15 Year, we've already had 204 completed at initial and
16 have been followed up on so the program vendors, the
17 program providers have been working diligently with
18 our teams to enhance their work and to take on these
19 challenges and to deliver really, really well.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, thank you for
21 that.

22 I just want to touch on two more
23 questions, and that's it for me for a little bit.
24 According to the PMMR data, the monthly re-arrest
25 rate for adults on probation increased 23 percent

2 from last year to this year. What do you attribute
3 that to?

4 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Deputy Commissioner
5 of Adults.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: I contribute
7 that to more, the majority of that is for arrest for
8 violent felony offense.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: On the re-arrest
10 part?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: Yes.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, and this
13 increased recidivism, you're supposed to be bringing
14 this down through these programs. You've got this
15 special unit that deals with gun offenders and harm
16 of a sexual nature. Are you fully staffed for that
17 work?

18 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: So for that work, we
19 definitely are fully staffed in those particular
20 branches, which were implemented probably about,
21 what, a month ago, two months ago?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: Since
23 January.

24 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Since January.
25

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And what are the
3 types of programs for those particular individuals
4 because, if you're saying that the re-arrests are
5 mostly happening for violent felonies, what
6 particular programs are connected to this unit that
7 can help bring down that recidivism?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: That's where
9 our mentor coordinators come in so, right now when
10 you hear the Commissioner talk about RAW, that's
11 robbery, assault, and weapons, so anyone who's been
12 re-offended for any of those offenses, they attend
13 group on a weekly basis so we attached a group
14 session to their supervision plus we also have
15 increased our visits to their home, and we're making
16 sure that they are setting their goals in terms of
17 their individual action plans and making sure that
18 they're connected to employment, connected to schools
19 so we're really working very hard, and we see them, I
20 guess, at least twice a week.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, thank you for
22 that. The PMMR also shows the rate of adults
23 completing their probation terms during the reporting
24 period decreased by eight percentage points to 75
25 percent. What do you attribute this decline to?

2 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: The re-arrest, it's
3 probably related to the re-arrest.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Okay, Chair,
5 opening it up for others.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Chair
7 and Nurse.

8 I want to give a shout out to the DOP
9 Works Plus Program in Coney Island. It's run through
10 the JCC. Amani and her team there do an amazing job,
11 and it's been rewarding for me as a local elected
12 official to go there and speak with the youth and
13 programs like that, I think we should really be
14 trying to double down on our investments so any way
15 that we can be helpful, we want to work together with
16 you on programs like that. I think they're really
17 making a difference and, obviously, they've got a
18 great leader out there. If you have a good leader, I
19 think it could be really something we should look to
20 expand.

21 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Agreed, thank you.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: All right, we
23 have questions from Council Member Stevens followed
24 by Williams.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Hi, good
3 afternoon.

4 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Good afternoon.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I have a couple
6 of questions, and I see in your testimony you noted
7 the partnership around SYEP with DOP, and the
8 Executive Plan reflects a 489,000-dollar transfer to
9 the Department of Probation from Department of
10 Community Development for the Summer Youth
11 Employment. What is this?

12 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I don't have any...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: It's in your
14 Executive Plan and it was transferred over so what is
15 this?

16 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I'll have my DC of
17 Administration speak to you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: No problem.

19 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Oh, you know what it
20 may be? It may be a program that they were using our
21 budget, I think, for a particular program and it's
22 sent back. Matt can speak.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: It says transfer
24 SYEP.

25 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Okay, so...

2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

3 DIRECTOR LYNCH: I can provide context
4 there, and thank you for the question. DYCD over the
5 last two years has provided us with a little over 1.2
6 million to provide what we ended up calling NeON
7 Summer. It's the enhancement on SYEP for DYCD's
8 mandate to get over 100,000 young people served in
9 SYEP so DYCD reached out to many of their
10 collaborative colleague agencies that worked with
11 them already in the SYEP world to identify ways
12 through some of the programs that we provide where..

13 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So are you guys
14 considered a provider? Like I'm trying to understand
15 like what exactly, like so then how many students are
16 you serving?

17 DIRECTOR LYNCH: We serve as a pass-
18 through for the money directly to our NeON Arts, our
19 NeON Works, and in the past, just like Chairwoman
20 Nurse said, to Animation Project so the money for
21 Animation Project is not transferred this year. The
22 money for Works and Arts has been, and we're going to
23 deliver summer services, summer programs directly for
24 that for I think 500 young people, and then
25 Animation, where we found other money in our budget..

2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Let me take a
3 step back because I'm trying to understand like
4 specifically because I understand you're saying
5 you're a pass-through on those things, but you're
6 saying you're also going to deliver services, and so
7 this money is going to the NeON because maybe I'm
8 just like not understanding. so you're saying the
9 money is going to be used for the NeON Summer to
10 provide services to them and this is through SYEP. I
11 feel like it feels disconnected so if you can just,
12 I'm sorry, connect it a little bit more for me. I'm
13 sorry.

14 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Absolutely. For DYCD to
15 make sure that they can fill their 100,000 spots for...

16 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Mm-hmm, so I'm
17 the Chair so I understand what, that's why I'm
18 confused.

19 DIRECTOR LYNCH: So next year we won't get
20 this money because DYCD is capable of doing it on
21 their own but, two years ago, they asked us to
22 support them to get to those extra spots by giving us
23 money to fulfill 1,000 spots through our internal
24 programs...

2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So you guys have
3 a program already, and this is what I'm just trying
4 to make sure I understand, so you guys have a program
5 already and so these young people are considered SYEP
6 students so that they can get to their numbers and
7 not necessarily through the program.

8 DIRECTOR LYNCH: The NeON Works and NeON
9 Arts and Animation historically have provided their
10 own services.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yes, I know.

12 DIRECTOR LYNCH: This is an enhancement on
13 that so the people that are a part of these programs
14 will be recruited to receive both program services.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So they'll get
16 paid for both programs through SYEP and the NeON
17 Summer.

18 DIRECTOR LYNCH: They will be receiving
19 and delivering on both scopes of work to be able to
20 receive money.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So we're cooking
22 the numbers so that we can get to the 100,000 because
23 that's what it sounds like.

24 DIRECTOR LYNCH: DYCD currently is capable
25 of managing this.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Are they though?

3 DIRECTOR LYNCH: And so DOP has been
4 brought on to be supportive of that through three of
5 our strongest NeON programs to make sure that the...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Because if they
7 were capable of doing it, this doesn't make sense.
8 Because, again, if you are transferring money over to
9 duplicate numbers to say that we can get to the
10 numbers, because something I'm pushing for is they
11 should have done a new RFP so that they can have
12 additional providers so that they can actually
13 properly serve the students and not just say that
14 we're getting to 100,000 by doing things like this.
15 Exactly is what I'm always pushing for so that's why
16 I'm pushing back in the way that I am because I think
17 I do understand what you're saying, which is a
18 problem for me around like the whole system because
19 that doesn't mean that we're getting to 100,000. That
20 means we're cooking the numbers so we can get there
21 instead of actually doing the work and like we only
22 have, right now it's only 60 providers through the
23 City that does SYEP, 66 providers that does SYEP, and
24 that's a little number when we've tripled the amount

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON
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2 of slots that we have, and so I do think I understand
3 what's happening, but that's a problem.

4 DIRECTOR LYNCH: I want to clarify because
5 our Animation, our Works, our Arts programs have been
6 so successful for so long..

7 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Matt, I'm going to
8 have the Finance person come up and speak to that
9 because..

10 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And it's not a
11 hit on the program.

12 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Right.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: This has nothing
14 to do with the program. It is about getting to the
15 numbers so that we can say we got to 100,000, which
16 is a problem.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HAMBLIN: I don't
18 think DOP can say that is what they're doing.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I didn't say that
20 you said that, I said it. You didn't say it, I did.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HAMBLIN: Just
22 clarifying.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I didn't say
24 y'all said it, I said it.

25

2 Althea, the Chair of Children and Youth
3 said it. I will go on record for saying it.

4 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I'm going to look
5 into that because, yeah, I definitely will,
6 definitely take a deeper dive into that because I
7 didn't see it that way. Well, I'll take a look at it.
8 I'll definitely take a look at it.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And, again, this
10 is not an attack on the program because NeON is one
11 of the programs that I love and I support and I know
12 the work that they're doing, especially with
13 Renaissance and all the things that's happening and I
14 love it, it's a great program, and so I think that if
15 it is a way for us to enhance it, to figure out to
16 expand it or whatever, that is fine, but we should
17 not be saying we're doing this so we can get to
18 100,000 because there are young people that we could
19 be reaching in other ways and how do we make sure all
20 these things are happening, and I'm not going to
21 support something where I've been saying to DYCD, we
22 need to have another RFP because we need to have more
23 providers so that we can reach the actual number, but
24 that's it. Thank you so much and I'll follow up with
25 you afterwards to get more information.

2 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Yes, I will
3 definitely look into that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Thank you.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Council Member
6 Williams.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Good afternoon.

8 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Good afternoon.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: My first
10 question is on the Credible Messenger Justice Center.
11 Can you provide an update on the Credible Messenger
12 Justice Center partnership with CUNY? What services
13 are currently offered under this program and how many
14 CMJC CUNY scholarships have been awarded?

15 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Matt, do you want to
16 speak to that?

17 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Hi, yes. CMJC is, we
18 still have a partnership with CUNY that facilitates
19 the Credible Messenger Justice Center scholarship
20 program. We are currently in the process of
21 identifying our next cohort. Our Program Team has
22 been out recruiting Credible Messengers at our
23 community-based organizations that have Credible
24 Messengers connected to them, and we expect to have a
25 fall cohort of up to 12 Credible Messengers. We have

2 a little bit of flexibility in that so there's the
3 ability to go above. We have two different types of
4 scholarships, which is why I'm describing that
5 flexibility. We have the graduate scholarship and the
6 undergraduate scholarship so it depends on the
7 combination of that.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you. The
9 next question I have is on the IMPACT program. At the
10 last hearing, you testified that there were
11 alternative programs providing services to young
12 folks because the contract was canceled. Can you
13 describe these programs and how many young folks they
14 are serving?

15 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Matt, do you want to
16 describe the program for the Mobile...

17 DIRECTOR LYNCH: We have our Mobile
18 Adolescent Therapy Program that is currently up and
19 running. The work is being conducted through cases
20 where we have a very similar mandate and scope to
21 that of what IMPACT had proposed. We serve young
22 people that are justice-involved that flow in any way
23 through family court and youth part to juvenile
24 operations. Currently, we can serve a maximum of, or
25 we have a capacity of up to 36 young people that we

2 can serve annually, but the reality is that similar
3 to a lot of our other programs, it depends on overall
4 engagement, and so that number may actually exceed
5 that. Currently, our intake is open, but we are
6 servicing 12 young people at various levels of
7 engagement in those connections.

8 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: It's never really
9 exceeded capacity. They are very responsive. They're
10 always available at any moment's notice, not just to
11 a person's home. If we need them and the person's at
12 one of our facilities and we feel the need to
13 intervene immediately, they will respond to that
14 particular location, but they provide the same
15 services that would have been provided by the IMPACT
16 contract.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you.
18 Chair, may I ask a few more questions? Thank you so
19 much.

20 The next line of questions has to do with
21 firearm use. There was a 2013 memo that the Council
22 had a chance to look at that pretty much authorized
23 any probation officer hired prior to June 30, 2013,
24 was not required to possess a firearm. An officer
25 hired after June 30, 2013, was assigned, this is very

2 long, in which the Commissioner has determined that
3 the firearm possession is mandatory so they're not
4 authorized unless it is deemed mandatory and so just
5 wanted to know, because we heard reports that the
6 policy was changed, so just wanted to know if it is
7 still current policy that probation officers are not
8 authorized or don't have to use firearms, or if they
9 are now required to use firearms. And, if the policy
10 was changed, are you able to share with the Council
11 the new policy?

12 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I don't, that sounds
13 like a Commissioner's memo, their perspective, I
14 can't think for them. I don't know why they
15 implemented it but, with that being said, firearms
16 are part of probation officers being hired. You have
17 to attend academy, you have to be able to get
18 certified for your firearm at the firearms range and,
19 as it stands now, I believe it was from 2000, early
20 2000, that that mandate was put into place where that
21 is part of a probation officer's eligibility to even
22 graduate from their academy so the only thing that, I
23 wasn't aware of that, and that would be that
24 Commissioner's prerogative. My thing was, I'm in
25 compliance with what the State certification states,

2 their graduation requirements, but more importantly,
3 especially individuals that are supervising our
4 probation officers going out into precarious
5 situations, not to mention the number of firearms and
6 drugs that are confiscated with arrest annually,
7 that, yes, you're supposed to be certified to carry a
8 firearm. That is part of your uniform of the day, and
9 that's what probation officers do.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, so if I
11 was hired 20 years ago, maybe I went through the
12 training, was trained on a firearm, didn't use my
13 firearm, maybe previous Commissioners didn't require
14 probation officers to carry firearms. Do they have to
15 do regular trainings and usage of the firearms?

16 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Absolutely, they
17 have to requalify annually.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, would it
19 be possible to send the Council like any firearm
20 guidance policy? I think there might be some, I'll
21 say, misunderstandings or we're receiving information
22 from one entity. We don't necessarily have the
23 accurate information from your Department so it would
24 be helpful to...

2 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Absolutely, yes,
3 there is a policy and procedure written for that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, and then
5 the last question has to do with searches, the
6 requirement for monthly searches, and some probation
7 officers feeling like it's a violation of the Fourth
8 Amendment. Do you have any thoughts on that?

9 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Searches of a
10 probation officer?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: No, I think
12 probation officers are required to conduct monthly
13 searches.

14 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: That's a mandate by
15 the court. That's a judge's order. It's part of a
16 judge's order. It's called consent to search. It's a
17 very powerful thing to be able to go into someone's
18 residence and be able to search it without a search
19 warrant, but that's a judge's mandate.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, I think,
21 again, as Council Members, we have these hearings.
22 It's our opportunity to talk and ask questions. I'm
23 not an expert, but then we get information from other
24 people, and so this is an opportunity to sort of
25 cross-reference that..

2 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I understand.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: So the
4 information that we're getting is that there is a new
5 requirement, and some officers don't feel like they
6 have the proper training, the legal guidance around
7 these monthly required searches.

8 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: So, no, there's no
9 new process. This process has been in place, I guess,
10 since Probation, way before my time in City
11 government, but with that, the training is important.
12 I walked into an agency that had 12 weeks of
13 training. Impossible to properly train a probation
14 officer for what they do every day in 12 weeks. Their
15 training now has been expanded to five months, and it
16 really was crafted, like I testified to, by speaking
17 with various levels of Probation employees and kind
18 of getting the gist of what it is that they do, and
19 building out the scope of work, it's my belief, this
20 is my belief, I don't know if it will, but it would
21 really support probation officers making more money,
22 because if you really look at the scope of work that
23 they do, and I don't think that was spelled out, the
24 training that's surrounding that now, it really
25 supports probation officers getting a pay raise. You

2 know, that's my belief. They have the ultimate power
3 to do exactly what you described, to go out and
4 search someone's residence. No one can do that
5 without a search warrant. They also make arrests,
6 they confiscated guns, they confiscated drugs, they
7 needed the training on how to even secure a firearm
8 that they find during these conditional searches.
9 That training wasn't really provided, and that may be
10 what you're hearing so, as a result of such, the
11 academy now encompasses that particular type of
12 training. We also are currently building out
13 supervision training. There was no leadership
14 training, you get promoted to another level, and yet
15 there's no real training. We're building out how to
16 secure a firearm, how to secure drugs, why you should
17 wear gloves because of fentanyl and we know what can
18 happen if you accidentally touch fentanyl by
19 conducting your searches. All of these changes have
20 been implemented for the betterment of our biggest
21 asset, which is the men and women that do this work,
22 and they work but, unfortunately, sometimes they're
23 met with these unforeseen circumstances, and that's
24 why this training was really strategically built out
25 to address these low gaps.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you,
3 Commissioner.

4 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: You're welcome.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you,
6 Chairs.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Chair Nurse.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Just had a
9 followup. It's great to hear about the trainings,
10 particularly with arrests and handling guns, because
11 we were hearing that people felt they weren't
12 properly trained to handle some of that stuff. How
13 long has that training been operational?

14 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: We operationalized
15 it with this last class that went in, April 8th..

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: April 8th.

17 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: We began the
18 training, yes, but we've been going around to very...
19 my DC of Adult Services can speak to that.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: Yes, so with
21 that, all the officers have been trained in firearms,
22 consent to search, what to look for. They've also had
23 cyber training, so we are making sure that the
24 officers are getting the training.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, so the five-
3 month program is with the new class. Do you do any
4 refreshers?

5 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Yes, so that's
6 called in-service training, and that's what the DC
7 was referencing, so we also have a team of people
8 that come out to make sure that the probation
9 officers that are currently in those positions have
10 what they need because we had people managing cases,
11 sex offender cases, that didn't have the proper
12 skillsets to actually look through social media
13 websites so, after identifying that, that was
14 immediately addressed and put into place so anything
15 identified, we leave no stone unturned here,
16 especially me coming into Probation the way I did, I
17 want to make sure everybody's properly prepared to do
18 what we say we're going to do, and that's keeping
19 people out of the criminal justice system while also
20 protecting the men and women doing that job.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you for that.
22 Just to back up real quick, and then I know we have
23 one other person on the stack. For your ATI programs,
24 my understanding from what we just discussed, you're
25 at 75 percent capacity, which means you have a 25

2 percent availability for when people are referred to
3 you all for programs. Is that correct?

4 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I think we were
5 speaking about, that's the Arches, overall umbrella
6 for Arches.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, so what is
8 your current capacity for absorbing referrals for
9 ATIs?

10 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Okay, so are we
11 speaking, and maybe I just wanted a little clarity,
12 are we speaking probably more so to our juveniles
13 because naturally adults, they're sentenced, and we
14 don't see them before then so when we speak about our
15 juveniles, when they're coming through intake, if
16 they're not deferred for adjustment, and then if
17 they're not remanded, we have in place, we have
18 ECHOs, we have AIMS, which are two of our particular
19 programs. You want to speak to those, Matt? He's more
20 intimate with them.

21 DIRECTOR LYNCH: I just want to clarify
22 quickly because alternative to incarceration is for
23 adults. It's coming from Rikers. What the
24 Commissioner's talking about is an alternative,
25 alternative to placement so the equivalent of that

2 for younger people that are in placement. DOP
3 represents and serves as the largest ATI as a
4 Probation Department, and you should think about all
5 of our programs as enhancements on that Probation ATI
6 model so whether you're talking Arches or CEO or
7 other things.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So under no
9 circumstances are you turning anyone away from when
10 they're referred?

11 Okay, I'm going to kick it over to
12 Council Member Stevens.

13 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Yeah, so I just
14 wanted to intervene because maybe I know that
15 everyone's not familiar with what it is, but we are
16 an alternative to incarceration, Probation as a
17 whole, and I know you're familiar with that, and then
18 naturally we work very well with ACS. We have ICM
19 cases that are assigned to us by judges. I just
20 recently spoke, that was like a small group, maybe 90
21 cases. We were taking 20 each borough with the
22 exception of Staten Island, may have been 10 because
23 it's a smaller population but, with that, I actually
24 broaden that. By now, everyone can handle an ICM case
25 so, once we get fully staffed, we may be able to go

2 back to the drawing board and speak about being able
3 to take on more of those cases, which keeps children
4 out of remand or whatever we call it, detention, with
5 ACS, and that's our intentions when it comes to those
6 particular cases. We work very closely, I speak with
7 the Commissioner over there. He makes me aware of
8 what's going on naturally. Anyone that is assigned to
9 detention, that's done by a judge usually, but we
10 still communicate where if it's a particular child
11 that they have and he feels maybe they'll be better
12 off managed by us with ICM, and he's able to have
13 those discussions with me and we're able to take
14 individuals on as a result of us expanding.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: No, thank you,
16 and thank you for your clarification around it, but
17 some of this stuff that I'm hearing, because as you
18 know, I just got ACS under my tutelage and I'm big on
19 like, why are we not working on a decarceration plan
20 for young people, and one of the things, especially
21 talking to folks in the legal community, what they
22 are experiencing is that when a judge isn't able to
23 refer them, because when they do, they are being told
24 that you guys are at capacity, and so that's what I'm
25 trying to get a better understanding of, because

2 that's what they're being told so their clients don't
3 have an option other than going to secure detention
4 because they're saying that DOP is telling them that
5 they're at capacity and they can't take any more
6 young people.

7 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Right, so I'll tell
8 you where that came from. ICM originally was designed
9 to take 20 cases only from each borough so with
10 Brooklyn and the Bronx, they were over capacity. The
11 services for family, anyone that's in family court,
12 120 days, I believe, correct me someone if I'm wrong,
13 and with 60 days, and with youth part, 120 days so,
14 as a result of such, they were over capacity so the
15 Associate Commissioner in Juvenile was saying we
16 can't take on any more because we can't manage them.
17 We only have two people there. What was happening,
18 what we discovered, when the 120 days were up or the
19 60 days were up, they thought they had to go back to
20 court and get before the judge and say, okay, they're
21 now finished the program. That's not the case. The
22 agreement is 120 days and 60 days so, when their time
23 is up, they're automatically released out of the
24 program so that was corrected. There was a brief,
25 maybe, what was it, a week, month for them to clear

2 out the particular cases but, once they reduced the
3 caseload, they were able to take in more cases, but
4 think about it. They were still only allowed to do 20
5 in every borough and Staten Island only 10, so I
6 said, why is it that when cases are managed based on
7 risk, every probation officer knows how to manage
8 every level of cases. As a result of such, why aren't
9 we allowing everyone to take on an ICM case just like
10 they have a robbery case or a weapon case. That way
11 we're able to take in more children once we get more
12 individuals hired, more probation officers hired so
13 that's why we changed it because I said, why are we
14 limited to 90 people, and then we had nine probation
15 officers over it. We could simply just take on more
16 ICM cases and manage those particular cases
17 throughout our juvenile probation officer staffing so
18 it's with the hopes of being able, once we get up to
19 full staff, we have 100 people, that's two academy
20 classes, 50 each going in back to back. We put in for
21 another 150 with the hopes of that being approved in
22 those classes every five months. We'll just keep them
23 in. We're doing recruitment. We're scheduling another
24 exam. We had one last year in June. We want to do the
25 exams twice a year so, as a result of that, hopefully

2 we can take on more cases and keep more kids out of
3 detention.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Absolutely, I'll
5 leave it there.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: No, I just want to
7 clarify, just yes or no, does DOP have the staffing
8 capacity to accept any young person into the ICM
9 program with a criminal case pending today?

10 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Yes, because I
11 expanded it and got rid of the old way that business
12 was done.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, that will be
14 helpful. Thanks, Chair.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, question
16 from Council Member Brewer.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
18 much. I have the Oversight and Investigation
19 Committee, and one of the parts of Department of
20 Investigation is just dealing with the folks who need
21 background checks. Is it a backlog or are your folks
22 able to get through that? I know when you mentioned
23 the onboarding program earlier and I was just trying
24 to see from your perspective, does the onboarding I
25 assume includes Investigation? Does it go smoothly?

2 Is there a backlog? Because you need to get your
3 people on as soon as possible.

4 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Right, no, with the
5 people that I'm hiring, unless it's at a high level,
6 executive level where it has to go through the
7 Mayor's Office of Appointments, we can get them
8 through.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

10 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: We get them through.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Quickly, okay. And
12 then the second question is just on mental health
13 because it seems to me, not you, but generally
14 there's a lot of sort of disconnected in terms of
15 mental health, so my question to you is how many
16 folks are working on it in the agency and maybe how
17 many folks who you think in your portfolio of your
18 clients have mental health issues and you have your
19 in-house and then do you have enough referral places
20 that can be of assistance to the people you're trying
21 to serve? Because that's a big challenge.

22 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: It is a big
23 challenge and, when I came in, I recommended that
24 everybody gets referred for a checkup, right, as a
25 result of just being arrested period is traumatizing.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Very.

3 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: So that's in place
4 now. We do not have an internal process. When I was
5 appointed, there was no internal process because it
6 was communicated that the individuals hired for that
7 particular position could not do their job based on
8 some statute. That never made sense to me, but we do
9 have a lot of referrals. I can pivot to my DC of
10 Adults. She can tell you exactly how many people we
11 have that are under that particular care.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And then juveniles
13 also. Go ahead.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: Good
15 afternoon. We have identified 710 Probation clients
16 who are receiving mental health services. That's 7
17 percent of our population. Yes, we have a lot of
18 programs that we have. We've made up actually a list
19 for the staff so they know who to go to so we do have
20 a list of different resources for them.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Do you think it's
22 satisfactory because you can have resources, but do
23 you have an evaluation of whether they're any good?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: That's a
25 good question.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I hate to say it,
3 but they're not all equal.

4 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Exactly. It's
5 something I've been preaching since I walked in the
6 door. It's one thing to check a box and refer
7 something, but where's the followup, and you're
8 absolutely right so that's something we're committed
9 to, and I think that's why DC of Adult Services
10 parsed out this particular list, identifying the
11 individuals that have been responsive or have been
12 very resourceful to us in treating our clients.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, 710 is a lot
14 of folks to be able to get support for. And how about
15 on Juvenile?

16 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GARDNER: Good
17 afternoon, Council Woman. My name is Joan Gardner,
18 Acting Deputy Commissioner of Juvenile Operations. So
19 approximately 48 young people were identified..

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: 48?

21 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GARDNER: Yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It's hard to hear
23 you. Can you just move the..

24 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GARDNER: I'm
25 sorry. Good afternoon. 48. Approximately 48 of our

2 youths. That's basically a 5 percent population were
3 identified as in need of mental health treatment.

4 However, I want to preface this by saying that some
5 of the youths that come in, they come in with court-
6 ordered services so their services are already in
7 place then we also look to providing a service
8 provider list for our young people and their family,
9 and there is followup from the supervising probation
10 officer with the program but in order to do a
11 followup, we need to have parental consent so,
12 because of HIPAA laws, we have to communicate with
13 the parent the importance of followups.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, I mean, my
15 experience with young people and families, if the
16 family's not involved, then it's never going to work
17 so I guess my question generally is, it seems to me
18 that, I teach at Hunter College, you have to give a
19 grade, not you, but I think just generally, the
20 mental health needs help, and I appreciate hearing
21 what you have to say, that there's a lot of work to
22 be done. Thank you very much.

23 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GARDNER: Thank
24 you, Council Woman.

25 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Chair Nurse.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I was going to ask
3 a question, but I think I'm going to pause for now so
4 I'll kick it back to you.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Commissioner,
6 your team, thank you very much for your testimony
7 today. We look forward to working with you going
8 forward.

9 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Thank you so much.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

11 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Have a great
12 weekend.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: All right, we'll
15 take a 10-minute break, and then we're going to hear
16 from the Department for the Aging.

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon, ladies
18 and gentlemen. At this time, please find seats. Once
19 again, at this time, please find seats.

20 Please ensure that all cell phones and
21 electronic devices are placed to silent.

22 We shall resume momentarily.

23 Thank you for your cooperation.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, good
25 afternoon, and welcome to the final Executive Budget

2 Hearing for the day. I'm Council Member Justin
3 Brannan. I Chair the Committee on Finance. Joined
4 this afternoon by Council Member Crystal Hudson,
5 Chair of the Aging Committee.

6 Been joined this afternoon by Council
7 Members Brewer, Lee, Schulman, and Zhuang.

8 Welcome, Commissioner Vázquez and your
9 team. Thank you all for joining us today to answer
10 our questions.

11 I always like to set the table before we
12 start.

13 On April 24, 2024, the Administration
14 released the Executive Financial Plan for FY24 to
15 FY28, with a proposed FY25 budget of 111.6 billion
16 dollars. DFTA's proposed FY25 budget of 494 million
17 dollars represents less than half of 1 percent of the
18 Administration's proposed FY25 Executive Plan. This
19 is an increase of 8.9 million dollars, or 1.8
20 percent, from the 485.1 million dollars originally
21 budgeted in the FY25 Preliminary Plan. This increase
22 results from several actions, but mostly from the
23 COLA, the cost-of-living adjustment, for non-profit
24 human service workers contracted with the City. As of
25 March 2024, DFTA has 37 vacancies relative to their

2 FY24 budgeted headcount. In the Council's Preliminary
3 Response, we called on the Mayor to add 78.2 million
4 dollars to DFTA's budget to invest in capital
5 improvements at our older adult centers, along with
6 funding home care, case management, and increasing
7 reimbursement rates for home-delivered meals. Council
8 is especially troubled in this case that the
9 Administration once again put precisely zero dollars
10 in response to our proposals, even though we
11 identified over a billion dollars that the Mayor's
12 Preliminary Budget left off the table, which could
13 keep key resources like our older adult centers open
14 and fully operational while still ensuring us against
15 economic hazards. My District is home to two NORCs,
16 and I assure you the City's older adult population is
17 not only growing, but it's as diverse as New York
18 itself, and the City needs its older adult centers in
19 top shape to serve a wide range of needs for the
20 people who quite literally helped build this city.

21 I look forward to hearing from you,
22 Commissioner, on how the Department will help our
23 seniors through these challenges now and in the years
24 to come. My questions today will largely focus on
25 capital funding and food reimbursement rates of the

2 Council's Preliminary Budget Response along with
3 expiring pandemic-related federal funding.

4 I now want to turn to my Co-Chair for
5 this hearing, Council Member Hudson, to give her
6 opening remarks.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much,
8 Chair Brannan, and good afternoon. My name is Crystal
9 Hudson, and I serve as Chair of the Committee on
10 Aging. Welcome to the Committee's hearing on the
11 Fiscal 2025 Executive Budget for the New York City
12 Department for the Aging, known as NYC Aging. Thank
13 you to Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez for joining us.

14 Older adults and the older adult provider
15 network have faced unprecedented challenges in the
16 past few years, and providers continue to raise their
17 growing concerns about the City's reimbursement
18 rates, contracts, infrastructure, and services for
19 older adults. I look forward to working
20 collaboratively with providers and the Administration
21 to help the city's 1.8 million older adults overcome
22 these challenges. NYC Aging plays a critical role in
23 assessing and meeting the needs of older adults and
24 in collaborating with the provider network and the
25 Council to harness best practices and scale

2 innovative approaches that best fit the needs of our
3 city's older adult population.

4 NYC Aging's Fiscal 2025 Executive Budget
5 is 494 million dollars, 27.8 million dollars less
6 than the Fiscal 2024 Adopted Budget. Since the
7 Preliminary Plan, the Fiscal 2025 Budget has grown by
8 8.9 million dollars, largely due to funding added for
9 the citywide human services COLA for contracted non-
10 profit providers, which I was very happy to see.

11 Despite serving almost a fifth of the city's
12 population, the Department's budget continues to
13 account for less than one half of 1 percent of the
14 City's overall budget. In our Budget Response, the
15 Council called on the Administration to increase
16 funding for case management, homecare, home-delivered
17 meal reimbursement rates, and older adult center
18 capital needs, but no funding was added to the
19 Executive Plan for these proposals. While the
20 Executive Plan includes no new needs and additional
21 PEGs, I was disappointed to see that there was no
22 restoration of PEGs from the previous two Plans. In
23 the November and Preliminary Plans, NYC Aging had a
24 cumulative 35.3-million-dollar PEG in Fiscal 2024,
25 and a baselined PEG of 17.2 million dollars starting

2 in Fiscal 2025. Additionally, I'm concerned that NYC
3 Aging's budget decreases significantly in the
4 outyears of the Executive Plan. The Fiscal 2026
5 Budget is 72.9 million dollars less than the Fiscal
6 2025 Budget. This is a 15 percent decrease for an
7 already underfunded agency. This is especially
8 concerning at a time when NYC Aging needs greater
9 resources to serve a growing aging population.
10 Critical investments are needed throughout its
11 kitchen, transportation, and non-profit provider
12 networks that serve on the front lines to address the
13 needs of our older adults. NYC Aging's Capital
14 Commitment Plan, the smallest in the City amongst all
15 agencies with Capital Plans, totals 74.9 million
16 dollars over Fiscals 2024 through 2028. The Council
17 funds nearly 30 percent of these projects. With over
18 300 OACs and NORCs now in the NYC Aging network, this
19 funding is insufficient to properly address all
20 needs. Many providers continue to raise concerns
21 regarding non-functional kitchens and deteriorating
22 infrastructure.

23 In today's hearing, we would like to get
24 a deeper understanding of NYC Aging's Expense Budget,
25 its Capital Plan, the impact of previous PEGs, how

2 the Agency determines utilization for programs, and
3 how its key services and programs will be able to
4 meet the needs of older adults in the coming years.

5 I'd like to thank the Committee Staff
6 who've helped prepare this hearing, Saiyemul Hamid,
7 Financial Analyst; Julia Haramis, Unit Head;
8 Christopher Pepe, Senior Legislative Counsel; Chloe
9 Rivera, Senior Policy Analyst; and my Chief-of-Staff,
10 Casie Addison; and Senior Director of Policy and
11 Budget Initiatives, Andrew Wright. Thank you.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Chair.
13 Before we get started, I also want to take a quick
14 moment just to thank the entire Finance Division
15 behind the scenes who's been working super hard over
16 the past nine days and all throughout this season,
17 especially Julia Haramis and Saiyemul Hamid for
18 today's hearing, my Committee Counsel, of course,
19 Mike Twomey.

20 As a reminder, for this year's Executive
21 Budget hearings, we're going to take public testimony
22 today as opposed to doing the big long day at the end
23 so if you're a member of the public and you want to
24 give testimony on the budgets for Correction,
25 Probation, or Department for the Aging, make sure you

2 fill out a witness slip with the Sergeant-at-Arms,
3 and we'll take your testimony after we're finished
4 with the agency witnesses from DFTA.

5 Now I'm going to turn it over to Mike
6 Twomey, our Committee Counsel, to swear in our
7 witnesses, but I want to mention we've been joined by
8 Council Members Carr and Brooks-Powers on Zoom.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Good afternoon.
10 Could you raise your right hands, please?

11 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
12 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this
13 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member
14 questions? Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez.

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I do.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Jose Mercado.

17 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: I do.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Thank you, you
19 may begin.

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: First of
21 all, good afternoon. Thanks you. Thank you for the
22 Sergeant-at-Arms who took care of my throat a few
23 minutes ago.

24 Good afternoon, Chair Hudson, Chair
25 Brannan, the Members of the Aging, as well as the

3 Finance Committees. As you heard, I am Lorraine
4 Cortés-Vázquez. I'm the Commissioner of New York City
5 Department for the Aging. I'm joined today by Jose
6 Mercado, our Chief Financial Officer. We want to
7 thank you for this opportunity to discuss NYC's Aging
8 Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2025.

9 We are proud to be talking to you today
10 in May, which is Older Americans Month, an
11 opportunity to celebrate the contributions of older
12 adults and the dynamic role that they play in our
13 society, something that I know that we have common
14 cause around. In addition to working to eliminate
15 ageism and ensuring the dignity and quality of life
16 for older New Yorkers, providing high-quality
17 services and resources are among our top priorities
18 at NYC Aging. We have common cause in our commitment
19 to serving this rapidly growing population of older
20 adults through services such as the Older Adult
21 Centers, which you've mentioned, home-delivered
22 meals, case management, the NORCs, which was also
23 mentioned, homecare services, transportation,
24 caregiver services, mental health, workforce
25 development programs, an array of other programs.

2 Uplifting and supporting our city's growing older
3 population is a key priority of this Administration.

4 To support this important work, our FY25
5 Executive Budget, as you've mentioned, projects 494
6 million dollars in funding, of which 356 million is
7 City funds, including allocations of 223 million to
8 support the Older Adult Centers, 59.6 million for
9 home-delivered meals, 44.4 million for case
10 management, 39.5 million to support homecare for
11 homebound older adults who are not Medicaid eligible,
12 14.7 for the NORC programs, which are the naturally
13 occurring retirement communities that could either be
14 geographic or they could be buildings, also 8.2
15 million for our caregiving services, and 5.1 million
16 for transportation services. As I mentioned during
17 our Preliminary Budget hearing, the past Fiscal Year
18 has been challenging for the City financially, and
19 New York City Aging has worked to ensure that we
20 prioritize the needs of older adults and our core
21 aging services while limiting the impact of these
22 challenges, like the various Programs to Eliminate
23 the Gap.

24 In FY25, there were no cuts in services
25 or future closures of Older Adult Centers serving our

2 population. We are pleased to see that there are no
3 mandatory saving exercises for NYC Aging under this
4 Executive Budget, and the FY25 PEGs prior to the
5 release of the Executive Budget were implemented
6 without negatively affecting services for older
7 adults. Nonetheless, we are still clearly aware of
8 the need for aging services, particularly in the core
9 services that are aligned with a community care
10 approach, which is the approach that most older New
11 Yorkers prefer, to be in their community rather than
12 institutionalized. Because of this growth, we are
13 working to ensure our state and federal partners
14 share this financial responsibility to aging services
15 in New York. We are pleased to acknowledge that the
16 budget for FY25 provides funding for three years of 3
17 percent COLA increases for the existing provider
18 network. That is key to our services, because most of
19 our services are done through the provider network.
20 Despite these past challenges, including insufficient
21 state and federal funding, we are proud of our work
22 done along with our non-profit partners in addressing
23 some of the notable recent successes and items, and
24 we really want to talk to you a little bit about
25 those, because usually we're talking about the

2 challenges, I want to talk about the opportunities
3 that we've seized. In mid-April, we are proud to
4 launch the Service Need Assessment Survey, I think,
5 Chair Hudson, you saw that in action this morning,
6 for older adults to better understand their needs,
7 and also to ask what is the quality of life that they
8 are interested in, deserving, and how can we get
9 there. Collecting data sets good policy. The data we
10 collect from this Service Need Assessment will better
11 inform the policies of the future and how our current
12 program and services can best serve the future needs
13 of the city's older population, which we all know is
14 subject to grow and, by 2030, there will be more
15 older adults than there will be young people under
16 the age of 18 in New York City. This is a great
17 opportunity for New York City's older adults as well
18 as their caregivers to have their voices heard, to
19 have programs designed around needs that they've
20 identified. When older adults complete the survey, it
21 ensures that our city's diverse communities are also
22 being heard. I would like to ask each one of you to
23 partner with us in promoting the Needs Assessment
24 through your networks and potentially even hosting
25 events in your communities or district offices where

2 older adults can complete those surveys. As I've
3 asked you in the past, I've presented the challenge
4 to join us in the conversation against ageism. I'm
5 asking you to join us in the needs assessment
6 challenge.

7 I was pleased to join Chair Hudson for
8 one of her spring senior series, Learn to Bike. It
9 was an event where older adults could either retool
10 their biking skills, relearn them, or learn to bike
11 after 60. I have long promoted the inclusion of
12 tricycles for older adults and want to thank the
13 Chair for her continued commitment to micromobility
14 options for older adults. Our community needs to be
15 age-inclusive. If we're going to talk about
16 micromobility, it has to include services for the
17 aged and also for the disability community.

18 It is not enough to be age-friendly. We
19 must design our neighborhoods and services around
20 physical infrastructures that benefit people of all
21 ages. Bicycles and tricycles should be included in
22 that discussion for older adults. While I was proud
23 to have attempted to bike that day at Commodore Barry
24 Park, I can see where tricycles would have been

2 useful and continue the work, including the viable
3 option in New York City.

4 Just this week, I attended an AARP United
5 Nations briefing series on global ageing where the
6 panel discussion was on the global longevity economy.
7 It was an incredible discussion around the longevity
8 economy and the immense positive economic impact to
9 our cities when we leverage the expertise and talents
10 of older adults in the workforce.

11 Similar to our efforts with the Special
12 Needs Assessment, we are continuously looking for
13 innovative approaches to meet the needs of older New
14 Yorkers, while we're also addressing the overall
15 challenges of this city. The baby boomers will soon
16 be past the retirement age, which will mean greater
17 need for meaningful and impactful workforce
18 opportunities for older adults. People either need to
19 continue to work or want to continue to work so that
20 they can be socially productive in their retirement
21 years. We're looking forward to upcoming
22 opportunities to showcase our work, which includes
23 the dynamic talents of older New Yorkers. On May
24 29th, we will host the Intergenerational Groove,
25 which is in recognition of the 31st Older Adult

2 Health and Fitness Day, and that will take place at
3 Foley Square. I expect to see all of you there
4 grooving with us. We expect about 1,000 older adults
5 from across the five boroughs come to learn new dance
6 moves and showcase their own. We've also invited New
7 York City Public Schools so that this is all part of
8 the larger Healthy NYC plan. I would like to invite
9 you all and your constituents to get the groove on
10 with us. As Madonna says, get into the groove.

11 Additionally, New York City Aging has
12 been convening a series of age-inclusive workshops,
13 meetings that sprung from part of our conference, our
14 work with the U.S. Conference of Mayor. Area agencies
15 across the U.S. have been joining these discussions
16 to come up with a definitive way of making sure that
17 cities are age-inclusive. We're developing a workshop
18 so that we can help other cities, including our own,
19 as another example how New York Aging, really New
20 York City, is leading the United States in policy
21 development and social service work, particularly
22 around older adults.

23 Finally, we are proud of the strides made
24 since the establishment of the Older Americans Act
25 surrounding food and nutrition, which created the

2 Area Agencies on Aging, the AAAs as they're commonly
3 known, New York City being one of them, New York City
4 Aging being one of them, to combat older adult
5 hunger, which has now evolved to meet the future
6 needs of all older adults. We are constantly
7 innovating, and that is especially true in the area
8 of food provision. We have opened five commissary
9 kitchens, which allow programs to cook healthier and
10 culturally appropriate foods, while providing meals
11 for other programs within the provider network. We've
12 been trying to move away from commercial catering.
13 Additionally, we have piloted the opening of pop-up
14 cafes to serve meals to older adults outside the
15 older adult club in an effort to look at food
16 insecurity from a broad and innovative perspective,
17 meeting people where they are. We are incredibly
18 grateful for the ongoing support of the City Council,
19 which in FY24 awarded NYC Aging with over 41.3
20 million dollars in discretionary fund, allowing us to
21 make greater investment in often underserved and
22 unserved communities.

23 Home Delivered Meals is a program that is
24 a central component for all our services. Not only
25 does it provide meals to the homebound older New

3 Yorker, the interaction, as many of you know, with a
4 delivery person, which for many people might be the
5 only interaction they receive for that day. Support
6 for our ongoing efforts to combat social isolation,
7 again, is a critical aspect of our community care
8 approach. This program is a very important program in
9 that constellation of combating social isolation, but
10 it's also important to know that this program has
11 strict guidelines set by the State and is open only
12 to those who meet that criteria.

13 Because financial security remains among
14 the most critical needs of older adults, it is highly
15 correlated to food insecurity. NYC Aging is
16 continuously evaluating our efforts and exploring
17 areas for innovation. This includes enhancing meal
18 options for recipients, embracing the diversity of
19 our city by increasing the availability of culturally
20 aligned meals, and promoting uniformly, highly
21 quality and nutritious meal. The current RFP included
22 requirements for halal meals. In the past, we have
23 only had a requirement for culturally relevant meals
24 and for kosher meals, and now we've included halal
25 meals, and it is our way of expanding our commitment
to cultural competency. In FY23, our network of HDM

2 providers delivered over four million meals to over
3 27,000 clients, 27,574 to be exact.

4 I would also like to raise an ongoing
5 issue that we have spoken about in our Preliminary
6 Budget hearing in March. In 2023, we were informed by
7 NYSOFA, which is the oversight agency at the state,
8 that managed long-term care clients would receive
9 meals through their managed long-term care provider
10 rather than HDM. This was surprising as NYC Aging had
11 been providing home-delivered meals to Medicaid-
12 eligible clients in the past more than a decade and,
13 as Medicaid is a means-tested program, MLTC clients
14 should be receiving meals through those rather than
15 the HDM. It was news to us. Since we learned of this
16 issue, we identified the number of MLTC clients which
17 were enrolled in the HDM program, and they totaled
18 7,000. We were very clear with NYSOFA that we were
19 not going to remove those 7,000 from the home-
20 delivered meal service, but rather grandfather them
21 in, and ask for their guidance moving forward for HDM
22 clients who were under MLTC providers. Currently, NYC
23 Aging has identified 2,523 older adults in the MLTC
24 programs, I hate these acronyms, it's managed long-
25 term care, who were deemed ineligible for the home-

2 delivered meals. This is a continuing problem for us.
3 Again, we are still waiting for state guidance from
4 NYSOFA on how to proceed with these cases. NYSOFA did
5 respond regarding our request, however, their letter
6 was unclear as how we should be addressing this. We
7 implore your partnership as we seek clarity and
8 guidance from the State on this issue. Your voice
9 amplifies the need of older adults in all items,
10 especially food provision for some of the most
11 vulnerable older adults.

12 For homecare and caregiving services, as
13 you know, caregiving is one of those things that
14 affects over 1.3 million New Yorkers. As a caregiver
15 myself, I know, and the Aging Chair also had this
16 experience, it is one of the most daunting, yet
17 essential services, and it's only expected to grow.
18 As the number of older adults in New York City
19 continues to grow, it is imperative that we continue
20 to grow the community care support systems which
21 allow older adults to stay in the communities that
22 they build and to truly age in place. We do this
23 through homecare and caregiving services, which
24 greatly serve those who are homebound or in need of
25 additional supports so that they can remain active in

2 the community. Homecare services are provided through
3 Medicaid reimbursements for those who do not qualify
4 for Medicaid programs, and that is the Expanded In-
5 Home Services for Elderly People which is commonly
6 known as EISEP, where case management hours are
7 reimbursed to providers. Currently, we are advocating
8 to New York State for the inclusion of \$1.15 per hour
9 wage to match EISEP workers with those of Medicaid or
10 Medicare homecare workers who have already received
11 these raises. This leaves EISEP clients at a
12 disadvantage where Medicaid homecare workers are
13 incentivized to take on those clients because the pay
14 is higher. There's no distinction between the EISEP
15 and the Medicare homecare workers. They're primarily
16 women of color, primarily come from the communities
17 that they're serving. This exacerbates inequity
18 because of salary. Currently, the homecare program in
19 NYC is funded at the tune of 38,774,000 dollars for
20 FY25, but this does not include the wage increases to
21 match the wage of the Medicaid workers. This occurred
22 in previous years, and we were able to resolve it in
23 part, primarily with the help of the advocates and
24 also with the Council workers to ensure that aging
25 services work. We have no idea how it could happen

2 again so we're asking you again to join us, to raise
3 our voices, to make sure that we can get that salary
4 differential between EISEP workers and homecare
5 workers. These are women of color who do not need to
6 be left out of this pay wage. It's critical to our
7 aging services.

8 As you know, the pandemic is behind us,
9 but it was challenging for all of us, and the strain
10 on unpaid caregivers has been significant. The
11 Caregiver Support Program offers groups counseling,
12 training, outreach, and information services to
13 unpaid caregivers, most of which are families. Many
14 older adults are caretakers caring for their aging
15 parents. That's where I come in. I'm a 73-year-old
16 woman taking care of a 94-year-old woman. Many
17 caregivers also have full-time jobs. The Caregiver
18 Program offers options for respite care through
19 homecare as well as participation in social adult
20 daycare. In 2017, we estimated that there were 1.3
21 million, I'm sure that that number has gone higher
22 since then, who function as caregiver. Without the
23 support for care of daily living activities and
24 respite care, many of these caregivers would not have
25 the financial means or ability to leave their care

2 recipient in someone else's care while they get a
3 needed break from their caregiving responsibilities.

4 I could not do it without the support of my mother's
5 homecare worker. In FY25, funding for the Caregiver
6 Program is currently projected to be 8.2 million
7 dollars. Caregiver supports positively impact the
8 health and well-being of older adults while aligning
9 with the cultural background of that individual.

10 These integrated services for homecare assistance,
11 which is care for daily living such as bathing,
12 cleaning, food prep, shopping, transportation, meal
13 provision, can keep an older adult in their community
14 independent, which is their desire and a shared goal
15 between this Administration and the Council. As I've
16 stated before, I have personal experience with this.

17 I'm not going to deliberate that. This is why I
18 believe that community care is important, not because
19 of my own personal experience, but I am no different
20 than the 1.3 million other New Yorkers who find
21 themselves in this situation. I continue to be proud
22 of the great work that NYC Aging and the network
23 providers accomplish with our resources. We're
24 continually implementing new approaches through our
25 provider network and testing innovative ideas to best

2 serve the growing population of older adults who are
3 central and core to everything that we do. Once
4 again, the Service Needs Assessment will inform
5 better policy in the future, help us get as many
6 older adults enrolled and responding.

7 This year has shown that NYC Aging as a
8 whole can look to inefficiencies and improve our
9 programs that truly meet the needs of older New
10 Yorkers. This mindset has allowed us to weather cost-
11 saving exercise, which each agency has had to
12 complete. While the financial outlook is improving,
13 we are continuing to be good stewards of public
14 dollars. While the needs of older adults often
15 outpace the availability of resources to aging
16 services, I look forward to explore ways to match our
17 programs to meet the increasing needs. As always, I'm
18 grateful to you, and I am willing to listen to your
19 questions and answer them.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you,
21 Commissioner.

22 I want to jump right in. Just note we've
23 been joined by Council Member Mealy and Council
24 Member Banks joining us on Zoom.

2 The fiscal funding cliff starting in
3 FY26. In the Executive Plan, New York City's Aging
4 FY25 budget is 494 million, decreasing by 72.9
5 million to 421.1 million in FY26 so this decrease is
6 largely the result of the expiration of federal COVID
7 funds, which totals 44.4 million in FY24 and 68.2
8 million in FY25 so can you tell us how is DFTA
9 planning to utilize the budgeted federal COVID
10 dollars in FY24 and '25? What programs and services
11 will be supported by those dollars?

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Go ahead,
13 Jose.

14 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: So for
15 '24, the COVID funds were used for HDM as well as
16 congregate. For '25...

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sorry, you said as
18 well as what?

19 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: For
20 congregate meals.

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: OACs.

22 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: OACs.
23 For '25, there is no COVID funding.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: For '25, there is
25 what?

2 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: There is
3 no COVID funding, stimulus funding.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, so what's
5 the plan to backfill this funding starting in FY26?

6 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: We're
7 working with OMB on that.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, do we have
9 an idea of what programs might hang in the balance
10 there until we figure that out?

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We've been
12 in close conversations with OMB about that. We're all
13 aware, and when I say all, Council, OMB, and us are
14 aware that we cannot do that without service cuts,
15 but we're working very closely with them to address
16 that.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Because it's our
18 understanding that all of the COVID-related federal
19 stimulus funds must be exhausted by December of this
20 year, 2024, Calendar Year. Is that true for the
21 Department of the Aging's pandemic funding?

22 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: So our
23 pandemic funding, there is no pandemic funding for
24 '25.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: No, I'm talking
3 about...

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Currently,
5 we have to exhaust it.

6 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Again,
7 for '24, there is no pandemic funding. The money was
8 offset with City funds.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have
10 here that you have 44 million in FY24, 68.2 million
11 in FY25.

12 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Once
13 again, that money was shifted with City funds.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, I don't
15 think we're clear on this.

16 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: So in
17 '24, we had COVID funding, right? Sorry, sorry. In
18 '25, there is no COVID funding. In '24, the COVID
19 funding was shifted. It was shifted with City funds.
20 The majority of the funding that was left over was
21 shifted with City funds. If you look at the November
22 Plan, there are those changes.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, so, because
24 it's our understanding that all the COVID money
25 across the board for every agency has to be used by

2 December of 2024. Do you have money that's still
3 being used right now?

4 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: All the
5 money that we had was expended for '24. There was a
6 funding shift of any money that was left over with
7 City funds.

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The City
9 supplanted the COVID.

10 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Yeah, so
11 all COVID funds were removed from the budget and
12 basically we were offset with City funds in '24.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, because
14 what we have here from the same paper you have from
15 OMB, there's funding codes here that reflect COVID
16 money.

17 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: In the
18 very beginning of the Fiscal Year, we had COVID funds
19 which we spent.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How much did you
21 have?

22 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: I cannot
23 tell you right now. I don't have it off the top of my
24 head.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How can you not
3 tell me that at a budget hearing?

4 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: I was
5 not prepared for that.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: You're not
7 prepared to tell me how much money you have at a
8 budget hearing?

9 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: I can
10 tell you large pictures. I can give you that, but I
11 don't have it right now.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, there's
13 68.2 million in ARPA codes for FY25.

14 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Again,
15 we don't have any COVID funding for '25.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So then why is it
17 coded accordingly?

18 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: I don't
19 know. Like I said, I don't see what you're seeing.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: This isn't like a
21 secret document. It's OMB's...

22 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: I
23 understand that, sir.

24

25

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So you're saying
3 as of now, DFTA has completely exhausted all of your
4 COVID, you don't have a dime that is currently?

5 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: For
6 Fiscal Year '24, all COVID funding was spent. The
7 remaining funding that was left over was shifted with
8 City funds.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, so starting
10 July 1st, you will not be using a dime of COVID
11 funding?

12 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: No.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And if there's
14 codes that say that it's COVID money, it's wrong?

15 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: I would
16 have to see exactly what you're saying but, right
17 now, based on what I look at, yes.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, I think
19 we're going to follow up on this later today.

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, I
21 would appreciate...

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I mean, if they
23 coded it wrong, they coded it wrong, but it's pretty
24 clear, it says it's COVID money.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, so
3 what happened was that we expended the COVID dollars,
4 and whatever was there was replaced with City tax
5 levy dollars.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Got it, but why
7 wouldn't they fix that then, if that's the case?

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We can get
9 back to you on that.

10 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Right,
11 so you see, for example, in '24, there was COVID
12 funding, which we exhausted, we spent it all, and
13 then there was money left over, which then was
14 shifted to City funds.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I hear you saying
16 those words right now, but it doesn't reflect on what
17 we've got.

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Doesn't
19 reflect, right. We'll get back to you on that.

20 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Yeah, we
21 have no problem sitting down and reconciling with you
22 guys.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Because
24 there's also, it's not just for FY25, right? I'm also
25 seeing 4.3 million in pandemic-related budget codes

2 for FY27 and '28 so you're saying that's an error as
3 well?

4 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Those,
5 like what you mentioned earlier, all federal funds
6 have to be exhausted by the '25, correct? So those
7 numbers, '26 and '27, have to be fixed, because there
8 is no extension beyond Fiscal Year 20...

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay.

10 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: of
11 September, so.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, for the
13 food reimbursement rates, I've heard a number of
14 concerns from advocates and trusted CBOs regarding
15 the food reimbursements rates. They've all brought to
16 our attention that they're not receiving the full
17 reimbursement for their costs of providing meals at
18 centers through the HDMs. The current reimbursement
19 rate for HDMs is \$12.78 per meal. The provider's cost
20 per meal is about \$15.30 on average. In the Council's
21 Preliminary Budget Response, we called on the
22 Administration to add 12.7 million dollars for home-
23 delivered meals to close this gap, but we didn't get
24 a dime, we didn't get a dime of that so is there any
25

2 consideration here for an increase in the meal
3 reimbursement rates?

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: At this
5 point, there is no ability to increase the meal rate.
6 What we are able to do is to meet the 12.5. It's
7 something that we look at individually with programs
8 so that, if there is some room within the bottom
9 line, we can make those adjustments but, as a policy
10 and as a strategy of changing meal costs the way
11 we've had in the past, we do not have that ability to
12 do that.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Why is that?

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Funding.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Because you don't
16 have the money?

17 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I beg your
18 pardon?

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Because you don't
20 have the money to do it?

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Because the
22 funding that we have is at the \$12.58.

23 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: 78
24 cents.

25 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: 78 cents.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, but how was
3 that rate determined? The \$12.78 meal rate for the
4 HDMs, how was that determined?

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That rate,
6 God, it was about two years ago, right, a year and a
7 half ago.

8 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Almost
9 three years ago.

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Almost three
11 years ago. We were at \$9.78, and we kept looking at
12 cost and looking at the average of providers, and
13 that is how we arrived over time. It went from 9
14 dollars to 11, and then it went to \$12.78.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So it's been at
16 the 12.78 for the past three years?

17 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes.

18 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: No, it's
19 been \$12.78 for the last two years.

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Two years.

21 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: So it
22 went from \$9.58 to 10 dollars to 11 dollars so every
23 year, we basically do an assessment of cost, we go
24 back to OMB, work with them, try to get rate.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: But I'm assuming
3 if you did that assessment now, you'd see it would
4 need to go up again, right?

5 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Well,
6 right now, for example, we haven't closed the Fiscal
7 Year. What we tend to do is basically look at the
8 next quarter, which is Fiscal Year '25, look at all
9 the costs, and then do an assessment, and then
10 discuss the cost.

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And then
12 discuss it with OMB.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Are all
14 providers required to provide any type of meal that
15 an older adult may request, and what are the main
16 types of culturally and diet-specific meals that DFTA
17 offers?

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: DFTA offers
19 a variety of cultural meals, Latina meals, Asian
20 American meals, halal, and it really depends on the
21 provider, and the provider has the requirement to
22 serve the cultural needs of the community that they
23 represent.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So aren't the
3 cultural meals, the kosher, halal meals, aren't they
4 more expensive to make?

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: But the providers
7 still have to just deal with the 12 bucks?

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Fantastic. Are
10 you considering issuing any standalone contracts for
11 specialized meals to sort of carve that out?

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No. That has
13 not been a consideration. Halal meals are provided
14 under the contractors that we currently have.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And none of the
16 providers have raised concerns about the pricing for
17 that?

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: About the
19 pricing?

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: That they can't,
21 you know, that it's very hard for them to..

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I think
23 everyone has concerns about the pricing given
24 inflation, which is why we will look at that in the

2 first quarter of the coming year to see what
3 adjustments are necessary.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, I have just
5 a few more and I want to turn it to the Chair. In the
6 Council's Preliminary Budget Response, we called on
7 the Administration to increase capital funding for
8 older adult centers by 50 million to DFTA's Capital
9 Plan with 10 million of this funding dedicated for
10 centers that predominantly serve older adults who are
11 immigrants. This funding was not included in the
12 Executive Plan, and we're concerned that this leaves
13 the infrastructure of DFTA's network of providers
14 vulnerable and a real challenge for them so
15 approximately 23 million or 30 percent of DFTA's
16 current Capital Plan is allocated for capital
17 reconstruction projects for a network of hundreds of
18 service providers so have you been speaking with OMB
19 or negotiating with OMB to increase your capital
20 budget?

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, yes, we
22 have, but we're in a unique position that we do not
23 directly manage a Capital Plan. We're one of the few
24 agencies. We're dependent on partner agencies like
25 DDC, NYCHA, DYCD, or DCAS to implement capital

2 improvements for our agency. We were very, very
3 fortunate this year and we have a pilot, and I was
4 talking to Chairwoman (INAUDIBLE) about this that
5 Antonio Reynoso, the Borough President of Brooklyn,
6 has given us 6 million dollars dedicated for our
7 older adult sites and so that we can have
8 improvements throughout Brooklyn. We're asking each
9 Borough President to match that but, with that
10 approach, we will identify a subcontractor so we can
11 take care of some of those capital needs,
12 particularly those at the older adult clubs. The last
13 hearing in the Preliminary Budget hearing, one of the
14 issues that came up was what is our plan for
15 addressing kitchen improvements. I don't know if you
16 remember that, but that was the discussion and we had
17 always looked at kitchen improvements or kitchen
18 needs on a one-on-one basis and usually those were
19 funded under existing contracts. With this approach
20 and because of the hearing, we are now looking at a
21 plan and looking at how is it that we could come up
22 with what are the critical needs, who are the
23 kitchens that need the most, and start serving those
24 and using Brooklyn as a model and hopefully we can do
25 that moving forward.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, do you have
3 an idea of how many kitchens in the network are
4 currently closed due to repair issues?

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, five.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And how many
7 providers requested kitchen capital improvement?

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, I can
9 get back to you on that but there's different, at
10 different stages of need.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sure.

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: All right?

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sort of in that
14 same line, how many older adult centers have
15 requested capital projects that were not approved?

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I'm going to
17 have to get back to you on that. I don't have that
18 number in front of me, sorry.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And what's the
20 status of your headquarters relocation?

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: From your
22 lips to God's ears, it'll happen before the end of
23 this Calendar Year.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: By the end of the
25 Calendar Year?

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, that's
3 the plan.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, I'm going
5 to give it to Chair Hudson. Thank you, Commissioner.

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, thank
7 you.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you, Chair.

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And thank
10 you for your advocacy.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Great questions
12 from the Chair.

13 The November Plan included a 13.5-
14 million-dollar PEG for older adult centers in Fiscal
15 2027. The Preliminary Plan included an additional PEG
16 for OACs of 18.9 million dollars in Fiscal 2024 and
17 2.2 million in Fiscal 2025 to 2028. In the Council's
18 Preliminary Budget Response, we called for the
19 restoration of the baselined 2.2 million PEG.
20 Unfortunately, these funds were not included in the
21 Executive Plan. During the Preliminary Budget
22 hearing, you indicated that you were concerned about
23 the potential impact of this PEG to OAC programs in
24 Fiscal 2026 to 2027. Has NYC Aging determined which

2 centers will be impacted by this reduction and, if
3 not, when will that be determined?

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, we're
5 in constant conversations with OMB about this budget
6 estimate for 2026. We are working closely with them
7 and are looking, even amongst ourselves, is how we
8 would implement that budget projection should it be
9 realized. I believe that we will work, and they are
10 very attentive to this, and so we're hoping that we
11 do not have to get to that point but, right now, we
12 are looking at what would that look like in terms of
13 older adult centers as well as home-delivered meals
14 and case management.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And so how are you
16 determining which centers would be impacted as you
17 look at those plans?

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We would not
19 do an across-the-board 10 percent. That just, to me,
20 from a public management perspective, that does not
21 usually fare well. We have to look at community
22 needs, we have to look at utilization, and we would
23 have to look at underspending, see what we could
24 realize through our reallocation of underspending,
25 but we would not do an across-the-board cut.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, so have you
3 identified, based on those determining factors, have
4 you identified a few centers that would be first on
5 the chopping block?

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. What metrics
8 does NYC Aging plan on using... okay, we just went
9 through that.

10 Did NYC Aging advocate for the
11 restoration of these PEGs in the Executive Plan?

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We work
13 hand-in-hand with OMB on all of these issues. I don't
14 know that, we have a strong advocate in our Deputy
15 Mayor, Anne Williams-Isom, also, so this is not a
16 conversation that does not include the entire
17 Administration.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, so is it
19 fair to say that you are not pushing for restoration
20 in the Executive Plan?

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That would
22 not be fair to say because that wouldn't be accurate.
23 I'm working alongside with OMB to make sure that they
24 are well aware of the implications should this be
25 realized, and we have a strong partnership.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Many
3 providers continue to worry about the impact the OAC
4 PEGs may have on future RFPs. When was the last OAC
5 RFP and how many providers were included?

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We have 106
7 contractors, and the last RFP was two and a half
8 years ago, and we will probably anticipate a new RFP,
9 which will be in FY25, some point in FY25, '26, '25,
10 and we'll look at the situation then. Obviously, the
11 RFP will be reflective of this budget projection or
12 estimate. It's not a projection, it's an estimate,
13 and we'll work accordingly.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Are you planning
15 to make any adjustments to scope parameters or
16 funding levels as compared to the prior RFP from two
17 and a half years ago?

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We're always
19 looking for, assuming everything stays the same,
20 right...

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Well, nothing has
22 stayed the same.

23 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right, but
24 assuming that there's a recognition of what some of
25 the issues are, right, we will always look for

2 innovation. There's some state-of-the-art programs,
3 and we will look to those to serve as models, and
4 that will be reflected in the RFP.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, I guess I'm
6 trying to make the point that if the last RFP was
7 issued two and a half years ago, many things have
8 changed within those two and a half years, and so we
9 would want to make sure that...

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you
11 for the clarification. I misunderstood your question.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

13 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So all of
14 the learnings that we've experienced in the last two
15 and a half years will be incorporated in the RFP,
16 including cost and including service delivery,
17 including catchment areas, including outreach,
18 including diversity and equity.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and do you
20 know how the PEGs might impact future RFPs?

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I think
22 we've had that discussion. We're looking at right now
23 what the impact of that that fiscal estimate will be.
24 We don't have that picture right now.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. I want to
3 just follow up on Chair Brannan's questions around
4 HDM. Are you considering issuing under the HDM RFP
5 awards specifically for culturally tailored meal
6 providers like kosher or halal foods?

7 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, that
8 was part of the RFP.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That was
11 included for the first time.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, great. We're
13 hearing concerns from non-profit providers regarding
14 a recent RFP for home-delivered meal providers and
15 wanted to get some insight into the process and where
16 things stand with new contracts. When was the HDM RFP
17 issued and when were responses due?

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The RFP was
19 issued, what was the date? September. The responses
20 came in about five weeks ago, six weeks ago. They're
21 in the evaluation process now, and we're just in the
22 final stages of awards and provisions, I mean, award
23 granting stage, but what I wanted.. Thank you for
24 asking the question about the RFP process. One of the
25 things that we did as you just alluded was we looked

2 at the experience of the last three years and build
3 on that, and we really wanted to open it for M/WBEs
4 and looking at other food delivery provisions because
5 it's something that we have seen improvements in the
6 past. Anyone who competed for the process, it was
7 open to our entire network and, for all who competed,
8 we did not skip anyone who won directly unless there
9 were multiple providers in that particular catchment
10 areas. So just for your information, we have four new
11 contractors based on the current stage that we're on,
12 many who have competitive and were innovative
13 contractors, and we also have 13 incumbents who've
14 received the contracts, and that is what I can share
15 at this point because we're still in that final
16 selection and determination process.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Of the four new
18 contractors, are any of them for-profit entities?

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes. Of the
20 four new contractors, three are for-profit and, by
21 way of background, these were agencies, providers who
22 have had experience with home-delivered meals and
23 meal provision for older adults, either as a
24 subcontractor to existing providers and/or people who
25 provided meals during the pandemic process.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, so just to
3 be clear, how many contracts were in the previous RFP
4 total?

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: 17? Oh, 22.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: 22, and so we're
7 going down to 17.

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Because of
9 the catchment areas, we wanted to align the catchment
10 areas to the case management areas so that they could
11 be more direct relationship. The other thing I wanted
12 to say is that with these three new contractors, we
13 have made a decision.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Four new. Well,
15 three for-profit.

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The four
17 new, the three for-profit, we have made the decision
18 administratively to give them one-year contracts.
19 Even though they have experience in home-delivered
20 meals provision and meal preparation, we've decided
21 that it is prudent to have a one-year process so that
22 we can help make sure that they're providing the
23 services as required.

24

25

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, so did the
3 three for-profits take away slots for non-profits who
4 already had contracts?

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It's a
6 competitive process. If we're issuing 17, yeah, there
7 were some incumbents that did not receive contracts
8 although most incumbents received one contract. They
9 might not have received two catchment areas that they
10 have had in the past, and I don't think there was a
11 limit on that.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, are there
13 any non-profit providers that you know of that didn't
14 receive a contract at all that were previous?

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Two.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Two, okay. When
17 did you say the new contracts will begin?

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The new
19 contracts will begin in October. We're giving
20 ourselves enough time for the transition.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Apologies if you
22 said this already, but what criteria were used in
23 determining the awarding of contracts to providers?

24 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It's a
25 competitive process that's read by a multitude of

2 staff familiar with aging services as all of our RFPs
3 are done.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Can you list any
5 specific criteria?

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: They're our
7 staff so they have to know the program. They have to
8 be well-versed in food services. We train them,
9 particularly around the RFP and what we're looking
10 for, and they're the skilled staff that we use all
11 the time so they're the staff that we depend on to
12 evaluate programs, existing...

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, sorry, not
14 the staff, but the criteria for identifying the
15 contractors. I guess one of my concerns is that we
16 have a number of non-profit providers that have been
17 doing this work for many years and, if we're losing
18 two of them, I'm trying to understand why we would
19 replace non-profit providers who've been doing the
20 work for so many years with for-profit providers who
21 haven't been doing the work presumably.

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That's an
23 excellent and fair point. I want to go back to, we
24 look for the best possible service for the older
25 adult, and we look at the strength of the proposal

2 and what they're offering, right, and so the strength
3 of that proposal is what will determine whether
4 someone gets, and the scoring of that proposal is
5 what determines if someone competitively meets all of
6 the competition and wins out, right, so that's how we
7 do this, right, and then in that process, we consider
8 other factors in awarding the contracts such as
9 capacity, experience, the ability to have more than
10 one geographic area, and we look at some of that as
11 we start looking at the scores, oh, yeah, I already
12 said that, and we just do it on a competitive
13 process.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Is there a
15 transition plan for non-profit HDM providers who are
16 not awarded new contracts, and will any extensions be
17 granted to their existing contracts?

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We are
19 looking right now, which is why we're starting it
20 October 1st, rather than July 1st, which would be the
21 normal time that we're doing. We're giving ourselves
22 and the contractors enough time to make sure that
23 there is no disruption of service for the older
24 adult. That is the core. The older adult is the
25 center of all of these services.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: As you know, the
3 HDM program is more than just food delivery. There's
4 also a human component to the program and providers
5 get to know the older adults. They serve and interact
6 with them regularly, and I would say for most non-
7 profits that are mission-driven, they invest in those
8 types of human interactions and the people who are
9 providing those services. Do for-profit providers
10 have this type of experience interacting with older
11 adults, and is the past experience a provider has
12 with similar clients part of the consideration for
13 determining the awards of contracts?

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The
15 competitive process asks exactly those questions in
16 the proposal. So it's to the bidder, whomever they
17 are, profit or non-profit, to describe how they will
18 not only provide food and deliver the food and make
19 sure that it meets standards, but also what are the
20 other surrounding services for the older adult so we
21 go by what the contractor says that they will meet
22 those needs that satisfy the home-delivered
23 vulnerable older adult in their home's needs.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Understood, and I
25 guess just a general concern of mine across any area

2 is that a for-profit entity is going to say and can
3 say anything in a proposal, but compared to, again,
4 mission-driven non-profit organizations who have the
5 proven experience of providing these services and
6 specifically home-delivered meals, my concern is
7 that, and I recognize that they're just going to be
8 one-year contracts, so hopefully that allows some
9 time for correction if needed. Yeah, but my concern
10 is that lots of people say lots of things in
11 proposals and that may not actually be the case, and
12 so I'm wondering also how are you planning to ensure
13 the for-profit providers are able to make the same
14 connection as the existing providers with regards to
15 human connection, delivering meals, looking out for
16 the clients, reporting back on other needs. I know
17 that happens a lot with folks currently.

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Excellent
19 point and concerns. Two things. I come from the non-
20 profit world so I have a strong commitment to non-
21 profit service. That being said, I also know that
22 proposals, we have to always put our best foot
23 forward in terms of describing our services and also
24 delivering against our commitment to those services.
25 That being said, profit or non-profit will go through

2 the same assessment and evaluation processes that all
3 of our contractors go to. We will have no distinction
4 in the way we assess, monitor, and evaluate profit
5 providers from non-profit providers so that they
6 would have to meet all of the requirements that the
7 non-profit has met in the past.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And do you feel
9 that some of these for-profit, I can guess your
10 answer, but I'm going to ask the question anyway. Do
11 you feel that some of these for-profit companies will
12 be able to meet the needs with regards to quality and
13 cultural competence of the food?

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: They have
15 to. They have to because it was part of the RFP and
16 that's probably what gave them points in the bidding
17 process.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Has NYC
19 Aging, you have not worked with for-profit providers
20 on HDMs previously, is that correct? I don't know if
21 you have the full historical context.

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No, not as
23 direct providers, but as subcontractors.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. I want to
25 just pause here for a second and go to some

2 Colleagues and then come back to my line of questions
3 if you don't mind. Thank you. I'll turn it back over
4 to Chair Brannan.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thanks, Chair
6 Hudson.

7 I just want to point out that we have the
8 printout here, and I've got all sorts of ARPA money.
9 I think we shared this so you're saying all these
10 codes are wrong?

11 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: No, no,
12 so I apologize and you were right because this is
13 ARPA money.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Say that a little
15 louder.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I apologize to...

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I'm kidding, I'm
18 kidding. We're all on the same team.

19 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: The
20 reason why is because this money is supposed to be
21 shifted out during '25 SO, for me, from my
22 perspective, it's going to be taken out and replaced
23 with City funds but, to your point, and I would say
24 you're right. I look at this and I'm like, oh, yes,
25

2 he was right. I forgot about this so, yes, there is
3 ARPA money. All this money has been here.

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: What's ARPA
5 for my edification?

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: For the people
7 playing at home?

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, stimulus
9 money, okay.

10 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Stimulus
11 money. Sorry. I apologize for my mistake again.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, so you
13 still have COVID money?

14 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: For '25.
15 As part of the Executive Plan, yes, it is there. This
16 money is supposed to be shifted. This money is for,
17 the one that you're looking at right now, is for the
18 older adult centers. That is basically to continue
19 the current contracts that we have.

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And it's
21 supposed to be fungible with City tax levy.

22 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Yeah,
23 eventually the goal is to just be swiped but, again,
24 that's.

25 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sure.

2 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Sorry
3 about that. I moved ahead, sorry.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: But isn't there
5 money also, the same codes, federal pandemic related
6 budget codes for '27 and '28?

7 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Correct.
8 Your point. Yes, your point. Again, that is
9 basically, the money expires. All of it's supposed to
10 expire in '25 so.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That's two points
12 for Chair Brannan.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: That's two.

14 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: He gets
15 two points and a half but, then again, I come back
16 and dunk...

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I'm going to suit
18 up tonight with the Knicks. Okay. Thank you. I
19 appreciate the clarity.

20 We got questions from Council Member
21 Schulman followed by Carr.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you to the
23 Chairs today. Hello, Commissioner.

24 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Hi.
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: A question for
3 you on the MLTC programs. One is you said 2,523 older
4 adults are not deemed eligible for HDM.

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Do we know where
7 they are? I mean, are they in a particular borough?
8 Do we have a breakdown?

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We know
10 exactly where they are, and I can get that.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Can you get us
12 that information?

13 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: And the other
15 question I have around that is that, while I realize
16 that you've gone to the state and asking them about
17 it, have you asked legal counsel if there's any legal
18 recourse here? Corp Counsel?

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I don't
20 believe that's a Corp Counsel issue but...

21 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: But it's worth
22 bringing up, I think.

23 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah. I'm
24 sure we could. I'll make sure that our legal counsel,
25 we brought it up with the State Comptroller, which is

2 where the issue emerged, and we've also asked him to
3 look at the very unclear statement that we received
4 from NYSOFA to see what his understanding is of that.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: We're trying to
6 look at all avenues. You're asking us for help, so
7 I'm saying to you, it might be the worst thing
8 that'll happen is they'll say they don't, but they
9 may be able to look at some language. There may be
10 some things that we don't know about that they may be
11 able to be helpful.

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Sure.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay.

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Sure, but
15 the issue is that the same issue emerged last year.
16 It was addressed by them last year, and yet it
17 reoccurred this year.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: I mean, because
19 even one person that's not able to be, you know,
20 obviously it's a problem.

21 In terms of some of the questions that
22 we've been asking about the PEGs and everything else,
23 the Independent Budget Office and we estimate there
24 are more tax revenues, that there is more money
25 available, so we're hoping that you will, I know you

2 said you're working with OMB. We're asking if you
3 would push to encourage them, how's that, encourage
4 them to see the needs for our older adults because
5 it's just so important. I mean, particularly my
6 District, I have a significant number of older adults
7 and on that note, and we've had this conversation
8 before, Richmond Hill, which I've now taken over
9 since January 1st in the redistricting, does not have
10 one senior center so I want to know if there's been
11 any thinking about how to deal with that.

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, when
13 we start looking at the OACs, we look at population
14 shifts, we look at needs, and that is sort of how we
15 determine what the geographic area is for an OAC, and
16 we'll look at that at that point and stay in
17 conversation with you about it.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Yeah, because
19 there are a number of small organizations that have
20 come to me that are actually doing their own thing
21 for older adults in those neighborhoods, and so it
22 would be nice if we had some kind of program or
23 something there so I'd like to continue with that
24 conversation offline.

25 Thank you very much, Chairs.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: I appreciate the
4 time.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, Council
6 Member Carr followed by Brewer.

7 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Hi.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Thank you, Chair.
9 Commissioner, always good to see you.

10 I want to focus in a little bit on
11 transportation to our older adult centers so New Dorp
12 Friendship Club in my District was one of several, I
13 think, around the city where seniors depended on
14 transportation to get to their home away from home,
15 so to speak, and, as you know, depending on what part
16 of the city you're in some places are well-served by
17 transit, others not so much, and certainly my
18 District qualifies in that.

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Your
20 district is not one.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Yeah, so I was
22 wondering what we could talk and get into. What
23 exactly are the savings that DFTA thinks it's getting
24 from the suspension of these programs, and can we
25

2 kind of move more in the direction of restoring them
3 because they're so critical?

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We have not
5 suspended transportation programs.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: My seniors tell me
7 otherwise at New Dorp Friendship Club so at least one
8 center that I know of is...

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, no,
10 I'll get back to you on that, but we have not
11 suspended transportation programs. The way
12 transportation has worked always has been that any
13 OAC who chooses to have transportation portal-to-
14 portal for their members to their homes, and I would
15 imagine that that would be a situation in Staten
16 Island, particularly in the New Dorp area, that
17 particular program still has the opportunity to do
18 that, and Council was very helpful to us to get us 44
19 vehicles last year, and we're hoping that they can
20 help us this year again so we can get more vehicles
21 so that still happens at the local level. The
22 distinction was that we provided transportation
23 programs, one for each borough, that would be beyond
24 the portal-to-portal transportation so, if people
25 wanted to go shopping, to go to medical appointments,

2 and also for people who were not part of the OAC, so
3 all other older adults in that community, that's what
4 those transportation programs were designed to do for
5 that particular borough, and then we had one that was
6 a citywide one.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Okay, well, let's
8 talk offline and get to the bottom of that.

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Absolutely.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: And then my last
11 question is about neighborhood NORCs. I think it's
12 something that a lot of us in my area would love to
13 see. We've always...

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Say that
15 again, I'm sorry.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Neighborhood NORCs.

17 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: (INAUDIBLE)
18 transportation to give you an answer.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: No, it's okay.
20 Neighborhood NORCs. I think that it's something that
21 would be a really good idea for Staten Island.
22 District 50 is always ranked high on the aging
23 census, and I'd love to have a conversation with you
24 about how we can make that possible.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right, and
3 we do have some precedent. We did the same thing in
4 Brooklyn a year or two ago where we worked for a
5 while to consider a NORC, and that was realized. That
6 was about two years ago.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Well, let's
8 definitely talk about that as we move forward.

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Absolutely.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: I appreciate it, and
11 thank you, Chair, for your time.

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you so
13 much.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. We
15 have questions from Council Member Brewer followed by
16 Mealy.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. In
18 terms of the HVAC and elevators, I know you spoke
19 about it a little bit, just the needs, the capital
20 needs, a lot of the centers are just barely hanging
21 on for the cooling centers, which we all need, I
22 assume, when it gets warm and, of course, elevators
23 breaking down so how do we reconcile you're a cooling
24 center but you don't have a working HVAC and your
25 elevator's barely working? What's the funding

2 allocated for these, I guess you have a list,
3 probably, of where the challenges are.

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you
5 for that question, but we have a challenge, right,
6 because the Council gave us 4 million dollars that
7 has been baselined to deal with HVAC issues and
8 cooling centers... (cough) Excuse me. There's something
9 in this room besides the hearing...

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: An unknown
11 substance.

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: There's
13 something that's, but that was targeted to NYCHA
14 sites so, if it was not a NYCHA site, then we'd start
15 looking at...

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm talking about,
17 in my case, it's not a NYCHA site, I know.

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, so...

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So there's no
20 money.

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: There is no
22 particular funding for that, but we look at that, and
23 we look at that one by one, to see how we can address
24 that because each one of those sites has to become a
25 cooling center, and so it's a priority for us.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But when do we
3 start looking at it, because it's getting warm? In
4 other words..

5 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: So
6 currently, for example, we had a cooling center
7 training for the last month, and we've been asking
8 our providers to basically tell us what issues
9 they're having with HVACs.

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, what's
11 the state of the cooling ...

12 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Right.

13 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: System right
14 now?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, and then
16 you're going to find money to fix it if it's a
17 cooling center in particular?

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We will work
19 very closely with them, and that is the goal.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, how about
21 elevators, broken elevators?

22 (Phone ringing)

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: If you have a
24 cell phone, please mute it.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I'm not
3 aware of any elevator situation other than the Carter
4 Burden one..

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Which has
7 been longstanding, so if there's a particular area or
8 an issue, let's take that offline so that we can look
9 at that.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I will get you the
11 list.

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay, great.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: In terms of Social
14 Day, I know Margaret Chin and I hate Social Day, so
15 what's the status? I mean, I don't know why these
16 things even exist. How many are registered with the
17 Department? What about Investigations? What are the
18 top concerns? I mean, I don't know why we, ugh, I
19 hate them.

20 UNIDENTIFIED: The bad ones.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: The bad ones.

22 I didn't know there were any good ones.

23 UNIDENTIFIED: There are good ones.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Oh, okay.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: There are
3 some good ones, and then particularly there are nine
4 excellent ones that are run directly by the New York
5 City AG so...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, but these
7 are the for-profits I'm talking about, so go ahead.

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The SADS,
9 not all of them are for-profit, but the SADS that
10 exist, as you stated, former Chair, Margaret Chin,
11 created an Ombudsman Office at the Department for the
12 Aging. Currently, we have four staff in the
13 Ombudsman's Office. We have a director, we have two
14 investigators, and then we have an administrator. I
15 believe that 328 SADCs, and they all have to be
16 registered.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right.

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I know, I
19 can't find it. They all have to be registered at the
20 Department for the Aging. We get revenue for that,
21 which then lets us fuel more staff and more
22 investigations. We then turn our findings based on
23 complaints or things that we identify to the state
24 and work to get resolutions, but each one of them
25 have to be registered, and right now we're working

2 with OATH, the Department of Administrative Trials
3 and Tribunals, so that we can have the authority to
4 impose greater fines on them if we find major
5 violations.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Are you finding
7 that there are challenges in terms of fines needing
8 to be allocated because there are problems?

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That level
10 of investigation is not as widespread as we had
11 anticipated that it would be, but all situations are
12 then reviewed and then we try to mitigate them, and
13 definitely any of those that are egregious, we take
14 to the state.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, I think they
16 steal our members, but that's okay. You're watching
17 them, I guess. I still worry about them.

18 And then just finally, two things..

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So are we.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know.

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We are
22 worried about them, and we also worry about
23 particularly those that are offering services to
24 people who are not eligible.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Correct.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And we hear
3 a lot of concerns from OACs.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Exactly, you come
5 in for services, and you're getting a blood test, and
6 you're getting this and that, and Medicaid's getting
7 charged, and we're all paying for it for nothing...

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The old
9 Medicaid mill.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And we're all off
11 to Atlantic City, very nice. Nothing to do with good
12 services.

13 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I didn't say
14 that out loud, did I?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's my
16 experience.

17 The other question finally is, thank you
18 for Stanley Isaacs for remaining as a non-profit in
19 terms of food. There's a lot of concern about COVID
20 long-term, I'm saying because it's not just seniors.
21 I'm sorry, older adults. I'm a senior, so I can say
22 whatever the hell I am, but the issue is...

23 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So am I.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Is that something
25 that, because I'm getting complaints from the general

2 public, not just for older adults, about long-term
3 COVID issues, and we're not kind of aware, and we're
4 not doing any, is that something that you're hearing
5 or not? In other words, there's concern that it might
6 come back, there's just concern about whether we're
7 having enough of an investigation about what happened
8 in the past, etc. I didn't know that's something
9 that's on your radar.

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It's
11 something that we're always concerned about,
12 especially all of the health issues. We have a very
13 close relationship with the Department of Health, and
14 those kind of findings, I mean, I know that they're
15 constantly looking at issues like that, so I would
16 defer to them. I don't want to speak on their behalf,
17 but they're part of the Cabinet, and we're always
18 looking at joint issues that affect not only older
19 New Yorkers in terms of COVID, but all other
20 situations. The same thing with Mitch Katz, I mean H
21 and H, Health and Hospital, is that what it's called
22 now?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, Mitch Katz.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: H and H, yeah.
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so I would
3 suggest that that issue perhaps be elevated a bit in
4 terms of what it is that happened in the past, making
5 sure it doesn't happen in the future, etc. Thank you
6 very much.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Questions from
8 Council Member Mealy followed by Lee.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Good afternoon. I
10 was just, could you explain to me?

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Darlene, just hit
12 your mic button.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Thank you. Could
14 you talk a little bit about the utilization of the
15 terms and conditions in regards to centers under-
16 utilized, what happened to this, and let me see what
17 kind of adjustments you put in regards to that. It's
18 no longer here. I'm getting my time back, right?

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No, no,
20 yeah, you're going to get your time back. I'm going
21 to give you your time back. I'm just trying to find
22 exactly my data on terms and conditions so that I
23 don't have to say I'll get back to you, all right?
24 Where is it? Okay.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: It was in regards
3 to if a senior center that was more than 50 or 70
4 people, that's a utilized senior center, right?

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No, what the
6 terms and condition report does is that we give you
7 data on the utilization of every facility, and we
8 also give you the rate of utilization for every so we
9 give you actual numbers and then we give you
10 percentages.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: So if we had one
12 that was really above board, more than enough people,
13 it should never have been closed down. Is that true
14 to say? If it's all about making sure that our senior
15 centers, no, our older adult centers are fully
16 utilized?

17 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The purpose
18 of the terms and condition report is to give you data
19 on existing services. It is not a determinant factor
20 or criteria about closing or not closing older adult
21 clubs.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: All right, so I had
23 spoke to you about the RFP. I believe we found out
24 that an RFP to open up a senior center has not been
25 done in how long?

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It was
3 almost three years ago. It's about two and a half
4 years, and it will be re-issued sometime in '25. We
5 were just talking about that they're due, and we're
6 going to take all of the learnings that we've had for
7 the last two and a half years and build that into the
8 RFP and, in that, and I think I'm trying to assume
9 where we're going with this is looking at the
10 services in a particular community, the growing needs
11 in a particular community, and that will also
12 determine just as Council Member Schulman asked, how
13 can her particular, Ridgewood, be considered for an
14 older adult club. It is all depending on the
15 demographics of that area.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: So the
17 demographics, that's another thing I want to speak to
18 you in regards to. You and I had spoke about another...

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Mount
20 Ararat.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Mount Ararat. Will
22 there be any way that Fort Greene Council can take,
23 remember you said you was going to speak to the
24 director.

25 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: And when I speak to
3 her, she acts like she don't know what I'm speaking
4 about so...

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And I think
6 the confusion is that we have not received the
7 discretionary funds for Mount Ararat and so...

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Well, the Speaker
9 gave 150,000 last year so we get much more this year,
10 so can we do this before this budget is clear
11 because...

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We can do
13 this...

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Because the Speaker
15 has no problem with it.

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We can...

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: But we need the
18 center open. This is a 400 unit of all seniors could
19 come right downstairs and eat and go right back. The
20 socialization of our seniors are lost. Some of them
21 are perishing because they have no food,
22 socialization, and it's almost a 15-mile radius in
23 that area, that was a cooling center so what is your
24 contingency plan on that for this summer coming up?
25

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Let me try
3 to parse out a little bit of this. Many of the
4 program's participants, or many of the people from
5 Mount Ararat do go to Fort Greene.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: And which they're
7 here.

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: All right.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: I told them they
10 could go, but they stay.

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I'm glad
12 that they're here so that they can hear it. Fort
13 Greene is available to them. When we get this
14 discretionary issue resolved, all right, and I will
15 make sure that we do that, Fort Greene is able to
16 provide the services at Mount Ararat but, until that
17 discretionary dollar situation gets clarified, that's
18 not possible, and I've had this discussion, you know,
19 we've had this discussion now for a year and a half
20 and what we need to do is to make sure that the
21 money's there so that Fort Greene can have the
22 resources.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: The money is there.
24 We had to pull it back. The money is there. It's just
25 that someone has to give Fort Greene Council the okay

2 to receive the money and then do the services. That's
3 all we need. This is not that hard because...

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No, it's not
5 that hard at all. The complication is that the money
6 has not...

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: And as you said, it
8 depends on the discretionary funding. We put the
9 discretionary funding there. We did that already, but
10 they were not ready to receive it.

11 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Yeah, we
12 haven't seen anything of that nature. I'm just
13 telling you what it is. I mean, you guys, every
14 month, basically you appropriate money, and you move
15 money back and forth. Your resolution is that you do
16 that. We haven't seen that so, as soon as we see
17 that, we can then proceed.

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We'll be
19 able to address that because we've had a plan with
20 Fort Greene for a while now.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: This was from the
22 Speaker.

23 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: I
24 understand that.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No, no, we
3 understand.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: She did this.

5 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Right,
6 but...

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: And now she's going
8 to do it again.

9 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: There's
10 a...

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: So now I just want
12 to make sure it's no miscommunication or no hang-ups
13 because if the money is there, it should not be a
14 problem so, therefore, by next month or before the
15 budget closed, that money should be there so I just
16 hope that we can do that. Could you tell me about the
17 contingency plan about, that's a cooling center,
18 Mount Ararat, that is closed. It's no senior centers
19 near there. All those seniors that comes to that,
20 used to come to that senior center, and the 400 young
21 adults that live upstairs, where are they going to go
22 for a cooling center this summer?

23 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I'll get
24 back to you on the cooling center to see if they're a
25

2 designated cooling center and, if not, we will work
3 closely with Fort Greene on that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: So do you have
5 approximately when a new RFP will be coming out for
6 opening up new senior centers? As we are building in
7 this city, I believe we're going to have to open up
8 new centers for all these new aging seniors so when
9 do you think a new RFP will be coming out?

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The new RFP,
11 once this RFP is completed, once these contracts are
12 completed, it is projected to come out in 2025, and
13 it will be for three years and, as I've said earlier,
14 we look at population shifts, we look at demographics
15 to identify the areas where older adult clubs are and
16 where older adult clubs should be so that's all part
17 of the overall plan.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay, could you
19 just give me later on the areas where you sent, when
20 we got all these new vehicles, do you know specific?

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, I will
22 give you...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: How many did
24 Brooklyn get?

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I can't give
3 you that right now. I know that the City Council paid
4 for 44.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: I know, but I
6 didn't see any in my District. I just wanted to know
7 where they are.

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And we can
9 give you exactly where those were because that money
10 was designated by program.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And it was based
12 on, I think, specific needs.

13 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That had been...

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It was
16 vehicles, agencies that had vehicles, I think that
17 were more than 10 years.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay.

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And then the
20 money was given directly to the program, and what we
21 did was we looked at it from a scale perspective so
22 that the program could get the benefit of New York
23 City Aging's negotiation and staying with the
24 vehicle, what do you call those, car dealerships, to
25

2 make sure that they delivered on time and with the
3 specifications that were required.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: I really need that
5 list, and I would love to see what my Colleague here
6 just said about and Miss Gale Brewer in regards to..

7 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I just want
8 for the record to say that we are as committed as you
9 are about Mount Ararat, you know that. We are
10 committed to help Fort Greene make sure that that
11 happens, you know that too. What we need to do is
12 figure out where is this glitch between our Finance
13 Office so that we can make sure that the money is
14 designated and can be then given to Fort Greene.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay, and I just,
16 for the record, I would like to say for-profits, with
17 these senior centers, I believe it should have been
18 more non-for-profits getting these contracts. They
19 have been in the mix, they have been when seniors
20 needed everything, and now for-profit, sometimes our
21 seniors get lost in the sauce with that so I really
22 want that on the record I felt if it should have
23 been, it should have been two for-profits and two
24 not-for-profits so I hope we look into that more.
25 Thank you, Chairs.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So it was 17
3 contracts, three for-profit, and the balance were,
4 whatever the difference is between three and 17, 14
5 were not-for-profit. (INAUDIBLE)

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now,
7 we have questions from Lee followed by Nurse.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hi, Commissioner, how
9 are you?

10 Really quick, I just wanted to know if
11 you could go over the numbers a little bit because,
12 so you're saying that EISEP Homecare Workers is part
13 of New York City's Aging program so the CDPAP and all
14 the other ones, that's through the state Medicaid,
15 correct?

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, so, and then
18 if, I just want to make sure that I'm understanding
19 this correctly so in order for the EISEP Homecare
20 Workers to be at the same level, you're saying raise
21 it about \$1.15.

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: \$1.15. If it
23 continues, we'll be even \$1.65 behind because there
24 was another 50 cents given. You know, it's going to
25

2 come down the pipe. The longer we wait on getting
3 this resolved, the higher the disparity is.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right, it's going to
5 be a bigger disparity, right. So how much more do you
6 project on top of the 38.774509 for FY25? How much
7 more on top of that do you think that would be,
8 including the wage increase, and then, also, is any
9 of the state COLA funding trickling down for this
10 program, or no? It's not in any of the, okay.

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No, it's
12 not.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: It's not pass-through
14 at all?

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The number
16 to reach the parity for \$1.15, it's about 3 million.
17 If it goes any longer, it'll be the extra 50 cents,
18 then we have to calculate that.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: But the
21 issue is that the disincentive for the homecare
22 worker, most of our programs have dual, EISEP and
23 managed long-term care, and it becomes a challenge as
24 to how you deploy workers.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, and if you
3 could get back to me on the total amount of how much
4 additional funding that would be, that would be great
5 too.

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: And then just to go
8 back, sorry, because I was trying to respond to
9 something, when Chair Hudson was asking about the HDM
10 for-profit providers, because I know that HDM
11 homebound meals are usually tied to case management
12 work so was there some sort of linkage agreement with
13 a non-profit organization if they were providing the
14 meals was in terms of the case management aspect, or
15 how was that handled?

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Case
17 management agencies are the feeder. I mean, you know
18 this better than me, right? You ran one. But what
19 we've tried to do is make them contiguous with the
20 case management area in terms of geographically
21 contiguous so that we would not have two case
22 management agencies for one HDM so that was one of
23 the issues. As part of the RFP, it's required, what
24 the recruitment and the assessment process is, so

2 it's no distinction between for the for-profit or the
3 non-for-profit.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: I see, so the for-
5 profit providers that were chosen still have to
6 comply with all the case management requirements and
7 intake and all of that.

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The for-
9 profit providers are for-profit in the fact of their
10 state designation, all right, or their federal
11 designation in terms of service delivery for home-
12 delivered meals. They have to do everything that
13 home-delivered meals has done according to our
14 standards, and okay.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, I think that's
16 it for now, because, and I just wanted to, sorry,
17 just one final thing, echo what Council Member Brewer
18 was saying about the social adult days, because yeah,
19 I know that there are good players and bad players,
20 and unfortunately, we've seen a lot of fraud
21 happening for more than a decade. This has been an
22 ongoing conversation for so long so whatever you can
23 do to really urge the State for oversight on this
24 would be great because it's Medicaid dollars that are
25 just being wasted at this point so thank you.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Absolutely,
3 absolutely.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Okay,
5 Commissioner, I have a question from the Majority
6 Whip, Selvena Brooks-Powers. DFTA supported a company
7 from Flushing to provide transportation for seniors
8 in Southeast Queens, and they beat, I guess, in the
9 bidding process, they beat out a locally known
10 provider that had capacity. The company that DFTA
11 selected ran out of money, and now they've upped the
12 contract so folks in Southeast Queens, they want to
13 know the status and how much of an increase did the
14 company receive, and what was the difference from the
15 nearest lowest bidder, who was a, I guess it was a
16 locally known transportation provider?

17 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, for
18 the record, the local bidder was not the lowest cost
19 contract. It was a very high cost of transportation,
20 and they were also the previous transportation
21 provider for the area. They provide excellent older
22 adult clubs. We help grow them so it's not about
23 that, but it's about the purpose of this
24 transportation program. The local, as I said earlier,
25 and I don't remember who asked the question, the way

2 the transportation programs are designed, I think it
3 was Council Member Carr, the way the transportation
4 programs are designed is that the local program will
5 have transportation services, which are portal-to-
6 portal. For older adult clubs, the transportation
7 provider, the borough-wide transportation provider,
8 then provides additional services and also to
9 services for older adults that are not part of the
10 older adult club so it's to expand transportation
11 services for all older adults, whether they go to an
12 older adult club or not so that's that's the
13 situation, and that's how the program is designed.
14 What happened in the case of Southeast Queens,
15 because so much of the demand for portal-to-portal
16 was required rather than being done by the local
17 older adult club, it exhausted some of the
18 transportation units for this borough-wide
19 transportation provider, and that happened for two
20 days. We addressed the situation and have really
21 remedied it to make sure that we have transportation
22 services, but portal-to-portal is the issue that is
23 usually handled and should be handled by the local
24 OAC.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, thank you.

3 Now we have questions...

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: From Council
6 Member Nurse followed by Stevens.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you, Chairs.

8 Just wanting to build on that. I think the Southeast
9 Queens example is one, but there is need. There's
10 more people who are older who need transportation.

11 I'm seeing that the transportation budget is 5.2
12 million. How much additional funding do you need to
13 cover the actual need for transportation services?

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I'm going to
15 get back to you on that because it's something that
16 we always look at, and how do we supplement Access-A-
17 Ride? How would we be able to meet some of those
18 demands? I will get back to you on that, but it is
19 something that we are carefully looking at. We know
20 that the 5.5 million for five borough-wide and one
21 citywide is not adequate, which is why we're
22 comfortable that local OACs can still provide local
23 transportation.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Have you raised the
25 need for an increase directly with OMB at all?

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I didn't
3 hear you.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Have you raised the
5 need for more funding to cover the true need with OMB
6 directly at all?

7 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, and I
8 know that this sounds like a pat answer that I keep
9 saying this, you know, that the needs outpace the
10 resources, but that's the truth.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Yeah.

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And then the
13 other thing is that we do have a very robust ongoing
14 partnership and conversation with OMB. I can't
15 express that enough, and it is something that, which
16 is why sometimes I feel confident that we could
17 address some of these gaps.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay. How many
19 transportation contracts are you managing right now?

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: With the
21 OACs, I'll have to get back to you on that number,
22 but with the broader ones for the transportation,
23 it's five, it's one per borough, and then there's one
24 citywide one.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay. It would be
3 great in the followup, if you could.

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I'm sorry.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: No, it's okay. If
6 you can bring that down...

7 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No, no, no,
8 no. I just was corrected. It's more than what I said.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay.

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It's two per
11 borough and one citywide.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, and in the
13 followup, will you provide the breakdown of the
14 contracts per borough?

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you. Just a
17 couple other questions. One is the related to the
18 kind of the high cost, inflationary cost of
19 everything. In particular, the cost of raw food is
20 something we've heard from providers and it's forced
21 them to decrease the amount and quality of food that
22 they're providing so how are you assessing these
23 inflationary costs to provide the best quality of
24 service as possible?

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: What we've
3 done, we have not had a food cost increase,
4 particularly home-delivered meals, as we mentioned
5 earlier, for two years, and what we're doing in the
6 first quarter of this year is looking at just that,
7 what are the actual food costs? Hopefully, I keep
8 hearing that food cost is coming down, but we're
9 looking at that to see what should be the cost per
10 meal, and we're doing that in the first quarter of
11 '24.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, and so will
13 any of your contracts be adjusted for that, for
14 inflation?

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The goal is
16 that we would do that, and we would present to OMB
17 what that new food cost is and then we will negotiate
18 from there.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay. Thank you,
20 Chairs.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Council
22 Member Stevens.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yes, and good
24 afternoon. It's kind of associated with what Council
25 Member Nurse was just talking about, just even in

2 regards to the home-delivery meals program and just
3 kind of thinking about some of the complaints that
4 I've gotten from seniors around the quality of food
5 and how it's like frozen meals and these different
6 things, and so just trying to think about, and I
7 think RFP came out or RFP is coming out or something,
8 I'm not sure, but even thinking about...

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Council
10 Member, as a Bronxite, the RFP came out and the
11 decision, we're in the final negotiations of the...

12 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Yeah, I'm not
13 crazy, so I do know some stuff sometimes. But even
14 with that, how are you looking at it with the
15 awardees, with the new contracts that'll be given out
16 around quality of food because, even before, I know
17 the last round, some providers were changed and some
18 of it was because of quality of food, but then the
19 new providers just did the same food, like they had
20 the frozen food, although in their proposal, they
21 said that they weren't going to be doing that so I'm
22 just trying to understanding what the checks and
23 balance looks like. Is there something in RFP that
24 you're pushing for more, for especially if they said
25 that they were going to do more prepared meals? What

2 does that process look like? Would love to hear more
3 about that.

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And I think
5 you hit the issue straight on. One of the things that
6 we did have three years of experience and looking at
7 what was said in the RFP, what we wanted, what people
8 were requesting, particularly around culturally
9 competent foods, and that is why that was a big part
10 of the RFP. Again, good learning is to make sure that
11 the provider is providing what they said and why they
12 were awarded that contract so that's part of our
13 monitoring process.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, and could
15 you talk a little bit about what that monitoring
16 process will look like moving forward because I think
17 that was one of the big issues I had where I had a
18 lot of seniors being like, well, this is the same
19 food, and I'm like, this is a different provider, and
20 so what does the monitoring process look like, how
21 will you be evaluating that, and how will you get
22 feedback from our older adults who will be receiving
23 these services?

24 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Two
25 different questions, and I'll try to answer them

2 separately. The way we monitor is we monitor three
3 things with programs. Time of delivery, the
4 nutritional value, and then we also do the irregular
5 assessment, client satisfaction and things of that
6 nature. So it's a regular monitoring process. I
7 remember at one of the hearings, I can't remember
8 which hearing, we talked about our concern. So many
9 providers were getting poor, and it was because they
10 had these commercial caterers that you can't really
11 look into what they're doing so you get the poor
12 rating and we were saying, let's really look at that
13 and monitor that closely. You get the poor rating,
14 that means you have to monitor your subcontractor
15 more so that's another area that we've built in to
16 the assessment process with a little more deliberate
17 focus, and then the other..

18 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So that piece is
19 new.

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That is
21 relatively new, right. It started maybe last year.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Okay.

23 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It was when
24 we saw all these poor ratings that we said, wait a
25 minute, everybody can't be poor, and then we realized

2 what was the causal. The other thing that, now I
3 forgot the other part of the question.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Oh, I was asking
5 about what are we doing differently and how are we
6 going to monitor it because...

7 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We will
8 monitor, and every time we look at new issues, one of
9 the things we're looking at is a cultural competency.
10 One of the things that the Chair has asked is that
11 that be built into the RFP, and she asked it but it
12 was a commitment that we've always had so we're
13 looking at all of those factors that were key to us
14 in the RFP and also that we've learned with these
15 last three years, and those are the things that we
16 monitor.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Okay, definitely
18 we can talk offline more, but I have a couple more
19 questions. Like I said, that was one of the bigger
20 issues that we have with a lot of our older adults
21 who were complaining about it and, like I said, I
22 knew that RFP was coming out and some of them were...

23 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, that was
24 what I was going to answer. The client feedback.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And we're
3 looking at right now, we're building in a new data
4 system so that we can get some client feedback on a
5 regular basis.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Thank you. Like I
7 said, I'll keep in conversation with you because
8 that's been...

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah,
10 because I would also talk to you about the Bronx RFP
11 because I want you to have a full understanding of
12 what happened in one area of the Bronx, all right?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Thank you so much
14 because it was in my District so thank you.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much,
16 Council Member Stevens.

17 I'm going to jump back to a few
18 questions. During the Preliminary Budget hearing, the
19 Committee was informed that NYC Aging conducts
20 assessments of meal contracts every six months to
21 determine the demand throughout the network. In
22 addition, we were told that OACs can come directly to
23 NYC Aging if an increased number of meals are needed
24 in a contract. Per your testimony, these discussions
25 were to occur in April. What were NYC Aging's

2 findings during these assessments and how many OACs
3 requested more meals in their contracts, how many of
4 these requests were granted, and how will they be
5 funded, and I'm happy to repeat the questions.

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Great. We're
7 still in that process, and that's not, I'm not
8 avoiding the question at all because you know I won't
9 do that with you, but what we're doing is we're
10 looking at not only where the meals could be and
11 should be and where the meals are not being utilized,
12 and it was part of our budgetary review process to
13 shift dollars because you remember, I was telling you
14 that we leave about 46 million dollars, sometimes 46
15 million dollars, on the table of unused money, and
16 that's the process that we're in right now, and we
17 can tell you, I will share with you who will be
18 impacted and who will be impacted either way, all
19 right?

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, do you know
21 how many OACs requested more meals in their
22 contracts?

23 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: So what
24 I've been getting is actually increase in costs, not
25 meal increase, not additional units, but increase in

2 costs, and we've been actually working with them to
3 look within their budgets to move money around to
4 assist on that.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and how long
6 does the reimbursement process typically take for OAC
7 and HDM providers?

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: You mean
9 what, from the time that they.. Yeah, we have a
10 stellar record, I'll say on the record, that the City
11 has a 30-year timeframe, I mean, a 30-day timeframe,
12 a 30-day timeframe and we are, when we're bad, we're
13 15 days. Our average is seven to 10 days
14 reimbursement.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That's great. We
16 have heard that so good to know. That's a point of
17 pride. How many meals is NYC Aging reimbursed
18 providers for in Fiscal 2024?

19 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: I know
20 those questions were asked, and we're still getting
21 that data since invoices are not all in.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

23 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: We can
24 send it, we can actually give it to you by the end of
25 the month when all the invoices are in for April.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

3 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The good
4 thing that I would say, which is correlated to that,
5 related, is that participation at OACs has been
6 leveling off and we see that we're up above 80
7 percent now, which is a good sign of participation
8 and that it keeps trending up, but we're very pleased
9 to see it at that rate.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. I'm going to
11 come back to utilization in a second but, regarding
12 case management, the PMMR indicated there was a pause
13 on the intake of new case management clients due to
14 budgetary constraints. The Council's Preliminary
15 Budget Response called for the addition of 6.3
16 million to address the waitlist and increased demand,
17 but no additional funding was included in the
18 Executive Plan. What's the budget for case management
19 for Fiscal 2024, for Fiscal '25, and the outyears,
20 and how much has been spent to date?

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I can't give
22 you what was spent to date... Oh, you want to do this?
23 Okay. It's 44.4 million.

24

25

2 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Right,
3 so the Commissioner mentioned it's 44.4. We actually
4 spent 30 million dollars so far.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sorry, 44.4 and
6 you've spent 39?

7 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: 30
8 million dollars.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: 30 million so far,
10 okay. That's the budget for '24? '24 and '25 as well.

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: '24/'25 case
12 management.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: '24 and '25?

14 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Yeah,
15 44.5 million dollars.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you,
17 and then is there a current waitlist for case
18 management services?

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: There is,
20 it's small. Well, it's not that small if you're the
21 one waiting. It's about 776 clients, but the thing
22 that I want to be clear about is it's usually
23 centered around the full assessment for case
24 management, right? So everybody gets the initial
25 assessment, it's the full assessment for case

2 management, and that's where we have the 776, and
3 anyone who's been deemed food insecure, unless you're
4 an MLTC client, you immediately get a meal.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. During the
6 Preliminary Budget hearing, we were informed that 6.3
7 million dollars would be needed to address budgetary
8 constraints with case management services. What's the
9 status of this new needs request?

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We have
11 constant communication with OMB about our new needs
12 request. At the last hearing, we gave you chapter and
13 verse, and each one of those is in, we're in
14 conversation with OMB about.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and do you
16 know the current case management ratio or the
17 caseload of clients a case manager works with?

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I believe
19 it's one to 58.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That can't be...

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Huh?

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That cannot be
23 optimal.

24 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No, the,
25 the...

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: What is like the
3 optimal ratio? Ideally, what would the ratio be?

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, ideally,
5 well, it ranges from 54 to 70, so we would say, you
6 know, right now it's about 58 optimum. It should
7 never be more than 1.1 to 65 so anything.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: 1 to 65.

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It should
10 never be more than that, and then even that's pushing
11 it so the one to 58, which is our average now, it's
12 an area that we feel comfortable with.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, but in an
14 ideal world, what is that number? Is it 54, is it 58,
15 or is it lower than that?

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It would
17 probably range, it'd probably be 55.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: 55? Okay. Thank
19 you. I want to just go back to the utilization and
20 just follow up on some of Council Member Mealy's
21 questions. You said utilization at OACs now is at or
22 around 80 percent?

23 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: 81 percent
24 is the average for all OACs.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Do you know the
3 lowest and the highest?

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I can get
5 you that.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and do you
7 know which borough is?

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I can get
9 you that.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You can get us
11 that? Okay.

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Are you planning
14 to reallocate resources from centers with low
15 utilization to those where utilization is high?

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And then are you
18 going to notify providers about that?

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Of course.
20 Can't do this without them.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: When would you...

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We have to
23 look at the implication of that. We're finishing the
24 study now, and we will...

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, when will
3 the study be finished or completed?

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: When do you
5 think it'll be completed?

6 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Sometime
7 by the end of this month.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: End of this month?

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: We're almost at
11 the end of this month.

12 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: I know,
13 I know.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Soon.

15 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: But we
16 have a lot of things going on, so yeah.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah. So, I mean,
18 you feel comfortable saying that on the record or
19 maybe June?

20 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Yeah,
21 we'll go for June.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Trying to
23 help you out here.

24 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The thing is
25 that I was going to, now I'm going to push Jose a

2 little bit. The thing is that the window of
3 opportunity to do the shift is also narrow.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So we have
6 to consider that also.

7 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: So you
8 also have to remember, and I know you haven't brought
9 this up, but we're also dealing with the COLA issues,
10 we're doing ICR issues. So all these things are
11 impacting..

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: PASSPort.
13 Passport.

14 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Passport
15 issues so we're actually dealing with all these
16 amendments that we're trying to do to the contracts
17 so we want to make sure all that gets done as well as
18 ensuring that the contracts that start in Fiscal Year
19 '25 get their advances so they have enough cash to
20 start spending. When we have that evaluation, again,
21 to your point, we will then have those conversations
22 because again, we want to make sure that all this
23 gets done before the Fiscal Year.

24 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And we have,
25 right.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And then,
3 beyond the sort of reallocation, will the findings
4 from this report be used to determine which centers
5 might close?

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I don't
7 think utilization is the only determining factor. It
8 might be part of a criteria should we ever have to
9 cross that bridge, but I don't think it's the only
10 determinant.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and is there
12 a plan, or are you working with providers with low
13 utilization to increase that utilization, and what
14 does that plan look like?

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, we
16 inform them of the utilization, and they have to give
17 us a corrective action plan as to what they're doing.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Remember
20 that each one of them has an outreach budget, and so
21 it's like, what are you doing in terms of increasing
22 outreach against that?

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, I'm going to
24 move on to homecare and then try to wrap it up here.

2 NYC Aging provides funding for homecare
3 services to help functionally impaired older adults
4 live safely in the comfort of their own homes. NYC
5 Aging's homecare services support older adults who
6 are not eligible for Medicaid. In recent years, the
7 demand for homecare has grown steadily. The Council's
8 Preliminary Budget Response called on the
9 Administration to add 7 million in baseline funding
10 to support the increased demand. Unfortunately, this
11 was not included in the Executive Plan. How many
12 older adults currently receive homecare services
13 administered through NYC Aging?

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I have that
15 for you right here, and I'm trying to find it.
16 Where's my homecare? I can't find the tab for that. I
17 will get back to you.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I'm here. I'll
19 give you another minute if you need a minute. If the
20 tab is there, I want you to find the tab. If it's not
21 there, that's a different story.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Where is it? Right
23 there. Oh, additional questions from Council. Okay,
24 here it goes.

25 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON
CRIMINAL JUSTICE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON AGING 322

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: In homecare,
3 we have 2,427 individuals enrolled. Those are unique
4 individuals.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: 2,427?

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: 2,427.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And in home
9 care, we have a waitlist of 322.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. You
11 preempted my next question. What's the current budget
12 for homecare and actual spending in Fiscal '24 so
13 far?

14 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: I
15 believe that homecare budget is 39 million in...

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sorry, 39 million
17 was it?

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: 39 million,
19 yeah.

20 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: So it's...

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: (INAUDIBLE)

22 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: Yeah,
23 and so it's actually, yeah, that's, that's
24 (INAUDIBLE)

25

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, CMA,
3 sorry, I was getting my programs confused. It's 39
4 million of which 27 million has been spent so far.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Do you
6 expect the demand for homecare services to meet or
7 exceed the budget this Fiscal Year?

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We
9 anticipate that the demand for homecare will always
10 be an increasing demand.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And did you
12 advocate for an increase in the homecare services
13 budget in the Executive Plan? I know you're in
14 constant communication with OMB.

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We have, and
16 it's part of our conversation in terms of the larger
17 issue.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, are you
19 pushing for an increase in the adopted plan?

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And the
21 other thing that I, for the record, is that the State
22 has not, we're advocating also for State funding. The
23 State has not given us any increases in this area,
24 and they're the primary funder of our EISEP program.

2 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: So
3 earlier mentioned the COLA issue, this is also part
4 of that.

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: This is all
6 part of that.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. You
8 mentioned this earlier. I just wanted to follow up
9 and see if you had anything you wanted to add, but
10 with regards to the capital funding provided by the
11 Brooklyn Borough President, it's 7 million dollars.

12 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER MERCADO: It's six
13 million.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Six million, okay,
15 and you have not received similar funding from other
16 Borough Presidents, is that correct?

17 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No, we have
18 not. This is a unique opportunity for us to be able
19 to respond to the conversation we had at the
20 Preliminary, which is bringing up our kitchens, some
21 of them just to standard and others to state-of-the-
22 art.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And what do you
24 plan to use those funds for?
25

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Primarily,
3 with the Borough President's agreement, we will use
4 those for improving kitchens in Brooklyn, and then
5 we'll look at some of the other capital needs
6 centered around HVAC.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, great. Give
8 me one second, please.

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Sure. We
10 would appreciate if you could talk to your other
11 Borough Presidents and see if they would follow this
12 model. It would give us a great opportunity.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I will indeed. I
14 will indeed. I also wanted to correct the record.

15 I believe you said in your testimony
16 earlier that you attempted to bike at my event. You
17 were definitely riding that bike.

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, well,
19 yeah, but there were two people right next to me.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, but that
21 doesn't count. You gotta give yourself credit. You
22 were on the bike and you were pedaling and you were
23 moving without the trike wheels.

24 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, yes.
25 What do you want to ask me about the trikes?

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: No, no, no, you've
3 touched on the trikes. I think we're good on the
4 trikes.

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, we
6 need to have...

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I just wanted to
8 correct the record and make sure people knew that you
9 were actually riding the bicycle.

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I was
11 actually riding a bike with great trepidation.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Okay, you
13 have another question, Council Member Mealy? Okay,
14 one more question from Council Member Mealy. A quick
15 one, I hope.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Since you don't
17 really know how much money you have left for COVID,
18 do you think you would be open to maybe putting it
19 towards security guards at our DFTA senior centers?

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It's not an
21 area that we have really looked at. It's something
22 that we could look at, but I want to clarify for the
23 record. It wasn't that we don't know how much COVID
24 dollars we are. We were confused between COVID and
25 City tax levy so that was where the confusion was. We

2 were thinking that it was baselined already, but it's
3 still coded as federal COVID funds.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: But wouldn't the
5 City Department of Aging want to secure our seniors
6 in senior centers with security? This day and age,
7 things are changing. People are doing different
8 things than they did before, and our seniors are the
9 most vulnerable population, and now that the Mayor
10 feel that they are going to balance the budget off
11 our seniors, taking away all the security from 55
12 senior centers and senior housing, isn't it our
13 obligation to make sure our senior centers are secure
14 and safe for our older adults?

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: If you're
16 talking about the NYCHA decision to remove the
17 security guards from NYCHA facilities, I cannot opine
18 on a NYCHA budgetary decision. Those are their
19 decisions. When we heard of it for the first time at
20 a town hall of older adults, what we did was talk to
21 our community partner in the NYPD and start looking
22 at how is it that we can use the senior liaison at
23 every NYPD to start looking at this, but I cannot
24 opine on a budgetary decision made by NYCHA, or I
25 should not.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: But could you let
3 us know your contingency plan? They are still under
4 your purview of being senior centers.

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: They're not
6 under my purview...

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, I just want
8 to clarify, Councilwoman. Those are the senior
9 centers at NYCHA facilities so it's in the NYCHA
10 budget. It's not in the NYC Aging budget.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: But we're New York
12 City, and this is Department of Aging. I feel we
13 still have to put some skin in the game because it's
14 still protecting our seniors.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Absolutely. Thank
16 you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Thank you for
18 obliging me.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: No problem. Chair
22 Brannan?

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Commissioner,
24 thank you so much. We look forward to working with
25 you and advocating on your behalf for our seniors.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you so
3 much.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you so
5 much.

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: For our
7 seniors.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: That's right.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yes.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we're going
11 to take like a 10, 15-minute break tops, and we're
12 going to hear from the public.

13 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: For the
14 record, I will be leaving, but we do have staff that
15 listens and stays here to be responsive should you
16 need to.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Appreciate that.

18 Okay, so we're going to start, I believe,
19 with public testimony for the Aging Committee, and
20 then we do Corrections and Probation.

21 Make sure you fill out one of those
22 tickets if you're here to testify, and we'll see you
23 in like 10 minutes.

24

25

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon, ladies
3 and gentlemen. At this time, please find your seat.
4 Once again, please find your seat.

5 Please ensure that all cell phones and
6 electronic devices are placed on silent.

7 We shall resume momentarily.

8 Thank you for your cooperation.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we're now
10 going to open the hearing for public testimony.

11 I want to remind members of the public
12 that this is a government proceeding, that decorum
13 must be observed at all times.

14 As such, members of the public shall
15 remain silent at all times. Unless you're testifying,
16 please remain silent. The witness table is reserved
17 only for people who wish to testify and who we call
18 up to the dais. No video recording or photography is
19 allowed from the witness table. Members of the public
20 may not present audio or video recordings of
21 testimony, but they may submit transcripts of such
22 recordings to the Sergeant-at-Arms for inclusion in
23 the official hearing record.

24 If you're here today in Chambers and you
25 wish to speak at the hearing, just make sure you fill

2 out one of those appearance tickets in the back and
3 wait to be recognized. Once you're recognized, you
4 will have two minutes to speak on today's hearing
5 topic, either the Corrections, Probation, or Aging
6 FY25 Executive Budgets, and that is all that we'll be
7 hearing testimony on today.

8 If you have a written statement or
9 additional written testimony that you want to submit
10 for the official record, just provide a copy of the
11 testimony to the Sergeant-at-Arms.

12 You may also email written testimony. If
13 you didn't bring it with you today, you can email us
14 the written testimony within 72 hours of the
15 conclusion of this hearing. You can email it to
16 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Audio and video recordings
17 will not be accepted, only written testimony.

18 Okay, we're going to call up the first
19 panel now.

20 Kevin Kiprovski, Ariel Savransky,
21 Jeanette Estima or Estrema, Tara Klein, and Beth
22 Finkel, and Andrew Santa Ana.

23 No, not in this panel.

24 I'm going to start from the right. Just
25 say your name and you can start.

2 KEVIN KIPROVSKI: Good afternoon, my name
3 is Kevin Kiproovski, and I am the Director of Public
4 Policy at LiveOn New York. Thank you so much for the
5 opportunity to testify.

6 Live On New York is a membership
7 organization that represents over 110 service
8 providers that basically cover most of DFTA's
9 portfolio. They run over 1,000 programs, most of them
10 in the five boroughs, but across the entire state. I
11 just want to open by saying we have submitted over
12 150 testimonies from older adults we've collected
13 across the city today to be entered into the record,
14 and our members will be submitting more across the 72
15 hours and some of them will actually be submitting
16 some today because the cuts are incredibly egregious,
17 and thank you both so much for your advocacy on this
18 issue. Ageism is pervasive in this year's Executive
19 Budget with a built-in hole of 80 million dollars
20 that threatens to disconnect older New Yorkers from
21 the services and support they need to stay involved
22 in their communities. We testified earlier this year
23 that older adult centers are in dire need, and
24 there's 82 million across the system that we've
25 identified to keep this system whole as it is and, in

2 response to that, we've seen an additional 100-
3 million-dollar cut with nothing to actually meet the
4 needs we've outlined. We are an aging city and we
5 must invest in that reality. The current paltry aging
6 budget, less than half of 1 percent and thank you
7 Chair Brannon for bringing that up in your
8 questioning, is not an adequate investment for now
9 and it's not an adequate investment for our future.
10 Some of what I'm going to say is going to sort of
11 reflect what we said during the Prelim Budget because
12 not much has changed since then but add a little bit
13 more.

14 One, we want to say we're so grateful for
15 the incredible amount that the Council gives in
16 discretionary funding. It is foundational to the
17 work. We believe it should be baselined but you guys
18 really do come in to save the day on a lot of
19 programs so thank you so much for that.

20 Two, we're still asking for 50 million
21 just to baseline funding for capital improvements in
22 centers from kitchens to floors to roofs. We have
23 places that are covered in mold that can't open, and
24 we're shocked that there's still 20 million being
25 pulled out of that system.

2 We need 20 million to expand social work
3 support. One thing that we actually heard in
4 testimony is that the optimal number is 55 but we
5 have programs that have up to 72 people per case
6 manager and they've removed intake workers so the
7 intake actually now falls on the case managers as
8 well so they're doing more admin work and they have
9 more cases and there is a wait list so, since money
10 was pulled out of that system, we've actually created
11 probably a system where there's a longer waitlist and
12 needs are higher.

13 The last one, oh sorry, 12 million for
14 HDM to get our per meal rate up to where it's
15 supposed to be to \$15.31, and I think that this is
16 something we're all thinking is that we need to
17 rethink how our aging system works in light of the
18 fact that our city is aging and we don't want to
19 continue ageist policies that disconnect people from
20 the communities they live in and our city as a whole
21 so we want to reverse all of the cuts but we don't
22 want to celebrate that. We want to actually add
23 funding to meet the needs and we are so grateful for
24 everyone's advocacy and partnership with us. Thank
25 you so much.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

3 ARIEL SAVRANSKY: Hi, my name is Ariel
4 Sabransky. I'm a Senior Policy and Advocacy Advisor
5 at UJA Federation of New York. Thank you, Chairs
6 Brannon and Hudson, for your support and for this
7 opportunity to testify.

8 I want to start just by thanking the City
9 Council for the 100-million-dollar workforce
10 investment over the last two years and 50 million
11 next year as well as the 3 percent cost of living for
12 FY25 and FY27. You'll have my longer testimony, and
13 Kevin just gave a really great summary of a lot of
14 our asks so I'm just going to highlight the Holocaust
15 Survivor Initiative and NORCS.

16 The Council-funded Holocaust Survivor
17 Initiative continues to be a lifeline for survivors
18 grappling with poverty, food insecurity, isolation,
19 medical challenges, and mental health issues. Trauma
20 after trauma, COVID, anti-Semitism, the war in
21 Ukraine, and now the war in Israel have exacerbated
22 survivors' already vulnerable mental health, and the
23 astronomical cost of living is making it harder for
24 them to make ends meet. Last year the City Council
25 included 4.2 million to support the Holocaust

2 Survivor Initiative. We're asking that this
3 investment be restored to 4.25 million which matches
4 FY23 funding. This goes towards things such as case
5 management, mental health services, trauma-informed
6 care, crisis prevention, legal services, emergency
7 financial assistance, socialization programs, and
8 end-of-life care. Many of our network partners
9 supporting Holocaust survivors have client waitlists
10 of over 500 clients and, just to give you an idea of
11 kind of where this funding goes to, adding one
12 specially trained case manager to their staff which
13 would allow a 10 percent reduction in the waitlist
14 costs roughly 85,000 dollars annually. That covers
15 salary and benefits so this funding is really greatly
16 needed to meet the needs of this population.

17 And then NORCS, we're asking for the
18 restoration of 6.09 million with 1.3 million to
19 directly support health and nursing services. NORCS
20 were discussed a lot in the hearing. I know that
21 you're aware of the impact that the NORCS have on
22 seniors' ability to stay in their communities and in
23 their houses so we really thank you for your support
24 in that area. Thank you for the opportunity to
25

2 testify and we look forward to continuing the
3 conversation.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
5 much. Go ahead.

6 JEANETTE ESTIMA: Good afternoon. My name
7 is Jeanette Estima, and I'm the Director of Policy
8 and Advocacy at City Meals on Wheels. Thank you for
9 the opportunity to testify.

10 In addition to funding home-delivered
11 meals for weekends, holidays, and emergencies, City
12 Meals is a citywide emergency food responder for
13 older adults who cannot access other emergency food
14 programs. In Fiscal Year '23, we delivered over 2
15 million meals to more than 22,000 older New Yorkers.
16 This includes about 34,000 emergency meals delivered
17 during emergencies and about 160,000 meals that were
18 pre-supplied in our seasonal emergency food packages.
19 These meals are nutritionally appropriate for older
20 adults, and they are shelf-stable, not requiring
21 refrigeration or heating. Pre-supplying the meals
22 means there's food on hand when extreme weather
23 disrupts a delivery or when a power outage or a gas
24 outage makes it impossible to eat a frozen meal
25 that's been received.

3 Like most providers, we continue to see a
4 rapid growth in the need for our services. In FY23,
5 we served about 1,150 more older adults than we did
6 in FY22 and, during the pandemic, our food costs
7 increased about 33 percent. Therefore, we're
8 respectfully requesting a renewal of the 500,000
9 dollars we received through the Older Adults Clubs
10 Programs and Enhancements Initiative and an
11 enhancement of 300,000 dollars. We also urge the City
12 to increase the reimbursement rate for home-delivered
13 meals providers to \$15.31 per meal, as they too are
14 struggling with increased costs. It's also critical
15 to provide that 50 million capital fund to repair and
16 upgrade older adult centers. You know, cooling
17 centers were raised, and we do think it's critical
18 that when these older adult centers are mandated to
19 serve as cooling centers, they really do need to make
20 sure that those HVAC systems are in good repair so
21 this is an urgent need, and OACs, leaving them mired
22 in bureaucratic limbo is really dangerous to older
23 New Yorkers.

24 Finally, we're just deeply concerned
25 about the HDM contracts that are being awarded right
now. We work hand-in-glove with the City's contracted

2 providers, which is only possible because of our
3 shared mission that puts older New Yorkers first. We
4 thank the Council for your oversight of that issue.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
6 much.

7 Great. Thank you, Chair Brannon, Chair
8 Hudson, and Council Members for holding this hearing
9 today, and thank you also for the new format and
10 allowing advocates the opportunity to weigh in. We
11 love this.

12 I'm Tara Klein. I'm the Deputy Director
13 of Policy and Advocacy for United Neighborhood
14 Houses. We are a policy and social change
15 organization that represents settlement houses in New
16 York, and many of our members run older adult
17 centers, NORCs, home-delivered meals programs, and
18 others so thank you to the Council for including many
19 of our priorities in the Preliminary Budget response.
20 That was great to see, and Kevin laid out many of
21 those new needs that we have in our system.
22 Unfortunately, the Mayor's Executive Budget once
23 again creates significant programmatic and financial
24 instability in the aging services network. There are
25 more cuts once again, there is no new needs funding,

2 and this is really accelerating a downward spiral of
3 systemic disinvestment in this system, and this
4 really is risking the health and well-being of over a
5 million older New Yorkers.

6 I want to touch on a couple of things
7 that came up in the questioning earlier. First,
8 around the cuts around stimulus funding. Thank you
9 for helping us clarify what is going on.

10 Unfortunately, we still have no answers about those
11 cuts. Are they going to be filled back in? If not,
12 what will the impact be? Are there going to be
13 centers that are going to be forced to close via an
14 RFP process that has fewer older adult centers? We
15 really don't know, and we need transparency around
16 that.

17 Next, I also want to thank you for your
18 work around the home-delivered meals contracts. We do
19 have serious concerns that private contractors could
20 compromise the integrity of the home-delivered meals
21 program. This is a social service program. It is not
22 simply a meal-delivery service. Drivers who work for
23 non-profits now and do the meal delivery often
24 identify challenges in the home, such as behavior
25 changes. Some have even identified people who have

2 passed away in their homes, and they are trained on
3 how to deal with that so we really encourage that
4 component to be key moving forward.

5 Finally, once again, this came up
6 earlier, the issue around eligibility for home-
7 delivered meals for people who are on an MLTC plan.
8 We just learned that there are over 2,500 people who
9 are denied home-delivered meals because of some
10 bureaucratic confusion. This is outrageous. This has
11 been going on for over a year now so we really
12 appreciate anything you could do to get to the bottom
13 of this and clarify that policy. Thank you very much.
14 We really appreciate all of the Council's support.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

16 BETH FINKEL: Hi, I'm Beth Finkel. I'm the
17 State Director for AARP New York. I want to thank
18 Chairperson Brannan and Chairperson Hudson, and thank
19 you for the advocacy that you've done and other
20 Council Members. AARP has over 750,000 members
21 throughout the five boroughs, but we represent
22 consumers, we represent constituents. We don't have
23 any programs. This is all about what we hope is the
24 best to allow people to age in place here in New
25 York.

2 I wanted to really talk about our deep
3 concern with the Mayor's Proposed Executive Budget
4 with the cuts. It's very, very concerning. We know
5 the numbers are just going up according to the last
6 census. From 2011 to 2020, there's over 30 percent
7 increase in people 65-plus in New York, and the
8 poverty rate among those 65-plus in those 10 years
9 went up 37 percent so you have to really scratch your
10 head and say what the heck is happening here doing
11 cutbacks when we know that the population is
12 burgeoning and also struggling. I'm not going to go
13 back over the numbers because you know it, but I'm
14 glad you pointed out that right now it represents
15 less than 1 percent of the City's budget, and that's
16 20 percent of New York City's residents are now 65
17 and older so there's some disparity here that really
18 needs to be addressed. We're concerned about the
19 numbers because we realize that if we lose 80 million
20 to the system, that could be up to 60 older adult
21 centers being closed. I mean that's outrageous. We
22 need to have some clarity about caseload because we
23 know that there's no more intake workers, and so what
24 does that do to the case workers that were
25 overwhelmed before?

2 I want to go back to the food issue.
3 Paying \$12.78 for a meal that really costs \$15.31, I
4 mean what's happening here? Where is the quality
5 control? Where is the basic dietary needs? And we as
6 a City have to address that. So overarching, this is
7 about ageism also. People allocate money where they
8 allocate it. You have to be concerned about the older
9 adults who built our communities, and to me and to
10 all of us, I think it smacks of ageism and it
11 shouldn't be tolerated so I thank you for your time
12 today.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Beth.

14 ANDREW SANTA ANA: Good Friday afternoon.
15 I want to thank Chair Brannan and Chair Henson and
16 the Council Members for the Committee on Aging for
17 holding this hearing and giving the Asian American
18 Federation an opportunity to testify on the needs of
19 our older adult community. My name is Andrew Santa
20 Ana, and I'm the Deputy Director of Research and
21 Policy at AAF, where we proudly serve the collective
22 voice of over 70 member non-profits serving 1.5
23 million Asian New Yorkers.

24 Before I begin, I did want to just
25 briefly take a moment to bring into this space an

2 acknowledgement of Don Lee, the former Chair of
3 Homecrest's Board of Directors. He was acknowledged
4 in this space. He recently passed, and his legacy and
5 influence continues to resonate through AAF's work.
6 Don was an unparalleled voice in the Pan-Asian
7 community in advocacy for seniors, in work to address
8 anti-Asian hate, and in solidarity with all
9 communities of color to keep New Yorkers safe. We're
10 uplifted by his wisdom and inspired by his ferocity
11 and leadership.

12 Going into Fiscal Year 2025, Asian older
13 adults continue to endure the impacts of teetering
14 economic conditions and continued anti-Asian hate,
15 making up 13.7 percent of New York City's senior
16 population. Asian older adults, with 23.2 percent of
17 said population living in poverty, our older adult
18 population lives alone, and often, as many as 83.5
19 percent possess limited English proficiency skills.

20 Our Seniors Working Group, the first and
21 only Asian older adult-focused advocacy coalition in
22 New York City and state, comprises of 12 Asian-led,
23 Asian older-serving adult member organizations. Since
24 its inception, the Seniors Working Group, under the
25 guidance of AAF, has become an authoritative voice

2 for policymakers to reference and consult concerns
3 addressing Asian seniors.

4 Now, my testimony will include details in
5 the written testimony that have more recommendations
6 but, in short, food insecurity is among the top
7 concerns for Asian older adults in addition to anti-
8 Asian violence, functioning older adult centers and
9 mental health, all of which are interconnected. Our
10 policy recommendations include increasing funding to
11 Asian-led, Asian-serving older adult service
12 providers, expanding the funding to include time and
13 expenses spent on case management, digital devices
14 and training, prioritize funding for both congregate
15 and remote services and programming, continue funding
16 a network of linguistically and culturally competent
17 food service programs that provide alternative food
18 benefits to older adults, and expanding funding to
19 include culturally competent in-language and older
20 adult focused non-traditional mental health service
21 models. This includes prioritizing CBOs with a
22 history of providing free and subsidized non-
23 traditional culturally competent services and funding
24 opportunities. Thank you so much for your time.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all
3 very much for your testimony.

4 Okay, next panel. Eustacia Smith, Linda
5 Hoffman, Fiorela Caro Turin, Paul Nagle, Kenneth Cox.

6 I'm going to start from my right. Just
7 say your name and you can begin.

8 LINDA HOFFMAN: Good afternoon. I'm Linda
9 Hoffman. I am President of New York Foundation for
10 Senior Citizens, and we are truly grateful to you,
11 Chair Brannan, and to you, Chair Hudson, for your
12 ongoing support of our citywide Home Sharing and
13 Respite Care Program, which only needs sort of a
14 little bit of a pebble on the beach of this major
15 budget, and we're all, including our Board of
16 Directors, very grateful for the staunch support
17 we've been receiving from you all of these years so
18 that we can continue to run the program citywide, and
19 we run it really on a shoestring budget. At this
20 year, or for the next Fiscal Year, we are really
21 hoping and praying for your support of a provision of
22 250,000 from the Speaker's budget, her citywide
23 budget, and an allocation from your individual and
24 borough delegation discretionary budgets within the
25 next City budget. Our free home sharing service

2 matches adult hosts with extra space in their homes
3 or apartments to share with responsible, compatible
4 adult guests who are in need of affordable housing,
5 and one of the match-mates must be over the age of
6 60. During the past 43 years, we have been
7 successfully matching and have successfully matched
8 over 2,600 persons in shared living arrangements. At
9 some point, we are hoping we might be able to involve
10 asylum-seekers to live in the homes of older New York
11 City residents.

12 Our respite care service provides
13 affordable, short-term in-home care at the low cost
14 of \$18.55 per hour that's paid directly to the
15 homecare workers by frail elderly who are attempting
16 to manage at home and those who are being cared for
17 by others, people who are above the Medicaid level to
18 prevent them from going into nursing homes. Although
19 the private cost of care for homecare in New York
20 City is 30 dollars an hour with a private agency,
21 these people are paying, they're on unfixed incomes
22 and paying \$18.55 an hour directly to the homecare
23 workers and, in some instances, we're providing it
24 free of charge for people with incomes under 40,000 a
25 year and who need it on an emergency basis. Both of

2 those are the only services of their types in New
3 York City. They prevent institutionalization, they
4 are responsive to the housing crisis, they provide
5 affordable housing, and they certainly provide
6 significant savings in Medicaid and other expenses
7 for the city. To continue our citywide program, we
8 really do need the funding that we've requested, and
9 I thank you very much in advance for hopefully
10 providing it for us.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
12 much.

13 EUSTACIA SMITH: Thank you, Chair Brannan,
14 for the opportunity to testify. My name is Eustacia
15 Smith, and I'm the Director of Advocacy at Westside
16 Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing,
17 referred to as WSFSSH. Thank you, Chair Hudson and
18 the Committee on Aging for your work to support older
19 New Yorkers.

20 We need New York City to invest 82
21 million in new funding across the aging system.
22 People 65 and older are the fastest-growing age group
23 of people experiencing homelessness. Instead, we find
24 ourselves facing the possibility of millions in cuts
25 and having to fight just so our centers can remain

2 open. The closure of older adult centers will plunge
3 New York City seniors into social isolation and
4 loneliness. This is not only unjust, it will harm
5 seniors and create new community health burdens.
6 Social isolation is linked to a 50 percent increased
7 risk of dementia and higher rates of high blood
8 pressure, heart disease, anxiety, depression,
9 Alzheimer's disease, and death. Our participants come
10 from vulnerable populations that already have
11 extremely limited resources, where these centers
12 provide a lifeline.

13 WSFSSH houses over 2,500 older adults in
14 permanent affordable and supportive housing and
15 shelter. To give a sense to how significant each
16 older adult center is, we operate three centers. Two
17 are in affordable senior housing, and one is in a
18 NYCHA housing. These three centers serve over 1,500
19 older adults in Manhattan and the Bronx, providing
20 socialization, community activities, nutritional
21 services as well as case management. They help
22 seniors navigate complicated entitlement programs,
23 access to healthcare, and the difficult process of
24 getting home health aide services. They provide
25 counseling and access to mental health services, help

2 completing housing recertifications and referrals for
3 housing when needed. Now, imagine that 30 to 60 of
4 these centers were lost, as the Mayor's Proposed
5 Budget could mean. The loss would be incredible.
6 Older adult centers are not expendable, and we need
7 more case management dollars and more money for the
8 increased cost of food. They are vital tools for
9 keeping people housed, healthy, and out of more
10 costly institutional types of care, such as hospitals
11 and nursing facilities. This is a time that we should
12 be dramatically scaling up funding for services for
13 older adults. As one of our center participants put
14 it, I've already lost so much, even the thought of
15 losing this center is devastating. Thank you.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

17 FIORELA CARO TURIN: Thank you to the
18 Council and Chairs for the opportunity to testify
19 today. My name is Fiorela Caro Turin, and I am the
20 Associate Director at the Educational Alliance's
21 Sirovich Center for Balanced Living, located in East
22 Village. Educational Alliance provides programs and
23 services to a highly diverse population of about
24 4,000 older New Yorkers annually through Weinberg
25 OAC, Sirovich OAC, and the Cooperative Village NORC.

2 Like many providers, our OACs work with the most
3 vulnerable populations, including older adults living
4 in high poverty and with limited English proficiency.

5 My fellow directors and I urge the
6 Council and Administration to continue to advocate
7 for the reversal of all cuts to the NYC Aging and
8 reinvest in this system. With acute needs across the
9 system, the City must invest funds into the older
10 adult network for both services and capital repairs
11 and maintenance of centers. Each year, we face the
12 same budget problem. Spending on building repairs
13 limits our investment in continuing to build out our
14 program offerings. Additionally, we must work to
15 expand comprehensive social supports for our members
16 and combat older adult hunger through increased funds
17 for congregate home-delivered meals.

18 I will be submitting, and I have already
19 submitted to Crystal Hudson, additional testimony
20 from 175 of our members from our older adult centers
21 and, if I could summarize, many of our members have
22 personally written about how significantly our
23 centers have positively impacted their lives. Many of
24 them highlight how crucial our programs and services
25 are, including meals, arts, exercise activities,

2 group trips, social and case management services,
3 education workshops, and socialization are imperative
4 for their longevity and joyful existence. To quote a
5 few, "I am forever grateful for Sirovich and how it
6 has nurtured and enriched me." "Many of us worked
7 hard and pay our taxes faithfully." "Please do not
8 reduce the budget that supports our centers." How are
9 we to continue with the support coming from the
10 budget without the support coming from the budget?"
11 Finally, "after my husband died, there was a huge
12 emptiness in my life. After joining Sirovich, it
13 filled the gap with art, friendship, and joy. Thank
14 God for our senior centers." Thank you for the
15 opportunity to testify.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

17 KENNETH COX: Thank you, Chairs Brannan
18 and Hudson. Thank you for convening this hearing
19 today. My name is Kenneth Cox. I'm the Chief of
20 Strategic Philanthropy for Encore Community Services.

21 Encore is one of the city's largest older
22 adult services organizations. We provide more than
23 half a million meals to older adults in their homes
24 and at our older adult centers. We also offer members
25 case management financial wellness.

2 Hundreds of older adults come through our
3 doors each week seeking a meal, companionship and,
4 increasingly, connection to supportive services.
5 Unfortunately, our centers are showing signs of
6 underinvestment as critical infrastructure begins to
7 fail. New York City Aging's Capital Budget is simply
8 insufficient to meet the vast capital needs of our
9 centers. At Encore, we've struggled with
10 malfunctioning elevators and deteriorating HVAC
11 systems. That is unacceptable. We are calling on the
12 Council to champion increased investment in the DFTA
13 capital program to prevent further deterioration of
14 critical infrastructure and ensure that older adults
15 enjoy safe, functional, and dignified facilities.

16 Providing fresh, nutritious meals is
17 another core part of Encore's operation. Currently,
18 the City only funds a single meal daily for older
19 adults. Unfortunately, for thousands of older New
20 Yorkers, that is the only meal they'll receive. Food
21 insecurity among older adults is worsening and
22 requires decisive action from the City. To support
23 healthy and dignified aging in New York, we must
24 provide three meals daily to older adults in need.

2 Finally, the economics of providing meals
3 is a significant challenge for providers like Encore.
4 The City's reimbursement rate remains too low,
5 particularly for weekend meals. Despite a modest
6 increase in the Fiscal '23/'24, basic food and
7 overhead costs have continued to rise. We're grateful
8 for the Council's action last year, and we urge you
9 to support additional investment until reimbursement
10 rates have caught up to inflation. Thank you for your
11 time. We look forward to celebrating a city budget
12 that supports older New Yorkers who built our city.
13 Thank you.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all
15 very much.

16 Okay, our next panel, Minnetta Brown,
17 Chen Lightfoot or Cheri Lightfoot, sorry, Essie
18 Dugan, Kimberly George, Darcy Connor, Sonny Smith or
19 Susie Smith.

20 MINNETTA BROWN: Good evening. Thank you
21 for having us here. My name is Minnetta Brown, and I
22 live in New York City Housing which is called
23 Reverend Brown Housing. Not related. However, I'm
24 speaking on the behalf of other senior citizens that
25 live there which is about 300 seniors. Mount Ararat

2 is now closed. We live in Brooklyn, 1634 St. Mark's
3 Avenue, and people there that are seniors that are
4 living there need nutritionist meals, they need
5 physical exercise, socializing, and also health and
6 well-being. They also need safety. The thing is that
7 Mount Ararat is closed and we need it open. We truly
8 need it open for the people, for the seniors there.
9 They have nowhere else or nothing else to do, and I
10 think it would be more important for them to be more
11 active at the center there. What it is that we also,
12 we have six stories, and the six stories that we
13 have, the dinette area is down on the main floor, and
14 it would be much more easier for them to come there
15 instead of going somewhere else because of the
16 transportation, and some of them are also homebound
17 so they're not able to participate and travel so I
18 just feel that seniors are being stripped of their
19 dignity and that the fact that we need to be treated
20 more as human beings rather than to be mistreated and
21 they need to recognize more about senior, Mount
22 Ararat, they need to recognize more things, that
23 activities that can go on so we also need free meals,
24 free meals and it would be important that we would

2 have free meals for each and every one of us in the
3 center there and to open up that center.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

5 MINNETTA BROWN: You're welcome.

6 CHERI LIGHTFOOT: Good afternoon. My name
7 is Cheri Lightfoot. I'm a resident of the Reverend
8 Brown Houses which is a public housing site in
9 Brooklyn. Thank you to our Councilwoman. We thank you
10 very much for trying to help us open our center.

11 My reason for today is to try to open us
12 a center. We just homeless. We need a place to go and
13 so what I'm saying to you, I'm going to make a plea
14 to you to please consider opening our center. We need
15 it. The center is located there between the two
16 buildings and also during the climate weather, only
17 thing we have to do is come downstairs to congregate
18 with our friends and play games. We have food and we
19 can get a nutritional food. We need to eat right.
20 We've been eating wrong for so many years. Please,
21 please help us. Thank you.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Cheri, can you
23 tell us, I've heard about this before but I don't
24 think anyone's ever explained why is it closed?

2 CHERI LIGHTFOOT: NYCHA closed the
3 building.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: But why?

5 CHERI LIGHTFOOT: Because no funding, lack
6 of funding.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So there's
8 nothing wrong with the building?

9 CHERI LIGHTFOOT: No, the building is a
10 beautiful building. It's ready for us to move right
11 in.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: The problem is
13 they don't have the funding to what, have a provider
14 run the place?

15 CHERI LIGHTFOOT: Right, we don't have the
16 funding.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, thank you.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And was there a
19 senior center there before?

20 CHERI LIGHTFOOT: Yes, there was a senior
21 center on the Wayside Outreach Development and then
22 it did not remain, so.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How long has it
24 been closed?

25 CHERI LIGHTFOOT: Since the pandemic.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Wow, okay. Thank
3 you.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Hi. I remember
6 you from the NYCHA hearing.

7 ESSIE DUGGAN: Yes.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I don't remember
9 your name though.

10 ESSIE DUGGAN: Good afternoon to Council
11 Brannan, to the Chair of the Senior Committee,
12 Hudson, and my Council Lady, Darlene Mealy.

13 I am Essie Duggan, an advocate for
14 seniors, and I just want to say that I heard a tiny
15 bit possible, hopefully, be some good news that the
16 center will be open this year ASAP and joining in
17 with Council Member, this is the reason why we are
18 here to make sure that what she's advocating and
19 pushing for come into fruition. The senior needs
20 senior service. Remember, they've been shut up since
21 the pandemic and they need full service, not just
22 meal. They need counseling because many had death
23 within their family, many have been sick with COVID
24 themselves, many of their friends around them and so
25 by having no one to talk to, to be around, to

2 fellowship, so they need some therapeutic counseling
3 too so that they can feel uplifted so that's what I'm
4 advocating for so they can have their full service.
5 Many senior, they need it because that's their only
6 company. Do you know just to come down to fellowship
7 to be the only voice you hear for the day and nobody
8 else? So that's make life much more worth living, and
9 I just want to quickly add, whenever a Council Member
10 was talking about having security within the senior
11 center, yes, NYCHA may have their guard, but that's
12 in the housing development but, within the center
13 where doors is open and anybody can walk in, it do
14 need someone there, okay, in all of the senior center
15 because there is no one there for the protection
16 because senior cannot defend themselves so thank you
17 so much, and I'm asking, okay, Council Hudson,
18 Council Brannan, and all the City Council join in and
19 get the center open. It's had more than 50 people
20 that will be coming down daily just for fellowship,
21 meals, whatever it may be.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

23 UNIDENTIFIED: Hi, good afternoon,
24 blessings of...

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Just hit the
3 little button on the bottom there.

4 UNIDENTIFIED: Okay, good afternoon,
5 blessings everyone to the panel there and to Mealy. I
6 appreciate you all.

7 It seems like everyone done said what
8 needs to be said so I'm just going to add on to it.
9 I'm a resident also at Reverend Brown. I'm a tenant.
10 I just recently moved there maybe a year ago, and
11 Mount Ararat Center is connected right to the
12 building. I found that we need that because I see
13 some of the older saints, I'm just a baby saint, some
14 of the older people there, they congregate in the
15 hallway so we can't congregate in the hallway. We
16 have people coming in, mail lady coming in, the
17 compacter people, the caretakers. We need that center
18 so we can sit and congregate amongst each other. We
19 can't sit around and wait for a nice day to be
20 outside to go sit on a bench. That's not good for
21 seniors. We paid our debt. We need to be accommodated
22 for our time that we've been here doing what we do
23 here in the City of New York so, therefore, I've
24 heard y'all talk about the money here, the money
25 there. If money could be spent for that, the money

2 should be spent for seniors. We put our time in. We
3 deserve our center. We deserve a cooked meal, a chef
4 in the kitchen. We need medical people there. We need
5 social, everything we need. We're lacking there and
6 this is what we need. We shouldn't have to go to
7 another neighborhood, have transportation take us
8 somewhere else when we live right above a center.
9 That is unacceptable, and it's going to be hot very
10 soon. We can't sit out on the benches and bake. We
11 need to be in there with some AC running. When you
12 get tired of getting cool, you're okay, go upstairs
13 and relax, take a shower, and go to bed. You
14 shouldn't have to go where you have access to
15 something that is closed and it needs to be open. I
16 don't know how fast, but we're going to be letting a
17 hot summer this year and we need to have somewhere to
18 go. Thank you.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all
20 very much. Thank you for your testimony.

21 Okay, now we're going to start our first
22 of the Criminal Justice panels. Zachary Katznelson or
23 Katzen..., oh, Zachary Katznelson, sorry, Darren Mack,
24 Jason Alleyne, Alexander Anderson, Dale Ventura,
25 Shannon Rockett.

2 ZACHARY KATZNELSON: Hi, good afternoon.

3 I'm Zachary Katznelson. I'm the Executive Director of
4 the Independent Rikers Commission, commonly known as
5 the Lippman Commission and thanks for the chance to
6 testify. I want to uplift three things that some
7 Council Members were speaking about before, the
8 investments that we would like to see in the budget.

9 One is programming in the jails. The
10 legal mandate is five hours per weekday for everybody
11 in the jails. People are lucky right now if they get
12 one or two, and the budget should be in there for the
13 five hours. Do our best to meet it, but we have to
14 start somewhere and it starts with the funding.

15 The second is re-entry programming and
16 planning. A lot of people in jail get nothing, and it
17 behooves us all if we want people to have the best
18 chance of success when they get out to actually
19 provide funding for everybody in there to have access
20 to planning.

21 The third is crisis intervention
22 training, which is for staff to deal with people with
23 serious mental illness. 20 percent of the people in
24 jail have a serious mental illness. We have now a
25 dwindling number of staff that have that training.

2 This training wasn't offered at all during COVID and
3 hundreds of staff left who had it. We need to really
4 bring those numbers up.

5 I also want to touch on the borough jail
6 contracts. I went to DDC and I reviewed the
7 contracts. There is a lot of room to speed those up
8 and of course in construction, time is money. It also
9 means less time for the surrounding communities to
10 have to deal with construction, but for instance in
11 Queens, the design period alone is three years. Three
12 years to design the building, and the construction
13 doesn't begin until afterwards. The design build is
14 supposed to allow some of that to happen
15 simultaneously, but it's not scheduled to happen that
16 way in this contract so we've asked the City to use
17 value engineering. It's a process where independent
18 teams of experts come in. They use it all the time at
19 DDC to review designs, to review timelines, to see
20 how we can save time and money. We've asked them to
21 do it here. Usually, it can save up to 10 to 15
22 percent of cost. It can save months, if not longer,
23 in the timeline. It's really urgent to get that done
24 as soon as possible. Before we move forward, let's

2 get it done now. Let's figure out how to speed these
3 up.

4 One last note on Bellevue, the staffing,
5 and I want to make sure there's enough staffing for
6 the outposted therapeutic units. It's not clear yet
7 from the budget that's in there. I just want to be
8 sure that they have the right staff allocated so we
9 can open those units on time. Thank you so much.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

11 DARREN MACK: Good afternoon. My name is
12 Darren Mack. I'm a Co-Director of Freedom Agenda. We
13 are led by members who are survivors of Rikers Island
14 like myself and impacted family members. We're one of
15 the organizations leading the campaign to close
16 Rikers, and I'm glad to testify here today.

17 New York City has committed to closing
18 Rikers Island because it doesn't serve our city,
19 doesn't create public safety, and doesn't match our
20 values. Rikers is legally required to close by 2027
21 despite any delay tactics introduced by the Mayor,
22 and this year's City budget must align with that
23 commitment to safely reducing the jail population and
24 shifting to a smaller borough jail system. We know
25 what works to create real public safety, and it's

2 things like housing, healthcare, work opportunities,
3 mentorship, and safe community spaces like the last
4 panel was just asking for, and the Mayor's budget
5 will cut out or continue underfunding all these
6 resources while leaving the Department of Corrections
7 budget nearly untouched. The Mayor's determination to
8 preserve a bloated DOC workforce is a scary
9 indication of his policy priorities, even more so
10 when compared with other agencies like the Department
11 of Education, Department of Buildings, the Parks
12 Department, and others that face vacancies and hiring
13 freezes. The Mayor may want to keep investing in
14 failed systems but the City Council can stop him. If
15 the Council cannot achieve the necessary restorations
16 and investments through negotiations with the Mayor,
17 we urge you to use every power you have including
18 passing a budget amendment to ensure a just budget
19 for our City. In the written testimony that we
20 submitted today, you'll see a full budget analysis
21 from the Campaign to Close Rikers that calls on the
22 City Council to make several amendments to the Fiscal
23 Year '25 budget to support the closure of Rikers
24 Island. Thank you.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you,
4 Darren.

5 ALEXANDER ANDERSON: My name is Alexander
6 Anderson, and I'm the Art Director for Re-Entry
7 Theater of Harlem as well as Ritual for Return, two
8 art-based programs here in New York City, one on the
9 Upper West Side of Harlem and the other one in Queens
10 at the Louis Armstrong Museum.

11 These two art programs are dedicated to
12 helping returning citizens reintegrate back into
13 society through the powerful use of cultural rituals
14 including community rites of passage. Our theater
15 practice provides participants with the tools to
16 rebuild their lives, fostering personal growth,
17 community connection, a renewed sense of purpose. Our
18 success is reflected in the zero-recidivism rate
19 among our graduates and the positive path they pursue
20 in the arts and education. However, the devastating
21 budget cuts to the cultural work this year threatens
22 the sustainability of programs like mine. While the
23 Mayor recently reversed a portion of the January cut,
24 the vast majority of cultural programs did not have
25 any of their cuts reversed. Smaller cultural groups
like mine are struggling to survive so we can

2 continue to serve our communities. Please fight for
3 the support for culture and arts in this year's
4 budget. Thank you.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

6 JASON ALLEYNE: Good afternoon and thank
7 you to the Council for the opportunity to speak here
8 today. My name is Jason Alleyne, and I am the Chief
9 Program Officer at Exalt, an organization that since
10 2006 has been dedicated to elevating expectations of
11 personal success for young people who have been
12 involved in the criminal justice system. Our powerful
13 combination of classes for tangible skill development
14 to navigate the education and criminal justice
15 system, placement in paid internships, and an alumni
16 network of resources equips our youth with the tools
17 and experience necessary to avoid recidivism and
18 reinvigorate their lives.

19 Exalt serves criminal justice-impacted
20 youth between the ages of 15 to 19. Many of them come
21 to us chronically disengaged from their respective
22 schools, over-aged, under-credited and reading at a
23 fourth-grade level. All our participants have five
24 staff members working with them throughout their
25 involvement in a cycle. This includes a program

2 coordinator, teacher, educational advocate,
3 internship liaison, and alumni liaison. Although our
4 program generally requires that our youth be enrolled
5 in school, if they are not, our educational advocate
6 works in collaboration with them to enroll them in a
7 school best designed to support their academic
8 advancement. In the first six weeks with us, they are
9 immersed in our pre-internship training which
10 includes our culturally competent, responsive, and
11 academically tested curriculum that rejuvenates their
12 love of learning. Our pre-internship program also
13 provides all of our young people with professional
14 skills training such as resume building, mock
15 interviewing, and digital literacy. Upon completion
16 of our pre-internship program, our participants are
17 placed in an eight-week paid internship in high
18 demand fields throughout New York City. Our core
19 program participants are paid 18 dollars an hour and
20 our alumni are paid 20 dollars an hour. Our list of
21 our internship partners includes a vast array of non-
22 profits, businesses, and government entities.

23 Exalt has been able to garner remarkable
24 results with the young people that in many ways
25 society has largely failed. We are proud to say that

2 70 percent of the young people that come to us with
3 open court cases have their sentences reduced or
4 dismissed, 95 percent do not recidivate two years
5 after graduating from our program, and 98 percent are
6 on track to graduate by age 20.

7 We ask that as you prepare the budget
8 decisions that best advance your criminal justice
9 goals that you support Exalt and the work that we do
10 to help facilitate the greatness in young people. We
11 thank you for your leadership and dedication to
12 addressing how criminal justice system impacts young
13 New Yorkers.

14 DALE VENTURA: Good afternoon, my name is
15 Dale Ventura, and I'm the Director of Community Legal
16 Services at Youth Represent.

17 First, I'd like to give a very strong
18 thank you to City Council for being a champion for
19 the court-involved youth we support and serve. Youth
20 Represent provides criminal and civil re-entry legal
21 services to over 1,200 young people annually. With
22 funding from City Council through the Innovative
23 Criminal Justice Programs Initiative, we were able to
24 bring holistic support to youth who are most at risk
25 of incarceration. With your support, we were able to

2 employ our multidisciplinary approach to meet the
3 many needs of recently released young people by
4 providing wraparound legal services and helping them
5 navigate the traumatic impact of incarceration on
6 their mental health. Building on the success of this
7 support, we respectfully request a renewal of the
8 funding as well as additional funding in the amount
9 of 50,000 to expand access to mental health services
10 for youth in response to the current mental health
11 crisis. We see every day the critical need for mental
12 health support as young people navigate not only the
13 criminal legal system, but its collateral impact on
14 obtaining housing, education, employment, and a
15 stable family life. Without access to adequate mental
16 health services, young people are more susceptible to
17 experiencing worsening mental health conditions over
18 time, further isolating them from social safety nets,
19 perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage, trauma, and
20 recidivism. With this increased funding, we will be
21 able to increase our mental health support by 50
22 percent and respond to the already overwhelming
23 demand we are seeing for our legal and mental health
24 services.

2 Finally, I want to uplift a request that
3 is shared by I'm sure many others here today and urge
4 City Council to continue investing in communities and
5 legal services such as ours and divest from
6 incarcerating people and close Rikers. We hope that
7 you will renew and expand funding for Youth Represent
8 so that we may continue our work in serving
9 neighborhoods with the highest level of need. Thank
10 you.

11 SHANNON ROCKETT: Good afternoon, Chair
12 Brannan, Chair Nurse, Chair Hudson. My name is
13 Shannon Rockett, and I'm here today on behalf of
14 Carnegie Hall. Because our own work has focused so
15 heavily on creative youth development, we were very
16 encouraged to hear Speaker Adams' emphasis on
17 supporting our city's young people and investing in
18 key human services among her priorities for the year
19 ahead. With the City Council's support, arts and
20 culture have been highly effective resources in the
21 portfolio of solutions to forge pathways for at-risk
22 and justice-involved young people and help them
23 succeed. For this reason and many more, we urge the
24 Council to restore the devastating cuts to culture
25 called for in next year's budget by allocating 53

2 million dollars to the sector and to preserve and
3 increase funding for the Innovative Criminal Justice
4 Programs Initiative in Fiscal '25.

5 For more than 20 years, Carnegie Hall has
6 invested deeply in creative youth development
7 programming. We have partnered with City agencies and
8 community organizations to ensure that our programs
9 intentionally reach young people who otherwise would
10 not have access to these opportunities. For Carnegie
11 Hall, our belief is that all young people, regardless
12 of their circumstances, should have opportunities to
13 be creative, explore their talents, and develop skill
14 sets that help them grow and overcome challenges. The
15 issue of arts access is especially critical for
16 system-involved individuals.

17 Last year, Carnegie Hall launched the B-
18 Side, our free intensive program for at least 40 New
19 Yorkers ages 14 to 22 interested in the business of
20 music with a focus on young people connected to
21 Carnegie Hall through our human services providers,
22 including DOP, ACS, DOE, DCLA, DHS, DYCD, NYCHA, and
23 MOME, as well as community partners such as
24 Children's Aid Society, Good Shepherd Services, and
25 credible messenger organizations such as Life Camp.

2 The B-Side provides participants an interactive space
3 to learn about the inner workings of the music
4 industry. Young people receive MetroCards,
5 refreshments, and stipends for their participation.

6 Our impact and partnerships throughout
7 the city demonstrate that investment in arts and
8 culture is a compound investment in human services
9 and our communities. Cuts to arts and culture,
10 therefore, have a compound negative effect on our
11 communities. We urge the Council to protect and
12 prioritize funding for arts programming for young
13 people in the year ahead. Thank you for your time.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Thank
15 you all very much for your testimony.

16 Okay, now we have Christopher Jeffries,
17 Jennifer Parish, Tawana Atkins, Melanie Dominquez.

18 JENNIFER PARISH: Good afternoon. Thank
19 you for this opportunity to testify. My name's
20 Jennifer Parish. I'm the Director of Criminal Justice
21 Advocacy at the Urban Justice Center Mental Health
22 Project, and I'm a member of the Jails Action
23 Coalition and the Halt Solitary Campaign.

24 First, I want to thank the Council for
25 your budget response, which includes restoring cuts

2 to ATI and re-entry programs, increasing funding, and
3 adding a line item for Justice Involved Supportive
4 Housing, or JISH, which is critical because it's the
5 only supportive housing designated specifically for
6 people involved in the criminal legal system. We also
7 appreciate that the Council included funding for
8 Forensic ACT teams, respite centers, and the Board of
9 Correction. It's clear that the Council recognizes
10 that reducing incarceration and closing Rikers Island
11 require investing in community resources that divert
12 people from the criminal legal system. We urge the
13 Council to fight for these priorities to be included
14 in the final budget. We would also like to see 2.5
15 million more for the Board of Correction and 6
16 million more for four new crisis respite centers.

17 But today I want to highlight another
18 important part of closing Rikers Island, which we
19 should also be advancing right now, and that's
20 downsizing the Department of Correction. We can begin
21 to do it in this budget. The Department has an
22 officer to incarcerated person ratio that is four
23 times the national average. Given that level of
24 overstaffing, the current jails can certainly be
25 operated with far fewer officers and, certainly by

2 the time Rikers is closed and the borough-based jails
3 are in place, far fewer people will be incarcerated
4 and the City will need even fewer officers so we
5 recommend that you reduce Department of Correction
6 uniform head count from 7,060 to 5,110 in this
7 budget. This reduction can be achieved without any
8 layoffs given that there are 1,450 vacancies and
9 about 500 positions that could be eliminated if staff
10 who are chronically absent were held accountable.

11 It's clear from what you've heard at this
12 hearing and many others that the Mayor and the
13 Department are not taking the steps needed to close
14 Rikers. We urge the Council to use its power to move
15 this process forward, and one important part of that
16 is addressing the bloated DOC budget. Thank you.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

18 MELANIE DOMINGUEZ: Good afternoon. Thank
19 you, Chair Sandy Nurse, for holding this New York
20 City Council Budget and Oversight Hearing on the
21 Executive Budget of the Department of Correction for
22 Fiscal Year 2025. My name is Melanie Dominguez, and I
23 am the Organizing Director at the Katal Center for
24 Equity, Health and Justice. Our members are from
25 across the city and include people who have been

2 directly impacted, have been incarcerated, have had
3 family members that have been incarcerated at Rikers
4 Island in the city of New York. Many of our members
5 know exactly how horrific Rikers really is and are
6 deeply troubled by the Mayor's budget proposal, and
7 today I am here to bring to your attention the crisis
8 at Rikers Island and the need to immediately shutter
9 this notorious and deadly jail complex.

10 New Yorkers across the city are deeply
11 concerned about the humanitarian crisis that is
12 unfolding at this jail complex. Since Mayor Eric
13 Adams took office, at least 31 people have died in
14 New York City jails and the violence at Rikers Island
15 is out of control. This is unacceptable and yet the
16 City continues to fund this deadly jail complex.
17 According to the City Comptroller, the cost of
18 incarceration at Rikers is over half a million
19 dollars per person per year, which is 1,525 a day. It
20 is intolerable that this is the amount of money that
21 the City is putting to basically put people in
22 horrific conditions that are life-threatening, not
23 just for the people that are detained but the staff
24 that is there as well, and all while this is
25 happening, we have a Mayor that continues to drive up

2 the jail population because of his jail-first
3 approach to public safety. On his first day when he
4 first took office, the jail population was that of
5 5,000 and now is well over 6,300. This is
6 unacceptable, and he's doing this all while he
7 continues to take money away from public schools,
8 libraries, universal pre-k, childcare, CUNY, health
9 service, the senior centers, community centers, all
10 of these things that are so essential in making sure
11 that our communities are being taken care for and
12 move forward, and so I'm here right now to just make
13 sure that the Council moves forward in proposing a
14 budget that aligns the City with their commitment to
15 shut down Rikers Island. This includes cutting the
16 budget that is being used for caging people. The City
17 must cut the number of people that are being
18 incarcerated at Rikers Island by putting more money
19 into alternatives to incarceration, and the City must
20 pass a budget, like I said, that is committed to
21 shutting down Rikers Island and, like we all know, we
22 need to make sure that the City is funding things
23 that bring true public safety, like housing,
24 healthcare, education, and jobs, and then, lastly,
25 it's really, really crucial that the City Council

2 pass Resolution 183, which calls on the federal
3 courts to appoint an independent receiver to take
4 control of Rikers Island to improve conditions and to
5 save lives, especially when we have a Mayor that is
6 not committed to shutting down Rikers Island and has
7 refused to abide by practically every legal and
8 process benchmark that the City Council put forward
9 in 2019 to shut down Rikers by 2027 so, like I said,
10 I thank you so much for your leadership and I ask
11 that you please, please focus on all of these things
12 that I said.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

14 TAWANA ATKINS: Good afternoon. My name is
15 Tawana Atkins and I'm from Katal Community Equality
16 Health, and I'm here today because I have been
17 impacted by Rikers Island. My son was incarcerated
18 there. He has schizophrenia, and he was not treated
19 as a person with mental health being incarcerated in
20 Rikers Island. He was attacked, he was beaten to the
21 point where he had to be hospitalized for two weeks
22 in the hospital with a broken eye socket, broken jaw,
23 internal bleeding, and all he wanted to do was just
24 see a doctor. He didn't feel well. So come to find
25 out he had the flu. So fighting his wounds from being

2 beaten by the officers, he had to fight his flu, and
3 he, excuse me, sorry, this always gets me, I told you
4 that.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Take your time.

6 TAWANA ATKINS: He wouldn't have got the
7 help that he needed if it wasn't for the other
8 inmates threatening the officers. I'm not saying that
9 it was right what they did but, if they didn't do
10 what they did, my son wouldn't have got the proper
11 help that he needed and he would have laid there and
12 he probably would have been number 32, and he also
13 wasn't getting his medication, his psych meds that he
14 was supposed to get. When I went to see my son on the
15 visiting floor, my son was taking his clothes off on
16 the visiting floor, laying on the floor, rolling
17 around like I don't know what. These people are not
18 equipped to take care of people with mental health
19 over there. This is a jail facility. It's not a
20 mental health facility. We really, really need help
21 for you guys to open up something that can help these
22 people so they can get the proper help they need.
23 Rikers Island is not it. Thank you.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

25 TAWANA ATKINS: Thank you.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all
3 very much.

4 Okay, next we have Sharon Brown.

5 Hello.

6 SHARON BROWN: I'm just going to be
7 reading.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay.

9 SHARON BROWN: How are you today?

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Good, how are you
11 doing?

12 SHARON BROWN: Good, Jesus Christ is Lord
13 and that's my testimony that God is my Savior, Jesus
14 is Lord and Savior. I'm going to be testifying, I
15 guess it can deal with all three of the categories.
16 Am I right? It's about Aging, it's about Criminal
17 Justice, and then you said something about Parole
18 which is also Criminal Justice. Okay, so here I go.

19 Sharon Brown. Rikers Island must be
20 closed immediately forthwith which is a military
21 term, and the funding go to get people wrongfully
22 held in their institutions and that would be in the
23 jails, in the mental institutions from the jails.
24 They use the jails to put people in mental
25 institution who never committed a crime in the first

2 place and those who are in Rikers Island should be
3 let out because they did not get to testify at grand
4 jury and they didn't get most of the redress they
5 were supposed to get concerning their constitutional
6 protections when it comes to having a trial, but many
7 of the people that are on Rikers Island shouldn't
8 have been there in the first place because they
9 weren't proven to have committed the crime in grand
10 jury because they were refused the right to testify
11 at grand jury which means that process never really
12 happened for them so they should have never gone to
13 any trial. The funding for Rikers should be going to
14 as when Rikers is torn down and whatever is done to
15 it, we should have a Tupac and Biggie Center and of
16 the former Rikers Island, Rose M. Singer, and the
17 other places, there should be an amusement park there
18 for the Bible, a Bible amusement park. They have
19 things, Paul was on the water, Jesus walked on the
20 water, different things that happened in the Bible,
21 Noah's Ark and different things like that. We need
22 DOC to stop the funding for all of DOC at Rikers
23 Island. It should not be open, it's dangerous. We
24 already know that there is nothing good going on at
25 Rikers Island so it should be closed. The Bible says

2 the Spirit of the Lord is upon me for he hath
3 anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, to bind
4 up the brokenhearted, to preach the acceptable year
5 of the Lord and to set the captives free so we're
6 going to do that at Rikers Island. When you put one
7 person in there that does not belong, that's
8 innocent, you affect everyone there, and most of the
9 people that are in there, when you go visit them and
10 things like that, they didn't get the due process
11 and, also, I would like to enter into evidence, I
12 don't have a copy, the Bible stands. The Bible itself
13 is where we get our law from. We have the
14 Constitution. Don't steal, don't kill. All the laws
15 through the State Constitution, the Federal
16 Constitution, it basically backs up the Bible so I
17 want the Bible to be entered in back into society,
18 back into the court, back into the Council, back into
19 the Congress so that we can look at what the laws are
20 supposed to be and then feed off of that so, if it
21 says you should not kill, you should not consent to
22 go with the crowd to do evil, at Rikers Island, they
23 are consenting to do evil. The one guard says, let's
24 attack this person, they all go and do it, so the
25 Bible is showing you, if the Bible didn't say murder

2 was wrong, we would never say murder was wrong.

3 Everybody would say it's all, everything is self-
4 defense.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

6 SHARON BROWN: And am I past my time?

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, but thank
8 you.

9 SHARON BROWN: Okay, let me just make sure
10 I got the final point. Yeah, okay, so just the mental
11 health, we also need to restructure what mental
12 health is. It should be the Bible mind. The last
13 thing I'm going to say is God has not given us the
14 spirit of fear. He has given unto us the spirit of
15 peace, love, power, and a sound mind so the things
16 that are going on with people are physical issues
17 that manifest itself to look like it is mental or
18 like the girl Rose or whatever her name is, they're
19 debilitated to make it look like they have mental
20 illness, and some of them are dealing with physical
21 issues or just being abused so..

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

23 SHARON BROWN: We'll deal with the
24 Biblical mind. Thank you.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
3 much for your testimony.

4 SHARON BROWN: Yes.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, now we're
6 moving to Zoom.

7 First up is Rachel Bender.

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

9 RACHEL BENDER: Good afternoon. Thank you,
10 Chair Brannan and Chair Hudson. I know that it's
11 late, so I'll keep it short and under the two
12 minutes. I just wanted to mention all the advocates
13 for the Aging testimony... Sorry, let me start again.
14 I'm with Lenox Hill Neighborhood House. I'm the Chief
15 Program Officer. We support close to 10,000 older
16 adults every year in the community, primarily on the
17 East Side of Manhattan, but we also support NYC
18 providers through our Teaching Kitchen Program, and
19 we offer free training so that all older New Yorkers
20 and any organization that's getting City-funded food
21 can serve nutritious, local, healthy food to their
22 constituents. and so we obviously appreciate the
23 leadership and support and advocacy of Council Member
24 Hudson and all the City Council Members on restoring
25 the funding to the Aging budget. We realize how

2 important it is for our older New Yorkers, and
3 they're only getting a very small part of the budget
4 so I just wanted to highlight those things today and
5 just say thank you for your leadership and support.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you,
7 Rachel.

8 Now, we have Rosemarie Salazar.

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

10 ROSEMARIE SALAZAR: Good afternoon, Chair
11 Hudson and Chair Brannan, Members of the Council.
12 Thank you for your time. I will be reading a brief
13 speech and try to keep it under the two minutes.

14 My name is Rosemarie Salazar and I am
15 University Settlements Director of our Older Adult
16 Center, the Meltzer Social Club, and oversee one of
17 the Meals on Wheels programs in the Lower East Side
18 of Manhattan. University Settlement partners with
19 40,000 New Yorkers every year, providing programs
20 such as early childhood, afterschool, mental health,
21 tenant eviction prevention, among others. We urge the
22 City Council to oppose the cuts to older adults
23 programs.

24 As one of the fastest growing
25 demographics in New York, we're seeing that it's the

2 smallest funded agency, and we need more investment
3 and not cuts. Our older adults rely on our center and
4 our centers like ours across New York City to
5 maintain their physical and mental health, to access
6 to nutritious meals, to maintain health benefits,
7 health insurance, and really just enjoy connection
8 and find joy. The City's argument is that we're being
9 underutilized and, while the centers have not
10 rebounded from pre-COVID numbers, we believe there
11 are many reasons for that. First, the pandemic had
12 much longer lasting impact on our older population.
13 Many remain fearful of gathering in person due to
14 health concerns, and other former attendees have lost
15 mobility and other issues have increased post
16 pandemic. Second, the older adults are more aware and
17 sensitive to feeling unsafe and not wanting to be
18 navigating the streets after dark. Third, our older
19 adults are more sensitive to change. There's some
20 difficulty in making connections, especially when
21 there's change. Staff and community turnover can lead
22 them to stop or limiting attendance.

23 We are also deeply concerned about the
24 message that these budget cuts send to our
25

2 participants. They look and they see crumbling
3 infrastructure...

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired. Thank
5 you.

6 ROSEMARIE SALAZAR: Thank you.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now we
8 have Dr. Cynthia Moore.

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Cynthia.

11 DR. CYNTHIA MAURER: Yes. Can you hear me?

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yes, go ahead.

13 DR. CYNTHIA MAURER: Okay. Hi, I'm Cynthia
14 Maurer with Visiting Neighbors. We are determined to
15 keep our seniors independent as active and in the
16 community, in their own homes as possible.

17 First of all, I want to say thank you for
18 this opportunity to provide testimony and, most
19 importantly, to our New York City Council, you are
20 our heroes. We understand that you get it. We've been
21 advocating for our seniors for years. A lot of people
22 don't realize if they're lucky one day, they may
23 become one, or they may be helping someone who is one
24 or have a neighbor. Bottom line is we're trying to
25 keep these people as involved in our community as

2 possible, but we work with seniors who are
3 predominantly amongst the oldest old, from 60 to
4 centenarian plus this year. We have 25 new seniors
5 alone that are turning 100 so we're working with a
6 very vulnerable population and majority of our people
7 do not go to senior centers and, when they do, we get
8 them there. We provide our services, our health
9 management, health advocacy, student nursing,
10 wellness, physical, emotional, mental, friendly
11 visiting, shop and escort. And when we say shop and
12 escort, we don't mean just being an arm to hold to
13 help safely navigate the streets. If somebody turns
14 out and they have a diagnosis that they're getting
15 from their doctor that is not a happy one, they have
16 a volunteer there to emotionally support them,
17 provide telephone reassurance, intergenerational
18 friendship and learning. It's wonderful to see these
19 young people connect with seniors and also dispel
20 stereotypes that each have about the other. We deal
21 with a myriad of changes that are going on with aging
22 and help our seniors survive. We need you. Our
23 greatest challenge continues to be the nonstop nature
24 of the needs of our older adults, and we really need
25 our City Council to continue to support programs like

2 ours that are on the front lines. Please continue to
3 advocate for us, just as we're advocating for our
4 seniors. We want to treat each person with
5 individualized care and love and, because of you...

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has expired. Thank
7 you.

8 DR. CYNTHIA MAURER: Thank you.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now we
10 have Shereemer Chevannes.

11 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

12 SHEREEMER CHEVANNES: Good afternoon,
13 Council Committee Chair Nurse and Chair Brannan and
14 the Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice.
15 Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony
16 today. My name is Sheremeer Chevannes, and I'm the
17 Senior Policy Associate at the Fortune Society.

18 The proposed budget fails to address key
19 areas essential for effective programming and
20 support, perpetuating the status quo rather than
21 fostering positive change. In Fiscal Year 2023, we
22 served over 11,000 people, including nearly 2,700
23 people in our city jails, whom we are no longer able
24 to serve due to abrupt funding cuts in June 2023.
25 Before then, Fortune and six other providers served

2 1,700 people daily across 200 housing units in seven
3 jail facilities, offering individual and group
4 sessions, hard skills training, certification, and
5 other services. When our contracts were canceled, DOC
6 claimed it would provide these services in-house.
7 However, the Preliminary Mayor's Management Report
8 showed a 29 percent decrease in group sessions and a
9 31 percent decrease in individual sessions in the
10 first four months of Fiscal Year 2024 compared to the
11 previous year. Recently, the Administration announced
12 14 million dollars in new funding, but this does not
13 cover the full amount that was cut and presents
14 additional issues. At the Preliminary Budget hearing,
15 DOC testified that it would take around 15 months to
16 issue RFPs with at least one aimed at institutions of
17 higher learning rather than previous service
18 providers. Consequently, the full range of services
19 previously offered has not been fully restored,
20 leaving those in need without access to necessary
21 programming.

22 We urge the Council to continue to press
23 for a budget that prioritizes community safety by
24 investing in effective ATI and re-entry services and
25 expanding access to housing.

2 Thank you, Council, for calling for
3 increased funding for JISH, but more needs to be
4 done. There are two key investments the City must
5 make. First, adequately funding supportive housing
6 like JISH, and second, adequately funding the
7 Commission on Human Rights to effectively enforce
8 laws that combat discrimination against people with
9 convictions like the Fair Chance for Housing Act.
10 Additional funding would enable the CCHR to conduct
11 education and outreach efforts, hire more staff, and
12 effectively enforce civil rights laws, providing
13 individuals with convictions a fair chance..

14 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has expired. Thank
15 you.

16 SHEREEMER CHEVANNES: Thank you.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now we
18 have Adiba Chowdhury.

19 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

20 ADIBA CHOWHURY: Good afternoon, honorable
21 Council Members and other Members of the Aging
22 Committee. I'm Adiba Chowdhury, Senior Manager,
23 Family Support Services at South Asian Council for
24 Social Services, in short, SACSS. Thank you for this
25 opportunity today to share with you a glimpse of how

2 some of our senior programs impact the well-being of
3 immigrant seniors in the city.

4 SACSS is a community-based organization
5 located in Flushing, Queens. Our mission is to
6 empower and integrate underserved South Asian and
7 other immigrants into economic and civic life of New
8 York. All our programs are free and are provided by
9 culturally competent staff that speaks 20 languages,
10 12 South Asian, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka,
11 Malay, Haitian, and French Creole. Our senior
12 programs provide immigrants or seniors with the venue
13 to address their socioeconomic needs to improve their
14 overall quality of life. From connecting seniors to
15 crucial benefit to emotional support and recreational
16 activities, we provide multiple services under one
17 roof. Throughout the pandemic, we ensured that our
18 seniors continue to be connected to vital services in
19 the areas of healthcare, benefits, case management
20 services, food pantry services, and were able to get
21 emotional support when needed. Majority of seniors
22 accessing services at SACSS often feel overwhelmed
23 while accessing benefit. Many of them have limited
24 English proficiency and have fixed income, which
25 creates anxiety and stress.

2 These seniors were isolated even before
3 pandemic and were dependent on CBOs such as SACSS for
4 different kind of assistance. Through a range of
5 senior support services such as connection to
6 benefits, senior center, counseling, and food pantry
7 services, we ensure that seniors' physical,
8 emotional, financial, and social well-being is
9 maintained. Our senior center is open twice a week,
10 Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 to 10.

11 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired. Thank
12 you.

13 ADIBA CHOWHURY: With breakfast and lunch
14 served. Thank you for your support.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now we
16 have Melissa Vergara.

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

18 MELISSA VERGARA: Hello, my name is
19 Melissa Vergara, and I am a member of Freedom Agenda
20 and also the Close Rikers Campaign.

21 It is shameful that the City continues to
22 overly invest in the systems of punishment like the
23 Department of Corrections instead of systems of
24 healing and true rehabilitation. My 22-year-old son
25 who has intellectual and developmental disabilities,

2 autism spectrum disorder, and disruptive mood
3 dysregulation disorder spent two and a half years on
4 Rikers Island in dire need of mental healthcare and
5 healing. Instead of receiving the care and treatment
6 necessary to address the root cause of his behaviors,
7 correctional officers assaulted him on Rikers Island
8 and where he is right now at Upstate Correctional
9 Facility.

10 To be clear, contrary to the testimony of
11 the Department of Corrections staff earlier today,
12 mental healthcare in Rikers Island is disgraceful.
13 There is no effective or adequate mental health
14 treatment. I say this not only as a mother of a son
15 who has been and continues to be failed by the legal
16 system of New York but also as a clinician myself.
17 While on Rikers, my son was pepper sprayed multiple
18 times during mental health episodes contrary to what
19 was stated earlier. There are no de-escalation
20 approaches. In fact, most of the approaches are
21 triggering and antagonistic. At a cost of 556,000
22 dollars to keep someone on Rikers Island for a year,
23 New York City spent over 1 million to keep Michael at
24 Rikers Island. That is more money than this City has
25 ever invested in his well-being. Despite all the

2 money spent, he received no substantial
3 rehabilitation or treatment. I have faced numerous
4 barriers to obtaining adequate treatment for my son
5 who has struggled with mental health challenges from
6 a young age. Without proper treatment, his symptoms
7 worsened leading to the interactions with law
8 enforcement and multiple psychiatric
9 hospitalizations. My son has since left Rikers Island
10 and is now being detained at Upstate Correctional
11 Facility, a prison built for solitary confinement
12 that has only caused more trauma and suffering for
13 him and our family. My son's mental well-being
14 continues to decline.

15 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired. Thank
16 you.

17 MELISSA VERGARA: His experience is a
18 direct result from the choices our City made to
19 prioritize punishment over cure. I thank the City
20 Council for punishment (sic) and I urge the Mayor to
21 invest in our communities to expand access to
22 treatment and reduce jail population. I want to
23 remind you that there is no time to lose.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
25 much.

2 Now we have Jay Edden or Edidin.

3 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

4 JAY EDIDIN: Thank you, Chair Nurse, Chair
5 Brannan, Members of the Criminal Justice Committee.

6 My name is Jay Edidin. I am the Director
7 of Advocacy at the Women's Community Justice
8 Association, an organization that advocates with and
9 on behalf of gender-expansive people impacted by mass
10 incarceration, and I want to start by thanking
11 Council Member Cabán for reaffirming that the
12 persistence and growth of mass incarceration in New
13 York is a matter not of crime rate or statistical
14 inevitability, but of executive policy. This is a
15 critical distinction, and it's one that should be
16 informing every policy discussion and decision made
17 here. We should never, ever forget that the people
18 caged on Rikers Island are there because the
19 Administration chooses for them to be there and they
20 have the power to choose otherwise. Other options
21 exist within reach, more humane, less expensive
22 options that support the needs of the people and the
23 needs and safety of our communities far better than
24 mass incarceration.

2 I also want to thank Chair Nurse for
3 specifically bringing up the women and gender-
4 expansive people incarcerated at RMSC and the plans
5 to triple the agreed upon number of beds for that
6 population in the Queens Borough-based jail from 126
7 to 450. I want to note also that this is happening at
8 a time when mass incarceration of women is rising at
9 an alarming rate, disproportionate to either
10 incarceration of men or rate of criminal offense, and
11 those women and gender-expansive people currently
12 incarcerated at Rosie's represent a vivid and
13 disheartening example of the principles that Council
14 Member Cabán discussed. 77 percent of that population
15 are primary caregivers, 80 percent have some kind of
16 mental health concern, 80 percent. Trans and gender-
17 non-conforming people are at vastly disproportionate
18 risk of physical and sexual assault while
19 incarcerated, particularly when detained in non-
20 gender-aligned housing, which many of the trans
21 people and particularly trans women on Rikers
22 currently are. Any one of those factors would more
23 than justify prioritizing diversion from
24 incarceration, and together they should represent a
25 mandate. And yet, thanks to pressure from the current

2 Administration, judges and prosecutors at whose
3 discretion those options are available are taking
4 less and less advantage of alternatives to
5 incarceration and sending more and more women and
6 gender-expansive people to jail. The Women's
7 Community Justice Association and Lippman
8 Commission's Path to 100 report offered simple,
9 direct, and effective interventions to lower the
10 population of RMSC below 100 while supporting
11 community options and public safety. These are not
12 arcane..

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired, thank
14 you.

15 JAY EDIDIN: Easily documented. Thank you.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
17 much.

18 Now we have Daniele Gerard.

19 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

20 DANIELE GERARD: Thank you, Chairs and
21 committee members. My name's Daniele Gerard. I'm a
22 Senior Staff Attorney at Children's Rights, a
23 national advocate for youth in state systems. Can't
24 seem to, there we go, I can't seem to turn my camera
25 on.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: That's okay, go
3 ahead, yeah.

4 DANIELE GERARD: I'm going to start over.
5 I'm Daniele Gerard, a Senior Staff Attorney at
6 Children's Rights, a national advocate for youth in
7 state systems. We're also a member of the New York
8 City Jails Action Coalition and advocate on behalf of
9 young adults on Rikers. We support Freedom Agenda,
10 Urban Justice, and other advocates in all their
11 testimony and in calling for Rikers to close on time.
12 Thank you to the Council for all your efforts to date
13 to rectify the Administration's lopsided budget
14 priorities. We urge you to continue to put social
15 services at the forefront of any budget expenditures,
16 particularly with this week's news that there is,
17 once again, even more of a budget surplus for the
18 City to the tune of over a billion dollars this year
19 alone. This money can and should be spent in a fair,
20 just, and reasonable way to mitigate the Executive
21 Budget's proposed cuts and to reallocate resources to
22 our communities. The current proposed cuts are
23 detrimental to true public health and true public
24 safety as were previous cuts. Please know that we
25 stand with you to restore and increase funding for

2 alternatives to incarceration, supervised release,
3 re-entry services, and supportive housing for our
4 neighbors caught up in the criminal legal system, in
5 addition to funding for community mental health
6 services, a better education for our children and
7 other priorities for keeping our young people out of
8 the criminal legal system in the first place. We
9 stand with you to ensure that the DOC provide
10 adequate, meaningful programming, educational
11 opportunities, outdoor recreation, and enough food so
12 that people living on Rikers don't continue to go
13 hungry. These programs and others will help provide
14 New Yorkers with true public safety all while saving
15 taxpayer dollars instead of allocating billions to
16 the DOC to keep someone on The Island at over half a
17 million dollars.

18 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired. Thank
19 you.

20 DANIELE GERARD: We urge the Council to
21 provide sufficient funding for these critical
22 programs now before Rikers closes in 2027 in
23 accordance with the law. We refer you to our written
24 testimony. Thank you again for your work.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very
3 much.

4 Now we have Roy Waterman.

5 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Roy Waterman.

7 Roy, if you're talking, we can't hear
8 you.

9 Roy, can you hear us?

10 ROY WATERMAN: Yeah, I'd like to place an
11 order to be delivered.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What do you want?
13 Roy, we can't hear you. If you want to try to log on
14 again, we'll get you back up.

15 Okay, the next person we have signed up
16 is PBCS.

17 KAI FAI LO: (INAUDIBLE)

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Say that again.

19 KAI FAI LO: Good afternoon. My name is
20 Kai Fai Lo. I am an older adult participant at
21 Homecrest Community Services. I have been member of
22 the senior center for over eight years. Mayor Adams'
23 proposed cut of over 100 million dollars will hurt me
24 and my community, and I firmly stand against them.
25 Aging services are important to me personally and to

2 the older New Yorkers who are in the system and use
3 all the services available. Closing older adult
4 centers and cutting off funding to Meal-on-Wheels
5 programs is both ageist and cruel, especially when
6 the Mayor invests less than half of 1 percent of his
7 budget on Aging services in the first place. I'm
8 calling on the City to invest in the true needs of
9 the existing system to make New York a better place
10 to age. I'm calling on the City to expand social work
11 support for older adults. Thank you very much.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

13 KAI FAI LO: Thank you.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we got last
15 call here on Zoom. If you hear your name, use the
16 raise hand feature and we'll call on you. Lucy
17 Sexton, Julie Sharpton, Siobhan Naboa (phonetic),
18 Darcy Connors, Tawana Harris, Kelly Grace Price. If
19 you heard your name, just use the raise hand function
20 and we'll get you on.

21 Roy Waterman, are you back?

22 ROY WATERMAN: I am back.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: All right, let's
24 do it.

25

2 ROY WATERMAN: Yes. Good afternoon. Sorry
3 for the technical difficulties. My name is Roy
4 Waterman. Well, first let me thank the Council for
5 having us today. My name is Roy Waterman. I'm a
6 Program Coordinator for the Arches Program and
7 Justice Initiative Division at Good Shepherd
8 Services.

9 I want to thank the Council for calling
10 for the reinstatement of the Next Steps Program and
11 for the restoration of cuts made in the November Plan
12 to the Arches Program and to the Council Response.
13 Thank you for the commitment to the (INAUDIBLE) by
14 the Department of Probation and support of youth
15 across New York City. Youth need educational and
16 vocational opportunities, but they also need positive
17 adult relationships and mentoring programs. Next
18 Steps provided that. Many youth will never make it to
19 the educational or vocational opportunity without the
20 assistance of Credible Messengers. At the time
21 (INAUDIBLE) not be removing services, and we need the
22 City to invest in young people and the communities
23 that support them. Next Steps existed because there
24 were people in community who care and were invested
25 in Next Steps and was successful because we were

2 built by Credible Messengers. People from the same
3 communities where our youth live and who care, who
4 are concerned and are embedded in NYCHA housing
5 developments that they all live in. In March of this
6 year, many of you might remember, twin sisters,
7 Samyia and Sanyia Spain were stabbed in Brooklyn, New
8 York. Their story made national news, but what did
9 not make the national news was the fact that they
10 were both participants of the Next Steps mentoring
11 program in Gowanus, Brooklyn. Samyia and Sanyia and
12 many more young people were benefiting from the
13 mentorship, guidance, and trips that Next Steps
14 program was providing on a weekly basis. We need the
15 City Council to go...

16 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired. Thank
17 you.

18 ROY WATERMAN: Budget that includes the
19 reinstatement of Next Steps. Please do what needs to
20 be done. Thank you and welcome.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, with that,
22 day nine of FY25 budget hearings is concluded. Thank
23 you all. [GAVEL]

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date June 20, 2024