

COMMITTEE ON AGING

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON AGING

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Monday, March 10, 2025

Start: 10:09 A.M.

Recess: 1:59 P.M.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: HON. CRYSTAL HUDSON, CHAIR

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

CHRIS BANKS

LINDA LEE

DARLENE MEALY,

YUSEF SALAAM

LYNN C. SCHULMAN

SUSAN ZHUANG

Other Council Members Attending: Brooks-Powers

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez,
Commissioner at the New York City Department for
the Aging— NYC AGING

Jose Mercado,
Chief Financial Officer at the New York City
Department for the Aging— NYC AGING

Helen Chen,
Director of Brooklyn Older Adult Center at
Chinese American Planning Council (CPC)

Anita Kwok,
Policy Analyst at United Neighborhood Houses
(UNH)

Kevin Kiproviski,
Director of Public Policy at LiveOn NY

Bryan Ellicott-Cook,
Director of Government Relations at SAGE

Justine Tetteh,
Director of Policy and Advocacy at Lenox Hill
Neighborhood House

Barbara Baer,
Director of the Home Sharing Program at the New
York Foundation for Senior Citizens (NYFSC)

Kimberly George,
President and CEO of Project Guardianship

Penelope Hernandez,
Program Director of Wellness Together, University
Settlement

Jenny Dembrow,
Executive Director of the Lower Eastside Girls
Club (LESGC)

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

Beth Finkel,
State Director of AARP New York

Jeanette Estima,
Director of Policy and Advocacy at
Citymeals on Wheels

Catherine Thurston, LCSW,
Chief Executive Officer Service Program for Older
People, Inc. (SPOP)

Ines De La Nuez,
Director of Grand Coalition of Older Adults OAC
at Grand Street Settlement

Elizabeth Bird-
Director of Public Policy at Educational Alliance
*Speaking on Behalf of Rich Baum, President and
CEO of Educational Alliance

Xiomara A. Maldonado,
Senior Director of Older Adult Programs, Manny
Cantor Center, Educational Alliance

Mohammad Razvi,
Executive Director and Founder of Council of
Peoples Organization (COPO)

Susanna Li Hom,
Homecrest Community Services

Kai Fai Lo,
Homecrest Community Services

Dr. Cynthia Maurer,
Executive Director of Visiting Neighbors

Atrice Wildman,
Social Caseworker at Encore Community Services

Kay Mantin,
Grand Street Settlement

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

Peter Kempner, Legal Director of Volunteers of
Legal Service (VOLS)

Christopher Leon Johnson

Sharon Brown,
Rose of Sharon Enterprises

Kavita Shah,
Program and Budget Director of India Home

Michael Singh,
Program Director-Program Manager
Older Adult Center of Catholic Charities

Navdeep Bains,
the Associate Director Of Advocacy and Policy at
the Asian American Federation

Tanya Krupat,
Vice President of Policy and Advocacy at Osborne
Association

SERGEANT WONG: Soundcheck for the Committee on Aging. Today's date is March 10, 2025. Being recorded by Danny Huang in the Council Chambers.

(PAUSE)

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quiet down, please, thank you. Good morning and welcome to the New York City Council hybrid Preliminary Budget Hearing for the Committee on Aging. Please silence all electronic devices at this time. If there are any question, please raise your hand, and we will kindly assist you. At any time, please do not approach the dais. Thank you very much for your kind cooperation.

Chair, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. And good morning. (GAVEL SOUND) (GAVELING IN).

My name is Crystal Hudson, and I serve as the Chair of the Committee on Aging.

Welcome to the Committee's hearing on the Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Budget for the New York City Department for the Aging, also known as NYC Aging. Thank you to Commissioner Cortés-Vazquez for joining us. We're also joined by Council Members Zhuang and Schulman.

Following testimony and questions with NYC Aging, we'll hear testimony from the public at approximately 12:00 p.m. Thank you to those older adult advocates and community members who've joined us today.

I'll keep my comments here brief and request that the Commissioner keep her oral testimony as brief as possible we can move on to the questions from council members.

Older adults, and the older adult provider network, have faced unprecedented challenges in the past few years due to the pandemic and budgetary constraints, as well as inflation and the increased cost of living.

I look forward to working collaboratively with providers and the Administration to help the City's 1.8 million older adults overcome these challenges.

NYC Aging has a critical role to play in assessing and meeting the needs of older adults and collaborating with the provider network and the Council to harness best practices and scale innovative approaches to best serve our city's elders.

NYC Aging's Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Budget is \$426.2 million which is concerningly \$124 million less than the Fiscal 2025 Adopted Budget.

Despite serving almost a fifth of the City's population, the NYC Aging's budget continues to account for less than one-half of 1% of the City's overall budget for yet another plan.

The Preliminary Plan includes one very small new need of just under \$42,000 for costs related to the annual BOOM! Conference in Fiscal 2025, but none for direct services and programs for older adults.

In the November and preliminary plans, there were no PEG restorations, leaving in effect several cuts made last year to NYC Aging's budget— \$2.2 million in Fiscal 2026 and \$15.7 in Fiscal 2027 and the out years for Older Adult Centers.

These are concerning cuts at a time when NYC Aging needs greater resources to help it serve a growing aging population whose need for Older Adult Centers and support services are increasing.

In addition to the impact of these PEGS, NYC Aging's budget in Fiscal 2026 is approximately \$124 million less than it currently is for Fiscal 2025.

A large contributor to this decline is expired federal COVID-19 funding that has not been replaced in Fiscal 2026 with City funding.

The \$124 million includes \$41.7 million in Council Discretionary Funding that is not yet included in the budget in Fiscal 2026 and the remaining \$82.8 million supported by various NYC Aging programs, including Older Adult Centers and naturally occurring retirement communities.

If this is not addressed in the Executive Plan, the fiscal cliff would severely impact older adult services and programs as well as NYC Aging's network of providers and future RFPs.

NYC Aging's Capital Commitment Plan, the smallest in the City, totals \$78.4 million over Fiscals 2025 through 2029.

With over 300 Older Adult Centers and NORCs now in the NYC Aging network, this funding is insufficient to properly address all of the infrastructure needs. I believe the Capital Program should be enhanced to help refurbish centers, improve kitchens, and connect older adults to much needed technology and resources.

In the Fiscal 2025 Preliminary Budget response, the Council called on the Administration to add \$50 million to NYC Aging's Capital Budget with \$10 million dedicated specifically to Older Adult Centers that predominantly serve immigrant older adults. But unfortunately, no additional funding has been added to fulfill the Council's proposal.

In today's hearing, we would like to get a deeper understanding of NYC Aging's Expense Budget, its Capital Plan, the impact of last year's PEGS, the looming fiscal cliff in funding, and key agency services and programs, including case management, Home Delivered Meals, and Older Adult Center programs.

We would also like to delve into the metrics reported for NYC Aging in the Fiscal 2025 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report or PMMR.

I'd like to thank the committee staff who have helped prepare this hearing. Saiyemul Hamid, Financial Analyst; Julia Haramis, Unit Head, Christopher Pepe, Senior Legislative Counsel; Chloë Rivera, Senior Policy Analyst, and my Chief of Staff, Andrew Wright and dedicated staff.

With that, I think we will swear you in and have you read your testimony, thank you.

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Just give me one second.

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this committee, and to respond honestly to council member questions?

[PANEL AFFIRMS]

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and, then, just before you start, just remember to turn your microphones on.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Is it on?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yes, okay, thank you.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: So, I am trying to honor your request for my comments to be brief. But I wanted to also take this opportunity to talk a little more in detail about the programs, so it's a little longer than I usually give.

So, good morning, Chair Hudson and members of the Aging Committee. It's great to see you. As you know, I'm Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, I am the Commissioner of the New York City Department for the Aging, NYC Aging. And I'm joined this morning by Jose Mercado,

our Chief Financial Officer. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the Aging's Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2026. I will also discuss in some of the details on the programs we provide with these funds as well as some highlights of what was accomplished during the year.

In addition to working to eliminate ageism and ensuring the dignity and quality of life of older New Yorkers, providing high quality services and resources are among our top priorities. To support this important work, our FY26 Preliminary Budget projects, as you said, Chair, \$426 million in funding, of which \$305 million is City funds. This includes allocations of \$178 million to support Older Adult Clubs, which I know you're all familiar with. However, while we don't typically view congregate meals as food for medicine, it is essential service for healthy living and preventing social isolation. That is truly the work that is done in OACs in addition to the recreational and educational work. Additionally, there is \$62 million for home delivered meals (HDM), a key anti-poverty and financial insecurity measure in this city; as well as \$46 million for case management which serves as the entry

point for in-home services and addressing the needs of older adults who struggle with performing activities of daily living. There is also an allocation of \$36.5 million to support home care for homebound older adults who are not Medicaid eligible, which allows older New Yorkers to age in place; and an additional \$8.8 million for NORC programs, naturally occurring retirement communities, which provide similar services as older adult clubs other than the meals. In addition to the recreation and combating social isolation services, they also provide some nursing services. Finally \$8.5 million for caregiving services supporting 1.3 million caregivers and their care recipients in the city. And \$5.5 million for transportation, allowing older adults to be connected to their community, their houses of worship, shopping, and medical appointments.

These numbers tell only a portion of the story behind the services included in NYC Aging and show the human side of the work we do to make New York City fully age-inclusive.

Previous fiscal years have been challenging for the City financially. And NYC Aging has worked to

ensure that we are prioritizing the needs of older adults and our core aging services while limiting the impacts of these challenges like the various PEGS of Programs to Eliminate the Gap (PEGs)

We are pleased to see that under the FY25 Executive Budget there are no mandatory savings exercise. And previous PEGs were implemented without negatively affecting services to older adults.

Nonetheless, we are keenly aware of the change in the federal administration and the need for the improved per-capita funding formula to increase state dollars that could result in fair share funding for New York City, which has led to confusion in many funding sources, especially federal grants.

These are ongoing issues that we monitor day-to-day and continue to assess their potential impact on aging services. We continue to advocate to our state and federal partners to share the financial responsibility of serving older New Yorkers— I mean older adults living in the City.

That said, despite these past challenges, we're proud of the work that was done by NYC Aging, and, of course, our trusted nonprofit partners in addressing some notable successes.

Following are a few highlights of this past year:

- In December 2024, we hosted the BOOM! Conference, New York City's first national conference dedicated to tackling the urgent issues impacting America's growing older adult population. This event was hosted alongside Mayor Eric Adams and assembled renowned speakers, practitioners, thought leaders, and advocates in groundbreaking sessions on combating ageism, the caregiving crises, community versus institutional care, and the evolving needs of adults 60. We are proud to continue to steer the national conversation on aging and serve as a countrywide leader with 19 other cities in The US Conference of Mayors Age-Inclusive Workgroup.
- Last year, with the help of The City Council and the current administration, we were able to codify the Cabinet for Older New Yorkers into the City's Charter— thank you very much. This will ensure that we can continue to grow projects with 24 cities and address the needs of older New Yorkers, 24 city agencies, and address the needs of older City workers. We are proud to announce that this year, both *My NY Story* and NYC's aging's anti-

ageism education program with New York City's public schools have been nationally recognized as *Programs of Merit* by Generations United.

The education program is now expanding citywide with \$400,000 from a Next50 grant to reach more schools and grade levels. These efforts ensure future generations understand the value older adults bring to their community. But it also is important in that there is a research component and we'll see how young people are responding to what the outcomes of these learnings are.

And as in the charge of the Cabinet for Older New Yorkers, these initiatives break down communication silos between agencies and serve older New Yorkers through budget neutral process through collaboration and meeting mutual goals.

- Last MayLast May, during Older Americans Month, NYC Aging launched our Service Needs Assessment. This citywide-service covered topics including managing finances, transportation, meal preparation, and social isolation.

The survey was distributed by providers, city partners, elected officials, many of you here and

your offices, as well as many others. And we were able to go online in 10 different languages.

The results provided great insights, and we collected the data we needed to support NYC Aging and the members of the Cabinet for Older New Yorkers in understanding the current needs of older residents. The voices of the older adult guiding our work is essential.

We received 8,600 responses from older adults and caregivers with special attention paid in our outreach to those who were not known to any of our programs. More than 40% of the respondents indicated that they do not attend an Older Adult Club, which gives us clear insight into what types of needs older New Yorkers are experiencing beyond food insecurity and social isolation.

We look forward to sharing more information about the results of this service needs with your offices.

- Lastly, NYC Aging hosted a large number of successful events in 2024 which underscores the City's deep commitment and service to older New Yorkers.

In May, we hosted Intergenerational Groove where thousands of older adults gathered On National Older Adult Health And Fitness Day for a dance party. That was part of a national initiative to promote the importance of physical activity and highlight the efforts of local organizations dedicated to improving the health of older adults. In September we hosted the Healthy Aging Fair—almost rained out but older adults showed up and participated— where 500 residents came to participate in a free day of screening activities, demonstrations designed to promote healthy living and active lifestyles. We were excited to do this in partnership with the City's overall goal of laying out its HealthyNYC aimed at improving life expectancy for New Yorkers. This was done on National Falls Prevention Week to show New Yorkers that in this city you can age confidently and age in place.

Finally, in October, we hosted the grand finale of the Talent is Timeless 2024, which has become something of an older adult event across every OAC in the city. And everyone looks forward to it now and it's gonna be in its third year. We had over a

thousand attendees at last year's finale and over a thousand acts participating over the course of the entire competition. Talent is Timeless showcases the spirit, resilience and limitless potential of older adults, offering them a platform to demonstrate their abilities. And equally important, challenging ageist stereotype that older adults just are not *this or that*, but like many of us have talents and abilities in a variety of areas.

This year we celebrate NYC's Aging 50th Anniversary, and we are looking forward to including you in those celebrations across the five boroughs. Our 50th Anniversary, coincides with our renewed focus on Aging services and key priorities for the entire agency: community care, community building, caregiver support, and always combating ageism. We view these priorities as an overall component of every program, service, and initiative completed by NYC Aging. There will be upcoming events and opportunities to highlight the work being done by this agency, our contract providers, and of course all the New Yorkers that we serve every day as we celebrate our Golden Anniversary.

I'm going to talk to you a little bit about the programs. Home Delivered Meals Program is a vital component of NYC Aging's network of services. Not only does the Home Delivered Meal Program provide meals to homebound older adults, but also the interaction with the delivery person— which for many of our clients may be the only direct human interaction for a day— supports are ongoing efforts to combat social isolation and, again, a critical aspect of our Community Care approach. This program continues to follow the strict guidance by the State and is open to those who meet its criteria.

We announced late in February, from Columbia University and Robin Hood Foundation, the share of older New Yorkers living in poverty. It is now 25%, double the national average. Because financial security remains amongst the most critical need of older adults, it is highly correlated to food insecurity. NYC Aging is continually evaluating our efforts and exploring areas for improvement. While workforce programs continue to be a way for older adults to avoid long term poverty, meals programs are also a lifeline to older adults struggling with financial and ultimately food insecurity. This

includes enhancing meal options for recipients, embracing the diversity of our city by increasing the availability of culturally aligned meals, and promoting uniformly high quality nutritious meals.

In FY24, our network of 15 home delivered meals providers delivered 4.2 million meals to 24,600 clients. Combined with meals served at OACs, NYC Aging has a record breaking 10 million meals... 10. 3 million meals in FY25 underscoring the importance of these meals to older New Yorkers.

We're happy to mention again this year that HDM reimbursement rates have increased meal costs to \$11.78 in Fiscal 2023 to \$13.78 in Fiscal Year 2025. Over the past few years, the rates have gradually increased to meet the needs of our providers serving and preparing these critical meals.

These have been key improvements of service to our providers that we have met with the partnership with this Council leadership.

In Transportation, we issued an RFP in FY23 and we've seen that this vital program has become incredibly beneficial to older New Yorkers. The Transportation Program is filling a gap in the lives of older adults who have difficulty navigating public

transportation in New York or have specific mobility needs that require accessible vehicles.

In FY25, the Transportation Program is funded at \$5.5 million across nine providers. There's two in each borough with one citywide provider.

I would like to note that this Transportation Program is separate from the community based transportation services provided by our network of OACs, many of whom opted to prioritize transportation needs at their centers and included it in their RFP submissions and ultimately in these contracts.

These Transportation Programs are meant to be for OAC clients to get to and from home and for centers to have rides as a group to center outings and other activities and events.

In Homecare and Caregiving services, a hallmark of a Community Care Plan, the number of older adults live in New York City continues to grow, and it is imperative that we continue to grow the Community Care support systems, which allow older New Yorkers to remain in the communities they build and to truly age in place. We do this through Homecare and Caregiver services, which greatly serve those who are homebound in need of additional support. Homecare

services are provided through Medicaid reimbursement for those who do not qualify for Medicaid programs through the Expanded In-Home Services for Older Adults, EISEP. The service hours are reimbursed to providers. Currently, we're advocating that New York State Legislature make permanent the inclusion which passed last year of a .55¢ per hour wage match for EISEP Homecare workers, which would bring them into parity with Medicaid home care workers who already received the raises. As you know this is a key component of Community Care and being able to age in place is an overwhelming preference of older New Yorkers which also improves their health outcomes. We welcome your support and advocacy in this regard.

Without EISEP, clients are at disadvantage when Medicaid home workers are not incentivized to take on those clients because their pay is higher. There is no distinction between the EISEP Medicaid Homecare workers— they are primarily women of color and this is exacerbating inequity because of salary. Currently the Homecare Program at NYC Aging is funded at \$36.5 million in FY25, but it does not include the wage increases to match the salaries of the Medicaid Homecare workers. This occurred in previous years and

was resolved in part with help from advocates, some on this council, to ensure that aging service workers, who frequently are women and women of color, are not left out of needed pay increases for critical aging services.

Many older adults are caretakers for their aging parents and spouses. Many are caregivers who also have full time jobs. The Caregiver Program offers options for respite care through home care participation in social adult day care centers as well as other services. There are an estimated 1.3 million New Yorkers who function as a caregiver. Without the support of care for daily living activities and respite care, many of these caretakers would not have the financial means or the ability to leave the care recipient in someone else's care while they take a needed break from their caregiving responsibilities. Chair, you know that experience personally, as so do I.

We know the cost of maintaining an older adult in institutionalized care is far higher when compared to the cost of community care options, such as supporting, including supporting caregivers. Its cost on the average is \$160,980 to house an older adult in

1 institutional care whereas the average cost of a
2 Community Care Service Plan is roughly \$32,000 per
3 person per year. In FY25, funding for the Caregiver
4 Program is projected to be \$8.5 million. Caregiver
5 supports positively impact the health and well-being
6 of the older adults' stability in the family while
7 aligning with the cultural background of the
8 individual. This is why Community Care is so
9 incredibly important to the future of this city and
10 to the future of older New Yorkers. These are
11 integrated services for home assistance which care
12 for daily living needs such as bathing, food prep,
13 shopping, transportation, meal provisions. All that
14 can help an older adult live longer in their
15 community which is their desired and shared outcome.
16 I have personal experience with this, as I take care
17 of my 95-year-old mother who wants to remain in her
18 home and who needs additional care.

19
20 I am proud of the work that we do at NYC Aging
21 and the work that we do in partnership with our
22 providers and what we accomplish with the resources
23 that we have. This past year has shown where NYC
24 Aging as a whole can look to efficiencies and
25 improvement in our programs and truly meet the needs

of older New Yorkers. This mindset has allowed us to weather financial challenges in previous years and confront the growing needs in aging services in New York City— where we know the population 60 will continue to grow. Amidst all this, we continue to be good stewards of public dollars. That said, given the need for further investment from state and federal partners, we are concerned about the current presidential administration and the changes that may affect NYC aging and the Older Americans Act. It is imperative now more than ever that New York City receive its fair share of aging services funded through federal grants and state grants and to be continually dispersed to support these vital programs.

As I've said time and time again, while the needs of older adults outpace the resources in aging services, I look forward to continuing ways to match our programs to meet this increased demand. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much for your testimony. Before I begin my questions, I would like to acknowledge that we have been joined by Council

Member Salaam, Council Member Lee, Council Member Banks, and Council Member Mealy.

I'll get right into it if you all are okay with that.

In the Preliminary Plan, NYC Aging's FY26 Budget totals \$426.2 million, which is \$124.5 million less than the current FY25 Budget. A large reason for this difference is the \$68.2 million in federal COVID-19 funding that was used to support older adult centers, home delivered meals, and NORCs. That funding has now expired and has not been replaced in FY26 and in the out years with City funds.

Additionally, there's \$41.7 million in Council Discretionary Funding for older adult programs budgeted in FY25 that is not included in the budget for FY26 and beyond.

How is the administration planning to address the significant decrease in funding for the agency in FY26?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We had anticipated this, uh, what we call fiscal cliff. And in our discussions with OMB and direct discussions with the Director of Finance, I mean Director of OMB, there's

1
2 been a commitment that current service levels will
3 continue.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: There's been a commitment
5 that what? Sorry.

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Current service
7 levels will continue.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Current service levels.

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: And there'll be no
10 impact on current service levels.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. So will additional
12 funding then be added to support these critical
13 services? Sounds like that's a yes.

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: What I can tell you
15 is that the commitment has been made that there will
16 be no impact on service levels.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

18 How... I don't know that your answer is going to
19 change, but how good do you feel about this
20 commitment? Like is it a firm commitment?

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I would say I am a
22 woman of my word, and, I, in the conversation I had
23 with the director, I believe that he's a man of his
24 word and that that commitment will stand.

25 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Then I will...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: And I also know that it is a statement that has been expressed at the various Older Adult Town Halls.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. I guess, and I think I know what your answer will be to this, but why then wouldn't it be included in the Preliminary Budget?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I can't answer that.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That's what I thought you would say.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: But what I can say is it is a Preliminary Budget, but I can also say that I feel confident in that commitment.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. If you feel confident, then I feel confident. And...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We'll have a discussion...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So I'm going take that and run with it.

Older adults represent 20% of our city's population. A 2021 CUNY Graduate Center study reports that the population of adults ages 65 and older in New York State will soar 25% between 2021 and 2040. In the city alone, the population of older adults is expected to increase by 40% by the year 2040. Despite

the growth in the City's older adult population, NYC Aging's budget still represents less than 1% of the City's overall budget.

Given the decline in the agency's budget in FY26 compared to FY25, it does not appear that the budget is at all aligned with the growing need and demand for services.

What metrics does NYC Aging have regarding older adult population projections and the demand for the agency's programming and services? And then how are you utilizing these metrics when making budget decisions for the agency?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We're using... we're constantly monitoring what are the essential services? We're constantly monitoring how to be good fiscal stewards. And we're also now taking the opportunity to look at services and see what we can reenvision. I think that using the data that we get from the survey— that we've received to get the voice of the older adults— will also help us look at how we reenvision services to meet the needs of this growing and changing population.

The one thing I want to say is that when we look at aging services, I'm going off a script here a bit,

1 but when we look at aging services we have to look at
2 four cohorts, right? You know aging is not one
3 monolithic. You know, you go from 60 to 102 if you're
4 blessed. So each one of those cohorts, I consider
5 there are four cohorts, the early 60s, then the 70s,
6 then up to 75 and then there's gonna be the 85+. And
7 then those cohorts all require different needs. But
8 what we are not... What we will not change is our
9 commitment to a Community Care Plan.
10

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So are there any specific
12 budgetary decisions that have been made based on the
13 metrics?

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Not at this point,
15 because this is a preliminary budget and we're
16 looking forward to looking at what we look forward to
17 in the Executive Budget.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And then can you just
19 share how you're working with OMB to address the
20 increased demand for programs and services? Are there
21 specific lines of funding or additions that we can
22 expect to see in the Executive Plan for NYC Aging?

23 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Sure. We are in
24 regular communication with OMB around the myriad of
25

unmet needs, particularly in those unmet needs that support a Community Care Plan and Caregiving.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you.

I'm going just jump to a colleague or two and then I'll come back to questioning, but starting with Council Member Schulman.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Hi Commissioner, thank you for being here today.

So there was a program a while back that helped seniors get to their doctor appointments.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Mm-hmm.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Do you still, is that still in effect? I know there was some issues with it at the time.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I'm not sure what issues you're referencing but it's the Transportation Program that we have.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Right.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: And we funded that. We have two of them per borough in addition to one citywide. And those programs specifically for— not portal to portal transportation that's done by the OAC— those Transportation Programs are for group

transportation, medical appointments, church visits, and whatever the older adult may need at that time.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: At this time seniors can make appointments to get transportation?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: to their... Okay. So is there any...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: there was a confusion. Let me see...

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: if I can clarify for you.

Last year there was a confusion between that Transportation Program and then the Portal to Portal Transportation Program, that is, as I said in the testimony, administered through the...

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Right...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Older Adult Clubs, I'm sorry.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: No, that's okay. So is there any plans to expand that? And the reason I'm asking, too, is because since then congestion pricing has gone into effect. A lot of seniors are ,you know, taking cars into their doctor's appointments and

1 particularly from the other boroughs into Manhattan
2 and all of that. So that's a concern of mine
3 that's... so anyway if you can answer that a little
4 for me and then...

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: It is one of the
7 many program decisions that we have to make, because
8 given our commitment to Community Care, that has to
9 be an essential part of it.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Do you have a... and I
11 know that you have Homecare, Caregiver services, all
12 of that— Do you have relationships with ,like, New
13 York City H+H and other medical providers to try and
14 get folks medical care?

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yes, we work very
16 closely. Both entities are part of the Aging Cabinet.
17 So we have a real good relationship, not only looking
18 at how we can move forward in the future, but we're
19 also looking at what are the impacts of these federal
20 cuts and seeing how we can do some gap filling.

21 The other thing that we have done, uh, is right
22 now we're in conversations with DOHMH just around the
23 fact that the measles incidence is not affecting
24 older adults...

25 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: But maybe we should do some education around awareness of vaccines, overall vaccines. So we're in constant communication with them and in work. I mean they do all of our health falls prevention work. There's a lot of work that we do in concert with both.

The other thing that we do, particularly with H+H, is we train a lot of their frontline staff on aging issues so that when an older adult goes into one of the hospital facilities or community facilities, those individuals are aware of what are some particular aging needs but also the community services that they can refer an older adult to.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: So I would ask, so DOHMH, I had a hearing last week about their preparations for public health emergencies including like the flu, bird flu, all of that. So whatever public service campaign you come up with, I'd ask that you work with them as well. Because we're trying to get...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Oh...

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: we're trying to get information out there about vaccines. That was a big issue. And so we want to dispel that in the

communities, and whatever we can help with in that I would like to do.

And the last thing that I'd like to mention which isn't...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: You should be... excuse me...

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Go ahead?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Don't mean to interrupt you. Just last week, the Commission and I were exchanging...

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: information and how we could work together, particularly around the issue around raising awareness and education around the importance of vaccines.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: That's great.

And then this isn't particularly your budget, but I've brought this issue up to the Chair as well as other folks around— the MTA, their fare reduction program, and I know you sit as a member, as the Commissioner on the MTA board, they don't have reduced fares for express buses which in my part of Queens, a lot of older adults take, especially for

their doctor's appointments. So I'd ask if you can do something with that.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I don't serve on the MTA Board...

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Oh, I thought you did. I thought...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I did, I did...

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: And I was fortunate enough not to... to no longer serve on that MTA Board.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: (LAUGHTER) Okay.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: But, I think we're asking, and one of the things that we're looking at (TIMER CHIMES) is to make sure that we have a stronger linkage with the MTA...

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: so that we can talk about many, many transportation issues for older adults, including that it should no longer be called senior fare. But it should be senior half fare or whatever they call it. But there are a myriad of issues...

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay, so I'm raising that one, and I raised it with the MTA, uh, with the New York City Transit Head last week when I met with him. So if you could echo that, that would be... would be helpful, especially for the seniors in my district. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you, Council Member Schulman.

I am going to go to Council Member Brooks-Powers, who is Zoom, while we have a quorum, then I will go to Council Member Mealy, followed by Council Member Lee.

Council Member Brooks-Powers?

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Hello?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yes, yep.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: One moment, I'm just trying to get my tech together.

Hi, Commissioner, and thank you for being your testimony provided. I just had a few questions for you.

The proposed \$100 million reduction in the New York City Aging budget threatens to eliminate a third of the Older Adult Centers and critical services like

congregate meals, case management, and naturally re
recurring retirement communities.

What steps is the Administration taking to
prevent these vital programs from being lost? And how
will the City ensure that older adults in communities
like mine, where senior centers are heavily utilized,
continue to have access to these critical services?

I have a couple of follow-up questions, but I'll
stop there to allow you to answer.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Thank you. As the
Chair asked a very similar question, and the money
that you're talking about is the fiscal cliff that
had been anticipated. In conversations with the
Office of Budget and Management, with the director
directly and myself, there's been a reassurance that
there will be no... that service levels will be left
at its current level.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: And what data did
the Administration use to justify these cuts,
particularly given New York City's older adult
population growing in the rate that it is?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I believe that it
was... I cannot answer that. That is better addressed

by OMB, but I believe that it was part of an a broader fiscal cliff conversation.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: And in my district, which has, as I mentioned, a significant number of older adults and several active senior centers, what is the projected impact of these cuts? Are specific centers or programs at risk of closure or service reduction?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Given that at this time, we are not anticipating a change in service levels, there is no projection of that, uh, should that come to be, I will have discussions with each with each... with the Chair exactly as to what those that impact is. All right?

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Just to be clear, so is it that you don't foresee it just yet? Because when OMB made these recommendations for the cuts, has, like, DFTA taken the steps to begin to kind of scope out what this means?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, we scoped out the impact a while back when we first anticipated this fiscal cliff. There have been conversations with OMB since then. And as we said, and I believe that

the director also said in his testimony that the current service levels would not be impacted.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Okay.

My last question, and thank you, Chair, for the opportunity.

So, in particular in Council District 31, which includes, again, seniors who rely heavily on NORCs and case management services to age in place, what steps is the Department of Aging taking to ensure these services remain accessible in historically underserved communities like Southeast Queens? I'd like to know what exact steps your agency is taking.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Well, in Southeast Queens, we have taken steps to increase services. In fact, we provided an additional \$3.6 million in service in Southeast Queens over the past year, uh, past two years I believe. And given that at this point, we are expecting service levels to continue as what they are, we do not have any specific impacts, because I think that would be alarming, although we have looked at what they may be.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: You're welcome.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And just one quick follow-up to that. Both OAC attendance and congregate meals saw an increase in the first four months of Fiscal 2025, so I'm hoping you might be able to address that. I think you said you don't anticipate any increases... both OAC attendance...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: An increase in participation?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You don't anticipate an increase in participation at...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I'm not understanding the question, excuse me, I'm so sorry.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: No, it's okay. I may not understand what it was I heard.

Both OAC attendance and congregate meals saw an increase in the first four months of fiscal 2025, So I just want to address the I don't believe there's going to be an increase in the funding. There's just going to be... at least there seems to maybe have been a commitment made by OMB to fill the \$124 million gap, not necessarily to increase. But we've seen already an increase in attendance and congregate meals.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I think... I believe that those are continued conversations. I'm confident that particularly OACs and meals are an important service and commitment by this city and this administration and the OMB director. And he said current levels and it'll be what the current levels may be.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. All right, I mean when the current... current at what point in time I suppose is a better question, because what the numbers are today are not what they were, you know, yesterday.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Agree with you and I believe that those are continued conversations we will have...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: with OMB in terms of if we see an uptick in home delivered meals and congregate meals, how will we address that.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: And I think it's a continued conversation.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Council Member Mealy followed by Council Member Lee.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Good morning, Commissioner. I just have a few questions. Silver Star other adjustments, uhm...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Council Member, can you just pull the microphone a little bit closer? Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay. Can New York City of Aging confirm which agencies that enter City transfer is associated with the Star adjustment? Silver Star, I'm sorry... Program.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Are you asking about the Silver Star Program?

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Mm-hmm, yes.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Okay. Silver Star Program is a program where former city employees who are retired can work up to 35... earn \$35,000 a year without an impact on their pension. Current... Uh-huh?

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Just quickly, how often are you promoting that? Could you tell me where you're promoting this? I know it's a bunch, because it seemed like whenever I go to senior centers, I tell the seniors about that program. So I was just concerned. Do you have a separate budget for advertising straight to the seniors?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: No.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Not at all?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: No. We have So have
a...

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: So have you ever requested
a budget for advertising and marketing?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We are always in
conversation with OMB around...

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: So how can we help you to
make sure we get... Because some seniors are
eligible. I'm getting... working out here, for me
now. So how can we really get them to know about this
program? Thirty-five-thousand, a lot of them are
eligible to get.. make that extra funding.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: You have to be city
retiree...

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Uhm, we have a very
robust workforce program. Right (INAUDIBLE)...

(CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: (INAUDIBLE)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: very good
individual, and she does the maximum outreach
possible. And we also work with other city agencies

to get them to work with us in terms of what the retirement pool is. But that is a limited program. It's not an open ended program.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay, then. Citywide NORCS initiatives is budgeted at \$5.2 million for 2025. Has any of the NORC programs recently closed?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: No.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: No?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: No.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Do you see any... anything in the budget that can possibly have any of these programs closed?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I'm gonna... I know... I don't wanna be a broken record here, but the conversation has been that there will be no, uh, current service levels will not be impacted.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: At all? I'm sorry, I heard that, I just wanna make sure with this, budget going forward... How does New York City Aging plan to address the staffing retention issues with nurses? This this in...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: In NORCS?

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Yes.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: That is... I don't know that there is an issue... I'm not aware of a major issue with retention of nurses. But if that were an issue, if there is an issue, it is dealt with by the provider of that NORC. But I have not heard that we have a wholesale, uh, retention issues with the nurses at the NORCS.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: At all? You haven't heard of any?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I...

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: So what about the staffing?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I think... I think is a critical issue for all human service. We have we have a paucity of people. It's... and it's retention as well as recruitment has been an issue for the overall human service network.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: And that brings me to a question, how are the centers hiring people? What kind of criteria should they have dealing with our young adults... senior adults?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: So in our program standards, we have some guidelines in terms of salary scale. We also have guidelines in terms of responsibility and educational levels for our various

positions in each one of our programs, whether it's a case manager, whether it's in the OAC. And that is done through the nonprofit agency. (TIMER CHIMES) But there are guidelines that we provide for each one of those.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Is there any database? I just have just this one, because I think we need a separate entity to start checking on who's working in these senior centers. How often are they giving our seniors exercise? Have you ever thought about putting that in the budget?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Council Member, each one of our programs gets monitored on a regular basis.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Do you have database on that?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Sure we do. And we...

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Could you please forward it? Because I go into some of them, and they are not doing anything. And that is shame on us. The only way to keep our seniors active is to keep them moving. So if I could go into some senior centers and nothing is

going on for awhile, we are dropping the ball. So I hope you can...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: So I would ask...

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: send me that information.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, I would ask of you to let us know what senior centers in particular...

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: I've been visiting a lot of them.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Okay, so just tell us where you find that the activities are not up to standard... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: So, now I'm telling on people? But I'm willing because it's a mandate. They have worked and saved us really, built this city, and now in their golden days, they are just withering away, and I can't handle that anymore. So, please, I will give you some of them, and then from there, if I see any changing, then I can let you know the egregious ones. Because if we don't do something now, we can lose a lot of our adults.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I totally respect your point of view, and I look forward to hearing from you. But I want to go on the record, is that we

1
2 have a lot of confidence in the service providers and
3 the quality of service that they provide. Because I
4 have a lot of confidence in the monitoring and
5 oversight of our program officers on those services.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay. Do you still need any
7 funding for marketing? Speak now or forever hold your
8 peace.

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I will always work
10 in partnership with the Council to support the needs
11 of older adults in the city of New York.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: And you will put that, a
13 request in in regards to marketing and advertising
14 for *all* of the programs directly?

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We're in constant
16 communication with OMB about all of our needs— and
17 public education and awareness is one of those.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay. I still didn't kind
19 of get my question answered. Will you have a separate
20 budget just for marketing?

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We have... Each
22 program that we support, each OAC that we fund, have
23 money for outreach and education. You were asking
24 specifically about the employment and workforce
25 program.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: That and the marketing.

Both.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Okay. We have it in our OACs we have outreach...

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Just in the CBOs not in the Department of Aging? Your...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We do have a marketing budget...

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: That's the...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Are you asking... Yes, we do have a marketing budget.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you...

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: How much is it?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I will have to get back to you on that.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you, Council Member. I'm going to move on. We can come...

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: We still...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: We can...

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: I can't understand this. If she... If she has a marketing budget, I asked how much it was. And do you need more...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I don't have that right in front of me. But I would be more than happy to supply that to you.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay, then, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And I can come back to you if you have additional questions. I just want to move on to Council Member Lee, thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hi, good morning, everyone.

So a few follow-up questions. I know that folks have already asked about the fiscal cliff OMB follow-up questions. I want to drill down a little bit more, because...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: I know that you're saying that OMB is saying that there will not be service reductions, but are they committed to restoring the funding? Because if I recall the same thing happened last year and that funding hasn't been restored. So my worry and concern is that as we continue to not replace the funding from previous years, essentially the budget does decrease. And as a former provider of DFTA services, I know that it is extremely difficult, because we're already working on shoestring budgets, and just as an example for the cost of food,

1
2 congregate meals, homebound meals, the other day I
3 went around the corner to the deli and the woman at
4 the counter was like, "Oh you got a hard boiled egg,
5 I got to charge you an extra \$1.25 for that," and she
6 actually separately charged me an extra \$1.25 for the
7 extra egg that I got.

8 So I just worry... and my concerns are with the
9 cost of inflation, food increases, all of these
10 things, how are we saying that we're service... the
11 service provider, the service is not going to be
12 reduced? So that, basically, essentially to me the
13 way I interpret that is that more will fall on the
14 actual providers to come up with that money or to
15 skimp which we don't want to see for our seniors.

16 So I just wanted to drill down on that a little
17 bit more.

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I would have to say
19 that there is a corresponding relationship between
20 service levels and dollar amounts. And I think in the
21 conversation, I think that's an understood, you know,
22 that is understood. We've been able to keep pace,
23 well not keep pace, but we've been able to increase
24 food costs, the food line for home delivered meals.

It's a conversation that we're in with OMB around OACs right now, and also fuel costs.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yes, the fuel costs have gone up.

Yeah, so if you could follow-up to see if the OMB commitment will be there to restore that funding, because I know that they said that they would last year, and I don't think that ever happened. So I would love to see that funding being restored.

But I also...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Councilwoman, I don't believe that we had a reduction last year.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Oh, the surplus, okay...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: All right, got it.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: So, yeah, so I just want to make sure that there's some sort of commitment there. And I know that... I'm happy to see that the homebound delivery meal price reimbursement went up from \$11.78 to \$13.78 which is great.

Is the \$13.78 also the same price that the subcontractors will be getting if there are still subcontractors, or...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: No, that's a negotiated rate between the provider.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Provider...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: and the contractor...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Uhm...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Is there a way to...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We're trying to get more contractors subcontract...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Versus the subs...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: the commissary kitchens so that that could stay within the network and we could manage costs that way also. Remember commissary

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: kitchens.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

Uhm, and, I... And forgive me, because I know that we had this whole thing where we were trying to push the seven day meals for homebound delivery

1 meals. So given the current budget status, I don't
2 know, is that included or what's the status of that
3 if you could give us an update? And also, yeah, just
4 where things are at with that.

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Right now the
6 seven... the meals beyond the five per week are done
7 through a private public/partnership.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right.

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Of which the City
10 contributes to that public private/partnership. And
11 that public private/partnership, uh, the in kind
12 support to that public private/partnership is
13 considerable because it builds on the network.

14 But there's been no review or analysis of what it
15 would cost to provide those meals seven days through
16 the City.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, so there's no number
18 that we have?

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We don't... We don't
20 have a number at this point, no.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. Let me have a... I'll
22 have a follow-up with you about that afterwards.

23 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We can provide that
24 number to you...
25

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, perfect.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: should that be done.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: And then for transportation, I'm glad to see that there is this RFP that's out, because I still remember when council members like Paul Valone and Barry had to take money from their own discretionary pots and actually provide that service for seniors in their neighborhood.

So I'm glad to see that you have this transportation RFP— \$5.5 million is a drop in the bucket if you ask me, because we all know how much it costs to provide those rides. So is... for the OACs that in the last part of that paragraph, I think that you were saying every OAC had the opportunity to include transportation dollars as part of their response (TIMER CHIMES) to the RFP. And ultimately 108 chose to include community transportation services. But is that in addition to or is that inclusive of the current budget that they already have?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: It's inclusive of their budget.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Inclusive, okay. So that means that they're probably...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: If they saw it as an essential service for their area, then they would include it in their budget.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. And, then, let me move on really quickly. Just as a... Sorry, one more question...

COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: As a follow-up with the NORCS that Council Member Mealy had mentioned.

Because I know that the nurses at NORCs used to be provided for free, and I believe the Council has been picking that cost up since 2019.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yes you have, thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: So I just wanted to know if there is any sort of room in the budget in the future for the city agencies and for the Mayor's Office to pick that back up?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I think that's a discussion item, but currently it's been provided for the last five years through the Council.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right. I think we've been doing that mostly because we see it as a gap that we're trying to fill. But I personally think that

this is a cost that the Administration should pick up. So if we could advocate together to put that back in the budget I think that'd be great too.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you, Council Member.

Okay despite the large number of facilities that make up NYC Aging's older adult provider network, NYC Aging's capital plan remains the smallest of all city agencies, totaling just \$78.4 million for Fiscal 2025 to 2029. The size of the Preliminary Commitment Plan is nearly the same as it was in the Adopted Commitment Plan. Two of the largest capital projects in the plan are the \$19 million for the renovation of older adult centers and \$28.3 million for the relocation of NYC Aging's headquarters.

How many older adult centers will receive renovations with the \$19 million in capital funding?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: You want to take that one?

JOSE MERCADO: Sure, 13.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thirteen?

JOSE MERCADO: The biggest one being Carter Burden.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Being where?

JOSE MERCADO: Carter Burden.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Which is Sandy

(INAUDIBLE)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, sorry, Garder Burt...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Carter Burden...

JOSE MERCADO: Carter Burden.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Oh, Carter Burden...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: East Harlem...

JOSE MERCADO: East Harlem.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: All right, thank you, no,
that's okay.

Has NYC aging determined which locations, and if
not, what will the process be to determine this?

So it sounds like you have a list of the actual
locations?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, we have...
we've done... based on a conversation we had, and I
don't remember what hearing it was, we've come up
with a plan to look at what was necessary to improve
kitchens. And we've been addressing that through a
variety of ways. But one of our priorities is to
bring our kitchens up to par. The other one is HVACs.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, so...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Because they are cooling centers.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, do you know how much is allocated per location? It sounds like the amounts will vary.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: (INAUDIBLE) location?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right, based...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: You have it?

JOSE MERCADO: Yeah, we have a list here. We can send it to you.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, great that would be wonderful.

And then you just started talking a little bit about this, but what capital improvements will be eligible under the funding? So kitchens, HVACs?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Kitchens, HVACs, which includes boilers, which break the bank. And I want to be real clear that we are trying to... we do this in city-owned properties as well as city managed properties. We are not doing major renovations like that in privately held properties for a variety of reasons. It's a landlord's responsibility. We will do kitchen improvements. But it's ADA compliance which

we're in compliance now but there might be some new things. And it's basically bringing kitchens up to standard and some to make them state of the art where possible.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and then can you just tell me the definition of a city managed property? You mentioned you're only doing this in city owned, city managed properties, not privately. But a city managed property could be a privately owned property, I assume maybe with...

JOSE MERCADO: Direct lease, right...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: a contract?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: A direct lease...

JOSE MERCADO: Yes, a direct lease, mm-hmm.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Direct lease?

JOSE MERCADO: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

We know there's been a pause in NYC Aging's headquarter relocation. When does NYC Aging expect the project to be resumed and completed?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We hope soon. We hope very soon. We've been attempting to move for five years, and we hope that this could move forward

as quickly as possible. And I understand that it is in the final stages of making decision.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Do you plan to advocate for increased funding for your capital plan? And if so, how much additional funding is needed to adequately address the agency's capital needs?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: You know, capital is not directly operated by us. We may get the funding, but we have to rely on other city agencies to complete the projects.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: And so that does not give us as much control over the timing of that.

What has worked, and what we have found to be helpful has been what Brooklyn Borough president did. Which Brooklyn Borough president allocated \$7 million specifically for the improvements in renovation at older adult clubs. And mostly older adult clubs and NORCS. And what we've done is make an appeal to other borough presidents to follow suit. My understanding, we're having a conversation soon with Manhattan borough president Mark Levine. And we hope that this also could become a pattern where we can make a major

investment in capital that will be managed and controlled with the Department for the Aging.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

So let me just ask you, and you can give me maybe a yes or no answer.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Do you plan to advocate for increased funding for your capital plan?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I always advocate with OMB for all funding.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. You get better and better at this each hearing.

(LAUGHTER)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I've got to get better myself, I guess, for getting directly to the answers.

Many older adult service providers are smaller organizations that find it very difficult to access capital funding. Has DFTA explored using expense funding to address smaller infrastructure needs at providers?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We usually do that... we usually do that through budget modifications and where things can be repaired and

through self funding. And that's a way that we normally do that.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Through self funding?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Mm-hmm. Because if a program underspends, you do a budget modification and you repurpose the dollars.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: What about centers that are not eligible for capital funds due to a lack of site control? Reasons could include bond language that would prevent them from getting capital funds.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Are you talking about private landlords? Is that what you mean by no site control?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yes.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: If it's a major construction or redevelopment we normally would not engage unless it's an emergency or presents a safety issue. We depend on the landlord to take care of their property.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you.

With the expiration of federal pandemic relief funding and the uncertainty as to whether city funds will be allocated to make up for the expired funds, many providers have expressed great concern about the

1 next OAC RFP and how it may be shaped by the
2 anticipated decrease in funding. OAC contracts were
3 set to expire on December 31, 2024; we know NYC Aging
4 extended these contracts and pushed out the release
5 of a new RFP. How long were the contracts extended
6 for? Were all contract terms kept the same when
7 contracts were extended? And if not, what were the
8 changes?
9

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: They expire on June
11 26th and an RFP will be released in anticipation of
12 that.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So all of the contract terms
14 were kept the same, right? Yes?

15 JOSE MERCADO: Yes, yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. When does NYC Aging
17 plan to release the next RFP? How far in advance of
18 that June 26th date?

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Usually, six months
20 in advance.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Six months in advance of June
22 is... was January

23 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: (INAUDIBLE) probably
24 January.
25

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: It... But you're talking about they were extended through June of this year, 2025?

JOSE MERCADO: Twenty-Six...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Twenty-Six...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Oh, 2026. I'm sorry...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Twenty-Six...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Just made me panic.

(LAUGHS)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I know, because I was, like, we're in March, so...

Okay, what impact will the decline in budgeted funding have on the parameters or scope of services in the next RFP?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Say that again, please?

COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: What impact will the decline in budgeted funding have on the parameters or scope of services in the next RFP?

I guess, what... I'll rephrase it to say assuming the commitment comes through, that's going to be the same budget in FY26 as you have in FY25. Given the increased population that we know about, increased

1
2 need in services, how will that budgeted funding
3 have... what impact will the budgeted funding have on
4 the parameters or scope of services in the next RFP?

5 In other words, if the money doesn't increase...

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: And I'm not trying
7 to avoid the question.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah.

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: But it's... when we
10 issue an RFP, we have a finite amount of dollars and
11 we look at what is it that we would like to see as
12 deliverables against that. So either individual
13 contracts will have to be impacted or the number of
14 contracts would have to be impacted. I mean that's
15 the process that we would use in making the
16 determination of what that dollar amount could fund.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So I mean this is where I
18 would, you know, just reiterate, and I know I'm in
19 many ways speaking to the choir here, but perhaps for
20 OMB— given all of the changes that we know are
21 happening, given the potential reduction in federal
22 funding, increase in the older adult population,
23 increase in needs and services— I don't see how it
24 makes any sense morally, fiscally, any other way to
25 keep the same dollars for those increased needs in

the next fiscal year and for the next RFP. We can't keep trying to do more with less.

So just stating that for the record.

Are there any changes to OAC services or contracts that NYC Aging is planning to make in the new RFP?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Nothing major that we can think of, but we will use the data and the information from the survey that came out. *What are older adults looking for?* And those will probably be dimensions to that.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And, then...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We also are looking at the results of the pop-up kitchens that we've tested for this last year, taking all of that into consideration, and those will probably influence the way we design food provision and alternatives of food provision in the RFP.

So all of that data that we're collecting now that will inform us as to what will people respond to, what are people looking for, and will impact the RFP.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, I'm going to come back to that in a second. But since you mentioned the

1 service needs assessment, I did want to just confirm
2 one aspect. You said you received 8,600 responses
3 from older adults and caregivers with special
4 attention paid in our outreach to those who are not
5 known to any of our programs. And then you said more
6 than 40% of respondents indicated they don't attend
7 an OAC. That 40% are... is the number of the 8,600
8 that are not already engaged in the network.
9

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Right.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right?

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: And then it's, *Why*
13 *not? And what would you like?*

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

15 And I would also make the argument that if you
16 were to engage that 40% then we need more money to
17 serve them. Would you agree?

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I would agree that
19 the demand would probably outpace the resources.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You would agree that the
21 demand would outpace the resources. So what do we
22 need to do to get OMB to understand that we need to
23 sort of demand needs to match the resources or
24 resources needs to match the demand?
25

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: You know, it is a conversation we're constantly having with OMB— not only around OACs but around some of the other growing needs around caregiving. And I trust that they are listening to us in earnest and will be responsive to some of those issues that we raise with them.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. You've got more trust in them than I do, will admit.

If funding is not increased in Fiscal 2026 and the out years, how many centers does NYC Aging estimate will be left out of the RFP, and what percentage of services would need to be reduced?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I want to make sure that I'm answering the question (INAUDIBLE)...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: If the fiscal cliff is not addressed?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: No, no, no. Well, this says specifically if funding is not increased. So if the fiscal cliff is addressed, then funding remains the same.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Right.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So if funding is not increased beyond that, beyond filling that gap...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: How many centers does NYC Aging estimate will be left out of the RFP, and what percentage of services would need to be reduced?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We don't anticipate any. We don't anticipate any. We would do the exercise that I described before— look at the dollar amounts and look at the impact. I'm not anticipating a closure of older adult clubs if the funding cliff gets addressed.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

Let me go to Council Member Mealy for a follow-up question.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: So if you anticipate no closures with this RFP, do you anticipate taking... opening up any new centers?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Unless we have the resources to match additional centers that would not be possible.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: So the Mount Ararat in my district, I'm waiting for RFP to come out. I'm funding it right now. So you're saying it's not on your list? What do they have to do to get an RFP to make sure they're on this list? Because the City...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Everyone...

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: should not be paying for, Department of Aging should, but I'm just waiting for the RFP.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Sure. When we issue an RFP, people apply for that RFP...

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: and the candidates that come up with the strongest proposals will be, you know, awarded an RFP. We don't have a set... I don't even want to use that word. We don't have a set of... we have a set number older adult clubs that we would fund. But I can't tell you if every existing program would if new entrants come in and they have stronger proposals.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: But you do fund some centers, Department of Aging...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Oh, yeah, we fund...

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: itself...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We fund 180 Older Adult Clubs. A total of 308 sites.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: So how can this club get on your budget instead of mine?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: When the RFP... when the RFP is released in July in 2026, that particular center could apply for... to get... to become one site.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Mm-hmm.

Chair could you please follow-up?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: We can... Yeah, we can continue the conversations that I know we've been having.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Because they keep being pushed back, pushed back, and they need to have a center. I just felt it was robbery that a unit, a housing unit, 420, all seniors do not have a senior center. So I put my budget in there just to make sure and it keeps saying the RFP is coming out. So now you're sure the RFP is in 2026?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Mm-hmm.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

The Preliminary Plan did not include the restoration of any PEGs made to NYC Aging, leaving in effect several cuts that were made to NYC Aging's budget, including \$2.2 million in Fiscal Year 2026,

and \$15.7 million in Fiscal Year 2027 and the out years for Older Adult Centers.

Older adult centers are a vital resource and lifeline for many of our city's older residents, we're concerned about the impact of a funding reduction on these programs, especially given that the aging population is rising.

The City's population of older adults, which currently represents 20% of our entire population, will only grow as the Baby Boomer generation ages.

The 2021 CUNY Graduate Center Study reports that the population of adults ages 65 and older is expected to increase by 40% by 2040.

How will Older Adult Center capacity be impacted by these PEGs, especially in light of the loss of the previously discussed federal funds?

(PAUSE)

JOSE MERCADO: So as the commissioner mentioned, OMB is basically... our conversations with OMB was to keep us whole for 2025 and 2026, which includes restoring all PEGs.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And are you advocating for the restoration of these PEGs in the Executive Plan?

JOSE MERCADO: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. That was the yes answer that I was looking for.

During last year's Preliminary Budget hearing NYC Aging testified on various new needs requests that were made to OMB. This included new needs requests for case management and homecare which have still not been added to the budget. Can NYC Aging provide the committee with any funding requests made to OMB and the mayor this fiscal year?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We submitted a package of unmet needs to OMB and we're in conversations with them about that package.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Are you able to share any of the details of that package either now or as follow-up?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I can follow-up with you. But it centers around caregiving and Community Care Plan.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

How are new need requests determined and how are metrics taken into account when making those requests? So how did you land on caregiving and the Community Care Plan?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: It's just a recognition that the caregiving area is growing and the number of older adults needing care is growing. And the number of Community Care Plan resources to support that are also growing. And so we base it on by geographic and by need, by demographics.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

I'm going to move on to food reimbursement rates and funding. Give me one second here.

In our Fiscal 2025 Preliminary Budget response, the Council called on the Administration to add and baseline \$12.7 million for the Home Delivered Meals Program to bring the per meal reimbursement rate up to \$15.31 from \$12.78.

At adoption last June \$4.8 million dollars was added in baseline starting in Fiscal twenty 2025 to increase reimbursement rates for home delivered meals to 13.78 a meal, partially addressing the Council's proposal.

The PMMR indicates that home delivered meal providers served 1.4 meals to 19,014 homebound older adults in the first four months of Fiscal 2025. This is 6.1% fewer meals and 8.5 fewer clients when compared to the same period in Fiscal 2024.

1
2 Is NYC aging considering a further increase to
3 meal reimbursement rates this budget cycle? And if
4 so, to by how much and for what period? By how much
5 and for what period?

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: At this point we
7 have not submitted additional funding for the per
8 meal cost of home delivered meals. And although we
9 are in conversation with OMB about Older Adult Club
10 meals, that cost per meal has not gone up.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

12 How has the rollout of the new reimbursement rate
13 been? And has NYC Aging received feedback from
14 providers? If so, what type of feedback?

15 JOSE MERCADO: We're talking about it's still
16 \$13.78 correct? Yeah.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yes.

18 JOSE MERCADO: So what we normally do is we do an
19 assessment within every quarter to determine costs.
20 We have not done that yet, so we're planning to do
21 so, we're planning to do so.

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. What you said you...
23 okay.

24 Why have we seen a decrease in the number of
25 meals and clients served in the first four months of

1
2 Fiscal 2025? Does NYC Aging believe further
3 investment in the Home Delivered Meals Program would
4 address the decline in meals served by the program
5 and staffing deficits at providers?

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I'm sorry, I had a
7 brain fog.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That's okay.

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: This goes back to an
10 issue... Thank you for that, Ryan.

11 This goes back to an issue that we raised with
12 you previously where the state imposed on us that we
13 could not deliver home delivered meals to people who
14 were on Medicaid.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We disagreed with
17 them, but we had a period in which we could not serve
18 people. When we saw the number increasing to about
19 3,000 we went back to the state and we said this
20 happened last time we had to grandfather in 80,000,
21 this practice cannot continue, there is no way of
22 indicating if all of these people who are Medicaid
23 eligible are getting a meal. So we restored... We're
24 in the process of restoring those. But that is where
25 you see that decline.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That decline. Okay.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That makes sense.

Okay, so are you advocating for increased funding, or you're staying... or not, because you think you're going to get those numbers back up...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We believe that...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: to where they were?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: we can get those numbers back up.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: How many meals is in (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: And also we are no longer cutting taking people. We've never... anyone who came to NYC Aging who wanted a home delivered meal, that was one of the things we did... That was... even with the partial assessment you still got a meal. That was not the case when the state imposed this.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: That has changed and we got some guidance from them that it'll... that they're not disputing our findings.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. That's good news.

How many meals is NYC Aging reimbursed so far in Fiscal Year 2025?

JOSE MERCADO: So the number I'm quoting, it's strictly for the HDM, it's \$2.1 million.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: It's \$2.1 million?

JOSE MERCADO: Yeah, we're having a little... we'll get back to you in the OAC. Due to a conversion of the new system, we've been having difficulty...

(CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Between the (INAUDIBLE) between PASSPort and the...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

JOSE MERCADO: Right. So the OAC number is a little difficult because it's actually... we're doing everything manually unfortunately.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

JOSE MERCADO: It's easier to do 15 contracts instead of 116 contracts.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

JOSE MERCADO: So we'll get back to you on the OAC ones.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And then how many meals are pending reimbursement?

JOSE MERCADO: Right now zero. Because actually all invoices... we just got new invoices in so they're under review.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: And just for the record, we reimburse within seven to ten days.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I know you're one of the best agencies...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: If they don't... if the invoice is a good invoice, if there's no data missing, yeah, thank you for that.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, that's great.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Thank you for Jose.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, federal funding, on January 27th, the Trump administration released a memo halting all agency grant, loan, and financial assistance programs that are federally funded. The White House Office of Management and Budget detailed that various federal programs were subject to this pause but later rescinded the order. Federal funds make up 18% of NYC Aging's budget in Fiscal 2026, an increase from 17% in Fiscal 2025.

What are NYC Aging's primary federal funding sources, and what programs and services do they each support?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: So our primary funding service sources are through the Older American Act. It's titled III-C-1, III-C-2, III-B, and then we also have AmeriCorps.

Is there anybody, anything I left out Jose?

JOSE MERCADO: And III-D

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: And III-D.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: What does III-D?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Oh, Caregiver, III-D

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Caregiving is III-D.

So can you share the programs and services that those support?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Okay, so...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: III-C-1, III-C-2...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: III-C-1, III-C-2 are meals. Right? Title III-B are case management, transportation, and now III-D is just defined as caregiving.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: In addition to that we have AmeriCorps...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: AmeriCorps...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: funding...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: for our workforce program.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And has NYC Aging assessed how it would be impacted and what it would do if there was a federal funding freeze or reduction?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Well the AmeriCorps grant is a three-year grant, and it's at the end of its grant. So we anticipate, as much as you can anticipate anything coming in the federal direction now, that we'll be able to complete that grant. That's AmeriCorps.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, you said that you'll be able to complete that?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Right because it was a three-year grant...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: But do you anticipate it being renewed?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I'm not clear on what the federal government's role is with AmeriCorps. We have not heard anything yet.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, but based on announcements and actions from the federal government, are you making plans to...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, we're meeting with the equivalent of our program officer at the regional level. We have not heard about any renewal opportunities or grant applications for AmeriCorps at this time. We still have seven months or whatever to go on that program.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Uh, but...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: If you're... Go ahead?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: But in the Older Americans Act we have not heard of any pending cuts on that either.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Whether you've heard about pending cuts or not, are you making plans to prepare for potential federal cuts?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: The answer is, no, at this time. It would be devastating to Our Home Delivered Meals Program and our Congregate Meals Program.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I would respectfully suggest that you start making plans to think about what will happen and what you'll do.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: If we lost the 17% from the federal government?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah. Yeah. I think I we just said it's 18% for FY26, yeah, up from 17% in FY25...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I mean, Jose and Ryan have been looking at that. I anticipate that we will, unless we hear something, we have not, I don't want to make...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Listen, this stuff happens with little to no notice. And so I just...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I hear you.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I don't know that we're gonna be warned. You know what I mean? It's just gonna happen.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And if we're not actually prepared; I think these are conversations that we should be having with OMB as well. I know OMB is thinking about it in a very broad and holistic manner in terms of the impact on the city as a whole.

But, again, I will continue to make the same argument over and over and over which is that the older adult population is growing. That's not going to change. And the budget that we have already is insufficient for the older adult population that exists here in New York City. And if we can

anticipate any type of reduction in funding there's going to be a problem. So I think OMB needs to prioritize your agency specifically in its thinking about how to address some of these federal gaps, potential federal gaps in funding.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, we were... we have been focusing on the state gap. But I know that Jose's been on this potential federal...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. All right. Well I have more hope in Jose than I do in some others...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: And you should, you should...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So, if Jose is on it, then...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Jose's on it. And I am not on it, because I can't...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Because Jose's on it. You don't have to be on it as long as Jose's on it, so that's fine. As long as somebody's on it, okay?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I don't mean to be flip. Jose and Ryan have been looking at this very closely.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I am just putting my emphasis on other things.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, that's fine.

I just, again, I just want to make sure that as OMB is taking into consideration what funding we might lose from the federal government that at the top of their list is NYC Aging. Because I just think that the impacts are going be detrimental to this agency in particular, with others as well, but certainly more so than some others.

Okay, moving back to... hold on one second. All right. Moving back to Capital Requests. Much of NYC Aging's provider network's infrastructure is dated, and many older adult centers and naturally occurring retirement communities are co-located with large capital needs. How many repair requests has NYC Aging received so far in Fiscal 2025? What kinds of repairs, and how many were received in Fiscal 2024?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Uh, 18 requests were for this year, and they already (INAUDIBLE) start. And for 2024. And, then for 2025, we already have... We have 18 capital requests in for 2025.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So, sorry, 18 for both 2024 and 2025?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, it just... I asked the same thing as...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: It's the same? The same request...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: It just happens to be the same number.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And what are those repairs for?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Kitchens, bathrooms, HVACs. And you know those are the things that we prioritize. There was a few for roofs. But we prioritize these because we are ,you know, we're also 50% of the City's cooling centers.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yes. And sorry, you said some were for what?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Roof.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Oh, roof.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Roof.

COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Roof repairs.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Uhm...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And you said 50% of the City's cooling centers are at OACs?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yes, yes.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And, so...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Now on weekends, the number may go higher.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: The number may go higher?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We are 50% of the City's cooling centers...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah. And of those locations, are all of those things, the HVACs, kitchens, bathrooms, all up to date?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: That is what the goal always is, is to get those at...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Is to prioritize those?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Right.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And of those 18, how many have been fulfilled to date this fiscal year? And how many were fulfilled last fiscal...

JOSE MERCADO: Haven't started yet. They should be starting now.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So zero for 2024 and zero for 2025 have been completed...

JOSE MERCADO: No, for 2025, they haven't started yet. They'll be starting...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: For 2024...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: But...

JOSE MERCADO: For 2024 is...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Well, 2024 is the same. If 18...

JOSE MERCADO: So, 18 in...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: 2025 and 18 2024...

JOSE MERCADO: Yeah, 18 have been...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Then zero have been...

JOSE MERCADO: So, 18 were completed. For 2025, they haven't started yet. For 2024...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Hold on, I just want to make sure I'm following. You said there were 18 repair requests in Fiscal 2024? Those have been completed. And then there's a new 18 in 2025?

JOSE MERCADO: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and zero have been completed...

JOSE MERCADO: Yeah, they'll be starting soon...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Copy.

JOSE MERCADO: Very soon.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. So do you just prioritize based on the cooling centers?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: No.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. How else do you identify priorities and requests from the provider network?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: No, it's not... the cooling centers, we focus on HVAC, and the heating

systems. But no, the priority is a facility, you know, safety...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Mm-hmm?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: And also kitchen to make sure that we're up to code, and also really improving our kitchens, trying to make most of our kitchens state of the art.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, that's great.

And kitchen repairs have long been a concern across the provider network. How many requests did NYC Aging receive in Fiscal 2024, and thus far in Fiscal Year 2025 for kitchens at OAC?

So of those 18 in 2024 and 18 now, how many were for kitchens specifically?

JOSE MERCADO: So we'll get back to you. I have a list here that includes everything.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Okay.

1:39:10

BOOM! Conference, new need, the Preliminary Plan includes an additional \$41,830 in City funding in Fiscal 2025 only for costs associated with NYC Aging's annual BOOM! Conference. What is this funding for?

JOSE MERCADO: So it was... so this is basically the fees that participants paid for. So it basically covered the rental of the site and any expenses associated with the conference.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You said attendees pay...

JOSE MERCADO: Yeah, so...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: the fee?

JOSE MERCADO: Yeah, they paid a fee. Depending on the... It was a sliding scale. First come, first served get a discount, and the rest basically was another fee.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: The cost for the conference, the largest cost is the rental of the facility.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And you're saying the fees did not cover that cost, and so this is to supplement that?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Right.

JOSE MERCADO: So, no, actually that's the cash that came in for those fees that we put in the budget to pay...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: The \$41,830?

JOSE MERCADO: Yeah

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. So you're just moving...

JOSE MERCADO: So it's revenue coming in...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: The money so...

JOSE MERCADO: to put in budget to actually make a payment.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sorry?

JOSE MERCADO: It's revenue coming in...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right?

JOSE MERCADO: put in the budget to make payment.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Copy. Okay, thank you.

What was the full cost of the BOOM! Conference?

JOSE MERCADO: \$60,000.

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. So then my next question is already answered, which is how much of the conference's cost was covered by fees collected from attendees? Do you have a percentage? What is that, like 80% or something? Roughly?

JOSE MERCADO: Roughly, yeah. I can do the math right now.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You're the math guy, so...

JOSE MERCADO: Yeah, but (INAUDIBLE) what the commissioner told me that day. So I'm good with

spreadsheets. It doesn't go into my head

(INAUDIBLE)...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: (LAUGHS) Well, I'm looking at the numbers. You're saying 50%?... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: From 40...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: (INAUDIBLE) from 60%.

JOSE MERCADO: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You tell me, I don't... She's saying 60%.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Sixty from 40?

JOSE MERCADO: No.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: No...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Forty...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Sixty-thousand was the total cost and...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Forty... Let me just...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: And (INAUDIBLE) thousand was roughly 60%...

JOSE MERCADO: Roughly 56%...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Fifty-six percent? Right? I was gonna get my calculator.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, calculator was close.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I was eyeballing it, but my eyeballs aren't that great I guess. Okay, 66%.

What are key lessons learned and takeaways from the conference?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Oh, there were many. One of the key takeaways is the value and the importance of bringing new thought leaders and exposing the network to new thought leaders. The exchange of ideas of what aging services can be and what the future is, uh, what's ahead of us and preparing us for that.

The value and the perspectives on the benefits of Community Care versus, you know, we say that, but when you start seeing it in practice, and you start seeing other cities benefiting from it, you start really looking at it as an... almost as if it was one of those mandates that we should be doing— rather ,you know, than institutional care and medical care when needed, rather than the preferred choice, which is what the whole system has been based around currently.

But I also think that the best practices of other cities, uh, we've learned so much from other cities. Like there's one city, and I believe it's Kansas,

1 that has a 1% of the sales tax goes towards aging
2 services. And so you learn so many... Some best
3 practices you think that New York is ,you know, the
4 head. Well, we are leading in a lot of things. We're
5 leading in an age inclusive model. But in terms of
6 some practices, the way some cities are using Habitat
7 for Humanity as a partner. And it's just the ability
8 to start having people exchange ideas in an
9 opportunity with other thought leaders is invaluable.
10

11 And every other industry has conferences. We
12 thought that New York and New York's network deserved
13 that same opportunity.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, I agree, and I was
15 there for part of it, so I saw that in real time.

16 And I would just say that ,you know, in some
17 other places, it's easier to stand up programs and
18 initiatives like that.

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Because of scale.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah. That's what I'm
21 saying...

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Everything that we
23 do in New York, you know, you've got to do it
24 hundreds of thousands.

25 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Exactly.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: You could do it in a rural county for 70 people.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right, right. But I am glad to hear all of those takeaways.

Okay, I'm going to go back to federal money for a second here. The Preliminary Plan includes \$611,588 in federal funding in Fiscal 2025 only. The federal revenue is allocated towards two programs, \$345,393 for the NY Connects Program and the remaining 166,195 for the Foster Grandparent Program. What are the federal sources for these funds? Do they fall under any of those previously mentioned categories?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, yes.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Which ones?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Older Americans Act.

JOSE MERCADO: Older...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: The Older Americans Act? Okay, thanks.

JOSE MERCADO: The NY Connects is a separate grant in itself.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

JOSE MERCADO: And the Foster Grandparent Program is part of the AmeriCorps.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, AmeriCorps.

And what's the what's the current budget for NYC Connects and the Foster Grandparent?

JOSE MERCADO: So, NY Connect, off top of my head, I can give you the exact numbers, but off top of my head, NY Connect is roughly about \$3.7 million, and Foster Grandparent Program is roughly about \$3 million.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And what's the scope of each of these programs?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Foster Grandparent Program is a long standing program where we train older adult volunteers to work with young children, mostly who are institutionalized, and they serve as a grandparent for them. And it's been a successful program, and it is a heartwarming program. And it alters the life of the older adult and it alters the life of the young person.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Absolutely.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: And then Aging... I mean NY Connect supports our volunteer efforts as well as our Aging Connect Hotline that you're all familiar with.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And then does either program have a specific budgeted number of slots?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Foster Grandparents has a number of slots. Aging Connect is an entire network that we have.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: What's the network for the Foster Grandparent Program?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We have it... They tell me we have it here. Let me just get it.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I'll get back to you on that number.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

(PAUSE)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I'll get back to you on that number.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And then does either program have a waiting list for new services or clients?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: For foster grandparents?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: There is always a waiting list and it depends on whether we find a site for them.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Okay.

And did you share earlier when Council Member Mealy was asking about the Silver Stars Program, how many older adults are currently part of this program?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: No, I didn't give you a number on the...

JOSE MERCADO: So currently there are a 144 participants. So the Silver Star Program is made up of two components, one is former city employees and one is non city employees. The majority of it is actually at this point in time non city employees. It's more of a temp program.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: The majority is non city employees?

JOSE MERCADO: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And then how does that compare to historical levels?

JOSE MERCADO: It's always been...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Is it more...

JOSE MERCADO: So I mean, under this, it's historically has always been non city employees. So now this year, another new or the new contract that came out was the idea was to basically have non city and city employees under one contract.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And then does the 144 number, is that more or less than you've had in the past historically?

JOSE MERCADO: It's about the same.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: About the same?

JOSE MERCADO: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. All right.

The Preliminary Plan includes 328 budgeted positions in your agency for Fiscal 2025, dropping to 324 positions in Fiscal 2026 and in the out years. As of January 2025, 307 positions were filled at NYC Aging leaving 21 vacancies. What positions are currently vacant and which programs and areas are the positions in?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I have that here. So we have 28 vacancies. Uh...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So 28 vacancies?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We have 28 vacancies.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Eight are under review. What was the question? The kind of positions?

JOSE MERCADO: Yeah...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: (INAUDIBLE)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Runs the gamut across the agency of...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: What... Can you give me like the sort of programs or areas or divisions?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Most of them in the... are in Jose's job. And there are some that are... most of them are... and the balance of them are in the program service areas, Mental Health, program officers under, you know for the Bureau of Community Programs. So they all have titles like Community Associate, what's the highest title? Community associate, Program Associate, that's the category.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: All right. All right, Jose are you hiring actively?

JOSE MERCADO: Yes, I am.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Does the agency have adequate headcount to effectively operate all the programs and initiatives?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Say that again?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Do you have headcount to effectively operate all the programs and initiatives?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: It is a conversation that we have with OMB on a regular basis because of

the number of program officers assigned per program.
So we're in conversations with OMB about that.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I don't want to put words in
your mouth, but it sounds like a no.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: It's a conversation
that we...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: (LAUGHS)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: have when we...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You're having a lot of
conversations.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yes, we do.

(LAUGHTER)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: It's a regular
booming relationship.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. ow are you actively
working to fill these vacancies? Is perhaps a better
question.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: You know what, we
talk to them about the ratio of Program Officer to
program in terms of monitoring. We use other agencies
as a model. Those are the... We look at other agency
ratios that do comparable work. And those are the
levels of conversation that we have. We also have
conversations with them on the vacancy rate, you

1 know, and the impact of the two per one allocation,
2 you know, that we have with the City. So for us, when
3 you are an agency this small it would take us 36
4 vacancies to fill x number of positions. You know,
5 it's like the two for one. So those are the kind of
6 conversations that we're constantly having.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. The recently released
9 PMMR indicated there was a decrease in the number of
10 clients served, but an increase in the number of case
11 management hours provided. Case management served
12 24,007 older city residents in the first four months
13 of Fiscal 2025 with a total of 179,437 case hours.
14 This is a 4% decrease in the number of clients served
15 and a 2.9% increase in the number of hours compared
16 to the same period in Fiscal 2024. These variances
17 are attributed to a variety of reasons, such as
18 staffing deficits, provider transitions, and state
19 MLTC guidelines. And these services are vital to
20 older adults— assisting them in getting connected to
21 needed services and resources.

22 What is the current budget for case management
23 for Fiscal 2025, for Fiscal 2026, and the out years?

24 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Okay, for 2026 it'll
25 be \$46 million.

1
2 And one of the reasons that we've noticed is the
3 number of clients, the number of hours are not
4 reduced. As a matter of fact, the number of hours are
5 increased because the complexity of the cases require
6 more case hours than we have had in the past. And
7 we've seen that trend started post-COVID.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. So then one might
9 conclude you need more resources for more
10 intensified, let's say, case management services?
11 Maybe those case managers need to have their
12 caseloads reduced. If we add more case managers and
13 cases are becoming more intense or more...

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: It's a ratio...

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: of higher demands.

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: The ratio is
17 something that we're always looking at, and we find
18 what the adequate ratio is. But yes, your analysis is
19 it's (INAUDIBLE)...

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You can say it's correct.

21 (LAUGHTER)

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: It's

23 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: It's okay.

24 (LAUGHTER)
25

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Your analysis is correct, Chair

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Thank you.

Can you provide further explanation as to the variance in these indicators between FY24 and FY25?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I'm not sure that I can add any more than what I just said.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

I'm not going to ask you how NYC Aging is working with OMB to ensure there are enough resources for case management, because I know you're "having conversations."

Does NYC Aging advocate for increased funding for case management? And if so, how much additional funding is needed to adequately meet the level of demand?

So if you're going you know, switch those ratio numbers, does that have an equivalent dollar amount?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Right, it's something that, I mean we're in earnest conversations with them about it, particularly as we're moving more and more to a Community Care approach and the need for additional Homecare services and things of that nature.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: There's a corresponding relationship.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right. I don't think you shared what the current ratio is. Do you have that, the case management ratios?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Sure, the current ratio is I'll give it to you, the case manager ratio is between 53 or 69, and it averages around 59 clients per worker.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: It averages at 59?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sounds like... that's a lot for a case manager. And, specifically, if those... if the clients have greater needs. Do you have a sense of where you're trying to get to in terms of that ratio?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: I can back to you on that.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. All right, And then congregate meals— the PMMR shows that the number of congregate meals being provided at Older Adult Centers increased in the first four months of Fiscal 2025 when compared to the same time period in fiscal

2024, with 2.2 million meals served to 87,772 older New Yorkers in the first four months of 2025, which was an increase of 9.7% in the number of meals and 3% in the number of participants.

How much does it cost to provide a congregate meal, and how do the costs vary between different types of meals such as Halal or Kosher?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Reimbursement rates are different. So you want to say that?

JOSE MERCADO: Yes.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Reimbursement rates different. Jose will give you the details.

JOSE MERCADO: Right, so a congregate meal is roughly about \$5.00, and a mean, a catered meal...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You said, sorry, a regular meal \$5.00?

JOSE MERCADO: Five dollars...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Congregate? Okay...

JOSE MERCADO: And a catered meal, is about \$8.00.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sorry, what's \$8.00?

JOSE MERCADO: Eight dollars for catered...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Catered...

JOSE MERCADO: Like a catered meal.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Catered?

JOSE MERCADO: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Is there a difference between the Halal and...

JOSE MERCADO: It's (INAUDIBLE) make a difference.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And you said it doesn't make a difference for Halal or Kosher?

JOSE MERCADO: No, yeah, that's in the budget that we have.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

Does NYC Aging anticipate further increase in participation in OAC activities and congregate meal consumption?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, we're...we've seen an uptick in in congregate meals. I don't know that we've gotten to pre-COVID levels yet.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, but I would say also going off of that, the 40% of the folks who took your survey, if you're engaging them, then maybe we can hope to see at least some portion of those folks lead to an increase in participation.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: And just to amplify that, the strategies that we're looking at, the other

data that we're looking at, the pop-up kitchens and see what that generates also.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: So, I think the trend...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You don't have those numbers from the pop-up kitchen?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: No, I can get them for you. We do have them, but I don't have them.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, okay, that would be great.

A recurring rationale we hear from the imposition of PEGs is that the reduction is made because of underutilization of the service being cut. The PMMR shows an increase in the number of older adults attending Older Adult Centers and an increase in the average daily participation.

OACs served 112,062 older adults during the first four months of Fiscal 2025, which is 2% greater than during the same period in Fiscal 2024, with an average of 27,916 participants attending daily, up 6.2% from the same period in Fiscal 2024.

Pre-pandemic, the average daily attendance was close to 30,000 older adults. Despite this increase

in utilization, PEGs to NYC Aging's budget have not been fully reversed.

What is the process and metrics NYC Aging uses to evaluate and determine utilization at Older Adult Centers?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Each program reports daily, their daily participation in what we would, was our (INAUDIBLE) system. That is the data that we use. And...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: But is it like people walking in the door, people having a meal, people engaging in a class or some sort of...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Great, thank you for the clarification.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: And I'm sorry that I wasn't...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: No...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We have different, uh, we collect different data for each one of those. We have meal participation; we have activity participation, uh, so that we will see that more people— we have seen a trend, which we don't know if it's going to stay the same— that people have been

1
2 participating more and not consuming the meals as
3 much. And we also have seen that... we also count
4 hybrid participation. And so that also impacts the
5 number, why someone might be participating and not
6 having a meal.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Got it.

8 And then this is like just a more pointed
9 question, but you've just sort of alluded to it. But
10 how much of a role do meals place in utilization
11 calculations? So they're part of the calculation but
12 not the entirety, right?

13 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: OACs were
14 established to address food insecurity 50-something
15 years ago.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So central but not...

17 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Not the sole...

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: the entire... sole.

19 How often does NYC Aging reallocate resources
20 across its provider network? For example, if one OAC
21 sees a decline in attendance and another experiences
22 an increase, how does the agency work to realign
23 funding rather than reducing it to where there's
24 greatest need?
25

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: That's a great question. For five years we've been talking about this, and we're finally implementing it now where we are using... We would leave money on the table and not repurpose it within the network.

This year we've taken the budget modification process and looked at it more holistically so that we could address some of the things we talked about earlier which was the kitchen repairs.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Things of that nature. And so we do that by analyzing performance over—I believe it's a two-year period. And, then...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Two-year period you said?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: A two-year period.

And if you have low performance given a particular level, we then will repurpose those dollars and possibly serve another network.

I can give you the numbers of the... and we've been able to do that very successfully in a way that we can continue the commitment to keep those dollars in the network. And that has always been the key.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: The other thing that I can say about that is that that's a one time reduction. You know, if you improve performance moving forward in the following year then that will, you know, you will not lose your baseline.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And so that's just become like standard operating procedure then?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We're just trying it now and it'll become standard operating procedure.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

An important component of assessing needs for services going forward is to not only review past utilization but to also project future demand. Does NYC Aging do this? And if not, why not?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We do. We're constantly looking at future demand. As a matter of fact, one of the things that... we've been looking at demographics and changing communities. You know, like do we have, uh, is there a glut of Older Adult Clubs on one particular community and a desert in other communities? So we constantly look at that. And that will all be, uh, will impact the future RFP.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

And then how does it... how do you forecast future demand, and what assumptions do you use for the expected growth of the older adult population?

So aside from just looking at where the Older Adult Centers are located based on population, how are you using the broader population numbers and data to inform your decisions?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We Look at population shifts within the older adult population. We look at greatest need, income; we look at cultural variations and try to see how's the best way to address those different data points with our service plan.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

In the Fiscal 2025 Adopted Budget, \$11.1 million was added to provide additional funding to support the Home Delivered Meal and OAC programs. This funding was only added in Fiscal 2025 and was not baselined. How has the additional funding been utilized?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: That's the food cost. That was the individual food cost increase.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Food cost increase? Okay.

How are you working with OMB to ensure this funding is added in the out years?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: It's part of our ongoing discussion with them.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Then if funding is not added in the Executive or Adopted plan, how will home delivered meals and OAC programs be impacted?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We would see... I mean, I'm going to go back to my original premise which the agreement was that we would have...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You feel confident...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: that service levels will remain intact. If not, then it will be either a reduction of meals or a (INAUDIBLE) that's the only way that we could address that.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: The proposed state fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget was released in January. State funding plays a crucial role in many of NYC Aging's older adult programs as it supports 10% of the agency's budget for Fiscal 2026. Were there any proposals in the Governor's Budget that NYC Aging expects will impact the agency either positively or negatively?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yes. The state added \$40 million to the State Office on Aging. And we're advocating very strongly that that funding be distributed on a per capita basis, as the federal dollars are distributed on a population basis, rather than at the discretion of the State Office on Aging solely. And definitely not solely based on waiting lists, because unmet needs are not only measured by waiting lists, but unmet needs are based by population and services in a particular area.

So that's been an ongoing discussion with the State Legislator and your comparable partners in the state.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

The NYC Aging Term and Condition Report provided to the Council for the period of July 1 through December 31, 2024 showed a waitlist of 202 people for Homecare and 491 for Case Management. Why are there wait lists for these programs?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Because of the homecare hours. You know, we don't... There's two things— we have a shortage of homecare staff, excuse me, we have... there's a short of homecare staff, and there's a shortage of homecare hours.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And what are you doing to eliminate the wait? (BACKGROUND NOISE) What are you doing to eliminate the wait lists?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: As we do with all of our case management services, we look at the highest needs, and look at those with the highest needs and address those as quickly as we possibly can.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: How many additional case workers and how much additional funding would be needed to eliminate the case management wait list?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We can get back to you on that.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And what steps are you taking to address the wait list?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We are really assessing client need and that is the determinant of who gets off the wait list and who gets services quickly.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And then...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: That's for homecare.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

Your Term And Condition Report on Older Adult Center Utilization...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: We don't want to lose sight of what I said earlier. One of the challenges we have there, and we're also advocating, is to make sure that we have parity between the salaries of workers...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: so that we then not have a shortage of workers because it's advantageous for someone to (INAUDIBLE)...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And is that advocacy part of your...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: conversations?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: with the State.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

Your Term and Condition Report on Older Adult Center Utilization data for 2024 was provided to the Council, but it didn't include the weighted utilization percentages, which is a vital component of the reporting requirement. Can you share why this information wasn't provided in the Term and Condition Report and when you anticipate the data might become available?

JOSE MERCADO: So as part of the transition from Xcelerate (sp?) to PASSPort, we lost some functionality.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Got it.

JOSE MERCADO: So we're still working on trying to correct that. Hoping to do that in the next report.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: In the next report? When is that?

JOSE MERCADO: Yeah, next year.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Next year?

JOSE MERCADO: With the new... So we're actually having a new system (INAUDIBLE)...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Next fiscal year or next calendar year?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Calendar.

JOSE MERCADO: Fiscal year, it's next year...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Why? When does it... Okay.

JOSE MERCADO: Next fiscal year.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: The other thing, the component to that that is important is that we are changing our data management system, because the Star system, the system that we've had in place for a long time, we are upgrading that so that we have more

control over the data rather than the vendor having control of the data, and we have to pay them every time that we want a change to that data. So we have created a new system called B There (phonetic), which will be... which we anticipate will, one, can talk to PASSPort, and integrate PASSPort easier, and second, uhm, that it... we have more control of the data as well as the provider will have more input control of the data.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: (INAUDIBLE) V I V E?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: V I V E?

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Alrighty, that concludes my questions.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Wow, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much for your testimony and the answers to the questions. We are going to move onto public testimony.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: Yes, and as I always say that we have people listening to public testimony. I leave, but that doesn't mean that NY Aging is not present.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yes.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VAZQUEZ: And I really want to thank for your continued support.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Thank you for your continued advocacy and the work that you do. Hopefully we can get you some more money to do more of the great work.

(PAUSE)

All right; I will now open the hearing to public testimony. I remind members of the public that this is a formal government proceeding and that decorum shall be observed at all times. As such, members of the public shall remain silent at all times.

The witness table is reserved for people who wish to testify. No video recording or photography is allowed from the witness table.

Further, members of the public may not present audio or video recordings as testimony, but may submit transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant at Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms and wait to be recognized. When recognized, you will have two minutes to speak on today's oversight topic... Oh, sorry, three minutes? No? When

recognized you will have two minutes to speak on today's Preliminary Budget Hearing.

If you have a written statement or additional testimony you wish to submit for the record, please provide a copy of that testimony to the Sergeant at Arms.

You may also email written testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72 hours after the close of this hearing. Audio and video recordings will not be accepted.

And I will call the first panel: Anita Kwok, Justine Tetteh, Bryan Ellicott-Cook, Kevin Kiproviski, Helen Chen, and Barbara Baer.

And, then, you'll each have three minutes, apologies, I misspoke. We will start to my left, and then we'll just go down the table. And the Sergeant at Arms will tell you when to begin.

All right, you can begin, thank you.

HELEN CHEN: Thank you. Good afternoon everyone. Thank you to chair Hudson and member of committee for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Helen Chen, and I am the Director of Brooklyn Older Adult Center at the Chinese American

Planning Council, CBC, the nation's large Asian American social service organization.

Asian Americans are the fastest growing population in New York State, and seniors are the fastest growing subset. Over one in three Asian American seniors live under the poverty line, and over two in three are Limited English Proficient (LEP). Their story deserves to be told, and I am here to share one of them.

Mr. Liu, a 75-year-old member of CPC OAC, was feeling hopeless and facing language barriers when we first met him. With no family nearby to rely on, Mr. Liu has come to depend entirely on our OAC for his SNAP and housing applications.

In April 2023, Our dedicated caseworker played a crucial role in this process, accompanying him for critical interviews, completing paperwork, and serving as a trusted translator and advocate. Finally, he secured stable housing in June of 2023. The housing process took over 10 years, our dedicated case workers did not give up and supported Mr. Liu through the whole process.

We urge the City to invest and expand the senior services like meals, delivery service, our physical

centers, and mental health services for our seniors to ensure that more individuals like Mr. Liu can overcome the challenge.

Thank you for the opportunity, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this issue, which has a great impact our community. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.

ANITA KWOK: Thank you, Chair Hudson and council members for convening for today's Preliminary Budget Hearing. My name is Anita Kwok; I am a policy analyst for United Neighborhood Houses. UNH is a policy and social change organization representing neighborhood settlement houses that reach over 800,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life.

This year, NYC Aging faces a fiscal cliff of over \$100 million that threatens NORCs, older adult centers, meals for older adults, and other essential services that support older adults aging in place.

Despite knowing about these cuts for at least a year, the City has failed to proactively restore them, failing to meet the needs of older adults. e aging services network urgently needs new investments to meet the needs of a growing older adult population and to rectify years of systemic underinvestment.

Amidst federal funding uncertainty, these cuts would be catastrophic, potentially forcing the closure of over one-third of older adult centers and severely impacting NORCs. If centers remain open, they may be forced to scale back services by one-third, leaving providers to choose between meals, case assistance, enrichment programs, and other aging services.

UNH members predict an uptake in food insecurity, social isolation, and a loss of access to benefits that extend the lives of older adults. The City must act now to reverse these cuts including both the fiscal cliff and an out year PEG cut to OACs of \$13.48 million in FY27 that was in last year's budget.

Furthermore, the City must, one, invest \$57 million for congregate meals at OACs to meet inflation since the last RFP. Food insecurity among older adults continues to rise, but there has not been an increase to the congregate meals budget in years.

Two, invest \$20.6 million to provide a home delivered meal every day operationalizing Council Member Linda Lee's Intro 770 to make the City pay for

meals seven days a week. For many homebound adults, the Home Delivered Meals Program is the only food that that they're receiving for their nutritional needs, and they will stretch that meal to last all day.

Three, invest at least \$5 million a year for a revolving capital repair program at NYC Aging. NYC Aging funded programs often face major difficulties with deteriorating buildings and equipment upkeep. Systemic wide needs include HVAC repairs, accessibility upgrades, technology systems, kitchen equipment, and more. Building maintenance, repairs, and upgrades are not covered in NYC Aging contracts, and available funding comes from a confusing range of agencies and pots of money, especially for those programs located in NYCHA facilities.

Four, invest \$44 million for the case management program as caseloads have increased, intake coordinators have been eliminated, and providers are seeing higher numbers of older adults with dementia and mental health needs.

And five, grow the NORC City Council \$6.2 million, as NORCS provide critical health and social

services including case management and nursing support.

Please see my written testimony for more information and thank you for this opportunity.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Next?

KEVIN KIPROVSKI: Good morning, and thank you so much Council Member Hudson for holding this hearing. It is more important now than ever that we make sure that Aging is funded in light of data that has come out throughout this year.

First off, my name is Kevin Kiproviski and I'm the Director of Public Policy at LiveOn NY. Thank you so much for this opportunity to testify, and for context LiveOn NY's members include more than a 110 community based nonprofits that provide core services under the New York City Aging portfolio and many other home and community based services in our city.

I want to start by saying we cannot do more with less anymore. Every year we have seen not only inflation eat up the budgets of our members, but we have also seen cuts to those budgets. Our members have done an incredible job maintaining service levels, but it was troubling to hear that in the face

of \$100 million of cuts, our members will just be asked to keep services the same.

We cannot take things that are not in the budget as word because if they were they would just put them in the budget. We are really concerned that long standing underinvestment has led us to a tipping point, our city faces the prospect of 60 Older Adult Centers closing at the next RFP.

We have been ringing this bell around the city, and it is it would be catastrophic to cut almost 20% of the centers just for no reason— especially in light of three reports that have come out in the last six months:

One is our report that shows that older adult homelessness is rising three times faster than any demographic.

Two is the Comptroller Report that shows just how many more older adults are in our city this year than were in the past ten years.

And the third one is a recent AARP Report with the Center for an Urban Future that shows that older adult poverty is growing at a faster rate than anyone could have anticipated.

1
2 In light of this, we are asking for bold new
3 investments in the system in addition to restoring
4 the cut. We have launched our Age Strong New York
5 City Campaign to add \$2.3 billion in additional
6 funding, \$500 million for nutrition, \$1 billion for
7 housing, and \$800 million for community services over
8 the next five years.

9 We recommend in the short term for this year \$44
10 million to increase case management capacity, \$57
11 million to increase OAC meals capacity, and \$5
12 million Council Discretionary for emergency repairs
13 for centers that, as we heard earlier in the
14 commissioner's testimony, are not eligible for
15 capital under the current bond agreements.

16 Many of my colleagues will go through the
17 specifics of the rest, as they're the ones who
18 provide the services, but for nutrition, people
19 deserve access to two meals a day every day. We we're
20 in we back that, and people need more access to SNAP
21 programs and federal programs as long as they're
22 still around.

23 We're advocating for housing separately. For
24 community services and spaces, many centers are
25 falling apart and we have not been able to get

1 funding into them. The current capital rules do not
2 allow it, and we need to figure something out,
3 because we cannot have centers in places we cannot
4 repair.

5
6 To close, anyone who champions these investments
7 will not only avert the closure of 60 Older Adult
8 Centers, but will fundamentally transform the future
9 for millions of (TIMER CHIMES) New Yorkers as we age.
10 Making this \$2.3 billion investment in nutrition,
11 housing, and community services is not just the right
12 thing to do, it is an incredible win that would mark
13 New York City as a truly age friendly metropolis.
14 It's a bold step that will correct past underfunding
15 and reposition our city as a national leader in how
16 we treat older residents. Thank you so much.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

18 BRYAN ELLICOTT-COOK: Good afternoon, Chair
19 Hudson, and members of the New York City Council
20 Committee on Aging. My name is Bryan Ellicott-Cook,
21 and I serve as the Director of Government Relations
22 at SAGE, the nation's largest and oldest organization
23 dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQ+ older
24 adults.

Every year we serve over 5,000 older adults, and New York City has long failed to prioritize the programs and services that help older adults remain in their communities as they age. Unfortunately, this long-standing underinvestment has led us to a tipping point of our city now facing the prospect of an additional \$102 million in cuts proposed by the Mayor that could close up to 60 older adult centers and slash vital services across the board. These cuts come at a time when older adults already make up one in 5 New Yorkers, a number projected to grow to 25% by 2040. Over decades, the City has intentionally underfunded and undervalued older adult programs, making it nearly impossible for providers to meet the growing need. These budget cuts would only accelerate that crisis by forcing more center closures and reducing core services at a time when demand continues to rise.

If these cuts move forward, more and more older New Yorkers—including LGBTQ+ elders, who are already

disproportionately undervalued—will have to navigate more holes in an ever-weakening safety net.

I submitted over 100+ letters from older adults at our SAGE centers telling you how these impact their lives, the joy that the centers bring them, and what the centers mean for them to be able to age with dignity, respect, and honor.

We are actively living in an administration that is against the LGBT community and a hostile and political climate where many older adults are heightened by fear and uncertainty of their rights. The Older Adult Act also directly, uh, with some of the executive orders, does target TG&B older adults, and that is something that we are worried about with funding, because it can effect our funding as well, not just for SAGE, but for anyone in coalition with us.

LGBTQ+ elders are often invisible, disconnected from services, and severely isolated without traditional biological familial supports. They are far more likely to live alone and less likely to rely on adult children or other family members for informal caregiving. In fact, 25% of SAGE's constituents have reported not having those

structures and that SAGE is their emergency contact people.

You can read more about all of our proposed renewals for our funding, including the little over \$1 million we get for the initiative around older adult services for LGBT+ older adults. And we did ask for an enhancement, because at this time we were finding that Know Your Rights for both our constituents and our staff around immigration and TG&B people is important, as well as our continued services for our SAGE Vets Program, because we know we are seeing an uptick in PTSD from our veterans around all the vitriol language around veterans and TG&B veterans specifically. (TIMER CHIMES) Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.

JUSTINE TETTEH: Good afternoon, Chair Hudson, and esteemed members of the Committee on Aging. My name is Justine Tetteh, and I am the Director of Policy and Advocacy at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House a 131-year-old settlement house that serves over 17,000 members per year. Today, I am here on behalf of my colleagues, our clients, and the communities served by the Neighborhood House. Our organization has dedicated decades of diligent work to uplifting aging

communities and advocating for increased investment in essential programming.

As our older adult population continues to grow, the Neighborhood House has worked to establish a model of comprehensive integrated services without parallel— including two Older Adult Centers bringing farm to table meals, financial assistance, arts and fitness activities, a dedicated social services and Benefits Advocacy Team helping older adult clients with accessing and maintaining government benefits, mental health supports, volunteer opportunities, so our members can share their wealth of knowledge and skill with other members, emergency and stipendiary grants, and more. We also offer a caregiver program for unpaid caregivers, as well as a Care Program which is a social adult day program.

As the community continues to expand and the needs for services continues to escalate, our older adult services will remain the core of our work for years to come. Our organization, and many organizations here testifying today, are concerned about the impact of New York City Aging's budget cuts, particularly on how these cuts will impact

access to care, resources, meals and socialization at older Adult Centers Across the city.

Our communities face mounting challenges, and many older adults rely on community based programs to maintain their independence and quality of life.

With the needs of our older adults growing, the need for programming and services at OACs are also growing. A cut to the budget of over \$100 million in Fiscal Year 2026 will have grave results on our aging services, making it difficult to maintain home delivered meals, socialization opportunities, case management, and essential capital funding.

Our aging population depends on older adult centers for more than just meals. They depend on the centers, which is for central for community building, companionship, improved health and wellness, education, and connection to necessary resources like affordable housing and public assistance.

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House remains committed to enhancing best practices to support older adults. Our community of older adults is the heart of our advocacy work, and continued investment in older adult services is a necessity to sustaining our community for generations to come.

I believe we can all say that we all remain united in our request to ensure that older adults continue to have the support and dignity they deserve. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

BARBARA BAER: Good afternoon Chairwoman Hudson, I am Barbara Baer, the Director of the New York Foundation for Senior Citizens Home Sharing Program and Respite Care Program.

And rather than just read you these remarks, because I think you know about home sharing, I'm going just extemporize and just take a few of the facts.

You might have noticed I was called out of the room, and the same person called several times, so I thought it must be an emergency. But to my surprise, it was a person who we had matched who called to say thank you. So on behalf of that person, all the persons that we've matched, the board of directors and the staff, really, thank you to your office, and to you, for really helping us stay alive and do better.

We did get over \$200,000 last year, and I hear that, because of OMB, the budget's going to be fine this year, so I'm hoping that we will be able to be at least held at what we were.

The gem that we really have is respite care where we offer homecare for \$19.10 an hour in contrast to the for-profits at \$30 an hour. We certify the home health attendant, we interview the client, and for three months they can go serve the client, the client

pays. We'll be doing 150 of them. Our cost estimates are that we do the respite care on the administrative side for over 500, and then to place two people in a home sharing match costs less... the government less than \$8,000, and then the people are on their own.

So hopefully you will help us, and we will keep the program growing and growing.

And again, I really thank you for all your help.

(TIMER CHIMES)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.

BARBARA BAER: I did pretty well, I didn't...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You did perfect, that was perfect. (LAUGHS) Thank you all for your testimony; I share the concerns that you have brought to light. So, thank you for being here.

Okay, the next panel I'll call up is Kimberly George from Project Guardianship, and I have two Kimberly George's Project Guardianship, although it's just one person; Penelope Hernandez; Kevin Jones; Jeanette Estima; Jenny Dembrow; and Beth Finkel. Oh, we can put you in the next panel if you'd like, or you're not...

UNKNOWN: (INAUDIBLE)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sorry? Okay, no problem.

1
2 KIMBERLY GEORGE: Good afternoon, Chair Hudson and
3 staff. My name is Kimberly George, and I'm the
4 President and CEO of Project Guardianship. Thank you
5 for your leadership in recognizing the need to invest
6 in nonprofit guardianship services and for lifting up
7 the critical work we do.

8 Project Guardianship serves as legal guardian for
9 200 New Yorkers, most of whom are low-income, older
10 adults facing complex challenges such as housing
11 insecurity, serious mental illness, dementia, and
12 more.

13 We also run a guardianship helpline where anyone
14 with a question about Article 81 guardianship, or its
15 alternatives, can speak with an expert to get a
16 better understanding of the processes and resources
17 surrounding these issues. Since launching our
18 helpline 20 months ago, we've received 1,300 calls,
19 mostly from women caregivers seeking help for loved
20 ones who are also overwhelmingly women.

21 Guardianship is not only an aging issue, it's a
22 women's issue, a public health issue, an immigration
23 issue, and a housing issue. We are grateful to you,
24 Chair Hudson, and this council for passing Resolution
25 561, urging the State to fund a public guardianship

1
2 program in partnership with reputable nonprofit
3 providers. This is a response to the severe shortage
4 of qualified guardians to serve in cases where an
5 individual has no family or friend to serve and no
6 money to pay for a private guardian— and the
7 devastating outcomes this shortage causes. It is a
8 crucial step forward, but while we advocate for State
9 investment, we cannot ignore the reality that 60% of
10 all guardianship cases in New York State originate
11 within the five boroughs.

12 The crisis is here in our city today. That's why
13 in FY26, we are calling upon the City Council to make
14 a deeper investment in guardianship services.

15 With additional support, Project Guardianship can
16 further safeguard older adults, preventing
17 unnecessary institutionalization and ensure that
18 every New Yorker subject to guardianship has access
19 to a qualified person centered guardian.

20 Thank you for your time and for standing with us
21 in this urgent fight. I welcome any questions.

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Next?

23 PENELOPE HERNANDEZ: Hi, good afternoon. Thank
24 you, Chair Hudson, for the opportunity to testify in
25 this preliminary hearing. My name is Penelope

Hernandez, I am a Program Director at Wellness Together, University Settlement.

Wellness Together is a program that serves homebound older adults— I submitted my testimony, so I'll try to just speak from my heart and the experience.

So I'm here today to advocate, of course, for the stop to the \$100 million proposed cut to older adult services. I know that you sympathize with us, you support the idea that older adults definitely need these services.

I'm also here to request adding \$44 million for case management services. The caseload, as we heard before, is extremely high. For us, it's 69 per case manager, and we have experience with this program. Wellness Together as a program that started really small, and we were able to serve 30 older adults. And that's really the only way that you can provide comprehensive holistic service. We're not, as human beings, we're not just basic needs. We're not just food, safety, and having a home health aid to support you at home, you're way more than that— we have talents, a need to connect with our peers, to make friends— and having a caseload of 69 older adults

really prevents us from going deeper into the services that we provide. Also, it is important that we add this \$44 million for staffing as well for retention and to hire staff that is able to serve the older adult the way that deserve.

The other ask that I'm here to present is to invest in \$5 million yearly for repairs and crucial, major changes that need to happen in our Older Adult Centers. Our Older Adult Center at University Settlement is located inside a NYCHA building, and I can't even tell you how much we struggle with the repairs that are needed. We have leaking walls and leaking ceilings, and it took NYCHA a year, for instance, to change our staff bathroom door.

So these investments are really important for us, and I'm glad that I had the opportunity to present on this today. And of course you have my testimony. I also brought letters signed by our older adults supporting what I just said to support my testimony, and I also staff letters as well. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. And where is the location?

PENELOPE HERNANDEZ: It is 189 Allen Street.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you.

PENELOPE HERNANDEZ: New York, NY. (TIMER CHIMES)

JENNY DEMBROW: Good afternoon, Chair Crystal Hudson and members of the Committee on Aging. My name is Jenny Dembrow, and I am the Executive Director of the Lower Eastside Girls Club (LESGC) and have been with the organization since our founding.

Since 1996, Girls Club has nurtured creative and supportive spaces where young people and their families can dream big, find their passions, and connect to peers and careers.

In 2022, we launched the Center for Wellbeing & Happiness (CWBH), where we provide a third space that fosters healthy relationships between neighbors, combats chronic loneliness, and promotes intergenerational community care through accessible wellness programs. This is a hyperlocal community space focused on being a dynamic wellness hub with programming that includes Nutrition, Fitness, Wellness, Creative Expression Classes and Support Groups. Our Weekly Food Pantry serves over 1,700 people each month, including 755 older adults.

It is also a community space where we collaborate with mission-aligned organizations and host meetings, trainings, and community events. Here, we prioritize

the well-being of all generations from babies to elders and all genders are collectively supported.

The CWBH membership is growing; currently 210 participants ages 50 to 61 and over 260 participants are ages 62+. CWBH is a vital resource for multiple generations of community members who are navigating various life challenges. Our ability to provide community care—from immediate crisis support to long-term wellness initiatives—has made us an essential anchor institution for older adults seeking connection and well-being, especially after the isolation and loss during COVID.

CWBH also supports grandparents and older parents who are helping their children and loved ones with substance use issues. We have also witnessed an increase in assaults against our elders. During this crucial moment, we are becoming a rapid response space where individuals feel comfortable seeking support. We aim to enhance our programming and partner with organizations to provide Know Your Rights trainings, safety trainings, and caregiver training for this population.

We are requesting \$20,000 from the Committee On Aging to support our work specifically focused on

1
2 older adults to provide wellness support and
3 emergency food assistance. We are also requesting
4 \$2.5 million from the City Council in FY26 to support
5 the stabilization of the organization.

6 Currently, we are navigating a challenging
7 financial reality and stand at a critical inflection
8 point. Between a \$3 million mortgage for purchasing
9 our CWBH space in 2019, rising cost due to inflation,
10 and declining donations and government funding, our
11 revenue has fallen behind resulting in a \$2 million
12 deficit.

13 These fiscal challenges pose a direct and
14 imminent risk to our ability to provide the vital
15 services and innovative programming so many older
16 people in the Lower East Side rely on at a time when
17 the need is greater than ever. Thank you so much.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

19 BETH FINKEL: Good afternoon, Council Chair
20 Hudson. Thank you so much for your advocacy over the
21 years. We really can't thank you enough. And so I
22 feel like I'm preaching to the converted here,
23 because we have our testimony that we've submitted,
24 and I know you know the data even better than we do.

The idea that 60 Older Adult Centers could be forced to close is something that I never thought would come out of my mouth, uh, advocating, that we'd have to go back to that.

Nearly 90% of those receiving meals through Older Adult Centers say that this helps support and keep them in their own communities. So cutting funding for these centers will not only worsen individuals' financial insecurity, food security, and social isolation, and put more stress on city resources, but it will hurt communities as a whole if these people

can't support themselves and be able to go out and buy groceries at the local grocery stores.

And you know this so well, a budget is a statement on priorities. By slashing funding for older adult services, the City is sending a clear message that older adults are just not a priority. And this is not just an oversight— it is, deliberate, it is discriminatory, and it's a decision that really ignores the needs of our really booming older adult population.

Investing in older services is not a burden. It's really a necessity. Older New Yorkers built this city, and the poverty rates are incredibly zooming as the (INAUDIBLE) report showed— which we shared earlier— and I know my other colleagues have shared, over a 30% increase in poverty in older adults.

So we are urging the City to allocate \$50 million for capital improvements across the aging services network to address deteriorating infrastructure— which you've heard so much about, and you've been advocating for so long for— \$20 million to expand social work support across the network, and \$12 million to properly fund home delivered meal providers.

Without real investments, we're gonna leave these older adults behind. So we urge the Mayor, and we urge the City Council to work together to fully restore and most importantly (TIMER CHIMES) expand these services for older adults. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.

JEANETTE ESTIMA: Hello, thank you Chair Hudson for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jeanette Estima, and I'm the Director of Policy and Advocacy at City Meals on Wheels. We're grateful to the Council for its support of our emergency meals program which provides food to homebound older New Yorkers during local or citywide emergencies.

In FY24, with the Council's support, we delivered nearly 273,000 emergency meals across all five boroughs.

But there's an underlying persistent emergency experienced by home delivered meals recipients, 60% of whom are food insecure. The one meal they receive through the program is simply not enough, and their access to food is very limited due to mobility challenges and financial barriers with 65% of meal recipients living on \$15,000 a year or less.

1 The City's Home Delivered Meals Program is a
2 critical part of the city's anti-hunger
3 Infrastructure, but it's not enough to truly address
4 food insecurity. This will require expanding the
5 programs and the creation of new programs to bring
6 food directly to homebound older adults in their
7 homes. Therefore, we urge the Council to pass Intro
8 770, which would require the provision of one meal
9 365 days a year, and we estimate it to cost around
10 \$20.7 million.
11

12 Moreover, City Meals has piloted several new
13 programs that bring more food to older New Yorkers in
14 new ways. The Breakfast Box is essentially a second
15 meal program that provides a monthly delivery of 30
16 meal equivalents— that includes a few frozen meals,
17 shelf-stable items, and seven pounds of fresh
18 produce. We're currently serving 2,000 people with
19 this pilot program, and we hope to that number expand
20 it to 4,000 in the coming year.

21 And our mobile grocery pilot, in partnership with
22 WSCAH (Westside Campaign Against Hunger), gives 200
23 homebound older adults in the Bronx the ability to
24 order a monthly bag of groceries by phone and make
25 some choices about the items that they're receiving.

Therefore, we request a renewal of the \$500,000 that we received for our Emergency Meals Program— through the Older Adults Clubs Programs and Enhancements Initiative and \$200,000 to support these innovative pilot programs so that together we can eliminate elder hunger.

Finally, we urge the Council and the Administration to reverse the over \$100 million in cuts that are proposed in the Preliminary Budget. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. And just one question for each of you and your organizations is, how much federal funding do you receive, or what percentage of your budgets are made up of federal funds? And you can go in any order.

BETH FINKEL: We don't get federal funds. We're talking for the consumers, because that's who AARP... and actually... and our volunteers who have been sitting in this audience.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yes.

BETH FINKEL: who feel strongly about this.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Mm-hmm, thank you.

JENNY DEMBROW: We do, we actually just got an email about two weeks ago that funding for our food pantry through FEMA United Way was cut. It's about...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: In its entirety?

JENNY DEMBROW: That portion of... We have multiple funding sources for our food pantry...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

JENNY DEMBROW: but that portion we were told to freeze funding, freeze spending and that was about \$13,000.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

JEANETTE ESTIMA: We also received some funding, like, \$25,000 perhaps. But I think the important thing also that I wanted say is, programs like the programs that we provide are going to become more and more important as those funding cuts are experienced across the board. If there's cuts to the OAA nutrition programs, that means that the programs that we're putting out, especially these pilots, are going to become lifelines.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

PENELOPE HERNANDEZ: For us, Wellness Together, we have a contract with the City so our funding is through NYC Aging. But the Older Adult Centers, they

do receive federal funding, and that will be in support of the Meals on Wheels program that will be at risk.

KIMBERLY GEORGE: We do not currently have any direct federal funding. We have some pass-through that was originally Administration for Community Living, and we had a proposal out to the Administration for Community Living for significant funding that now we're not feeling like any of that money's going to be going to anybody.

Our biggest funder is the New York State Unified Court System. It's unclear how much of their budget might rely on federal funding. In the same, our second biggest funding is the State Office for the Aging, and we know that they're facing big cuts, but it's unclear to us how that might impact our funding.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, great, thank you all so very much. I appreciate your testimonies.

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I will call up the next panel, Catherine Thurston; Rich Baum; Xiomara Maldonado; and Ines De La Nuez.

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, sorry about that. We can start to my left and then go down the table, thank you.

CATHERINE THURSTON: Good afternoon Chair Hudson, Thank you for holding this hearing on The Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2026.

My name is Catherine Thurston, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Service Program for Older People, or SPOP. SPOP is the only agency in New York City exclusively dedicated to community-based mental health care for older adults. We are licensed to provide outpatient mental healthcare for adults aged 55 and older, and we offer services via telehealth, at our offices, and at 19 satellite locations throughout Manhattan, Downtown Brooklyn, and the Bronx.

We serve over 2,000 adults annually and provide individual and group therapy, psychiatry, medication management, group-based psychiatric rehabilitation support, specialized counseling for substance use disorders, and linkages to other community-based services to support aging in place. Our goal is to support the overall health, well-being, and independence of older adults, and we partner with

hospitals, aging services providers community-based organizations to coordinate services and reach out to those who are most isolated.

The vast majority of our satellite clinic sites are co-located at NYC Aging-supported older adult centers, where we partner with staff to foster a culture of mental health awareness, reduce stigma, and integrate mental healthcare and wellness with other age-supportive services. We are proud to provide service at seven older adult centers funded through the DFTA Geriatric Mental Health (DGMH) program.

Older adults represent the fastest-growing segment of New York City's population, and older New Yorkers are generally older, more diverse, and more isolated than ever before. An estimated 20% of the population will experience a mental health challenge at some point, but there are few resources in the state specifically for older adults.

I urge the New York City Council to allocate robust funding for mental healthcare for older adults, including renewal and expansion of the DGMH program, which has dramatically expanded access to services for some of the most vulnerable members of

the community. Age-affirming mental healthcare is one of the best investments that we can make. When we support the emotional health of older adults it can improve their physical health, enable them to live with a greater sense of independence, and reduce social isolation and premature institutionalization.

I thank the Committee, and I thank you, Chair Hudson, for this opportunity and for your ongoing support.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. And what was the percentage you shared— how many folks experience (INAUDIBLE) mental health?

CATHERINE THURSTON: About 20%.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Twenty percent of the older adult population specifically?

CATHERINE THURSTON: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

INES DE LA NUEZ: Good afternoon everyone; I am Ines De La Nuez, Grand Coalition of Older Adult OAC Director at Grand Street Settlement. Thank you, Chair Hudson and member of the New York City Council Committee on Aging, for the opportunity to provide testimony on the Preliminary Budget.

Grand Street Settlement (Grand Street) is a 109-year-old multi-service Settlement House that serves over 8,000 New Yorkers through essential programs for early childhood, youth, and older adults on the Lower East Side, Brooklyn, and the Bronx.

The Grand Coalition of Older Adults Center, funded by New York City Aging, located at 175 Atlantia Street, support health and well-being of older adults on the Lower East Side. It serves as a second home for many older adults. We provide communal and nutritious meals daily and host a wide range of health and wellness, educational, cultural, social, and civic activities. Our robust programming ensures that older adults remain socially connected and civically engaged. In addition to the services offered to older adults at our Older Adult Center, the Baruch Elder Services Team (B.E.S.T.) NORC provides comprehensive medical, social, and support services to over 700 residents of the Bernard M. Baruch Houses. Our center for older adults features a variety of activities, including arts and crafts, bingo, gardening, Latin dance, mental health support groups, yoga, Tai Chi, evidence-based programming, and more.

Peer volunteers assist homebound older adults by providing essential transportation to medical appointments and errands. Staying socially engaged enhances their emotional, intellectual, and physical well-being. At Grand Street Settlement, we are dedicated to supporting the aging community in achieving their health and wellness goals.

We are committed to this effort and are proud to be a member of United Neighborhood Houses (UNH), a policy and social change organization that represents neighborhood settlement houses serving over 80,000 New Yorkers from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, we are a member of LiveOn NY, which provides essential services under the NYC Aging portfolio, along with many other home and community-based services throughout our city.

Programming for Older Adults and the Preliminary Budget— Without further investments, the FY 26 Preliminary Budget will have dire consequences for older adults who rely on organizations such as Grand Street for services. (TIMER CHIMES) The budget reduces funding for NYC Aging by \$100 million in FY26, about a quarter of the agency's total budget. These cuts are not new but have now become

increasingly urgent as more older adults rely on services and support. We urge you to put back the \$100 million to the City Budget. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.

ELIZABETH BIRD: Thank you, Chair Hudson, and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Elizabeth Bird, and I am reading comments on behalf of Rich Baum.

I am from Educational Alliance, we are a settlement house with community centers located throughout Lower Manhattan.

Educational Alliance operates three sites supported by contracts with NYC Aging: Weinberg Older Adult Center (OAC), the Cooperative Village Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) and Sirovich OAC. Together, these sites serve a highly diverse population of close to 4,000 older adults annually.

Like many here today, I'm deeply concerned for the future of older adult programs in the face of the fiscal cliff. I have submitted full testimony detailing specifics, but today I want to focus my comments on two areas, food and social work.

First, I urge you to include \$57 million to meet the growing demand for our meal services and the

1 rising cost of food. For many of our members, the
2 meals they receive through us are what sustains them
3 for the day. Some tell us that they would not eat at
4 all without the meals offered in our centers. But it
5 is increasingly difficult to provide high quality
6 meals. This is partially because of the increased
7 cost of food, but it is also due to increased demand.
8 We are projected to serve more meals this year than
9 we are contracted to serve.
10

11 As an example, our Weinberg OAC surpassed its
12 annual target of 1,200 unique clients in just six
13 months. This requires us to pay for the difference,
14 which is, as you can understand, is unsustainable.
15 But more is needed. Increasingly, we have to turn
16 people away from meal service due to high demand. Our
17 food pantry appointments fill up within hours of
18 being released. With additional resources, we could
19 serve many more than we do.

20 Secondly, the City should increase funding to
21 hire more case managers. Social service staff at EA
22 have an average caseload of 50 or more individuals
23 with a waiting list for high need cases. Because we
24 serve a highly diverse population across our sites,
25 we need social service staff, social work staff who

are fluent in Mandarin, Cantonese, Russian, and Spanish. Increased funding from the City would allow us to expand case management support and ensure older adults receive the quality, comprehensive support they need.

Most importantly, I urge you to reverse all cuts to the overall NYC Aging Budget. None of us wants to be forgotten when we grow old. Without action, too many are at risk of being isolated and forgotten. I ask that the leaders of the City consider the needs of our elders and take action so they are not cast aside. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.

XIOMARA MALDONADO: Good afternoon, Chair Hudson, and members of the Aging Committee. I am really grateful to you all for the hard work that you do on our behalf.

My name is Xiomara Maldonado, and I am the Senior Director of Older Adult Programs at the Manny Cantor Center, one of Educational Alliance community centers in Lower Manhattan.

I'm here today to testify not only as an aging services professional but also as a native New Yorker whose family members, family friends, and neighbors

depend upon programs throughout the Lower East Side to the... I'm just gonna take a moment.

I can't just advocate for Educational Alliance, I have to advocate for every single program in the Lower East Side— including Grand Street Settlement, including Henry Street Settlement, including UJC, all of the NORCS.

I know so many people who benefit from each of these places including my own family members— my mom, my dad, my grandma, a whole bunch of people from the church I grew up in. All of them desperately need these services, and it scares me that the City would think it's okay to cut a \$100 million in services instead of investing in our community.

And so I'm here to appeal to the City to reverse those cuts and instead to invest even more money in these programs. As has already been said, mental health is a big issue amongst our population. And we really, we're a satellite site for SPOP so I advocate for SPOP as well. We need more services for folks and not only through traditional therapeutic services but also through arts programs and exercise classes.

I just submitted a giant folder with 200+ testimonies from older adults from our various

programs. Over and over again they say our lives depend upon these programs. And so I'll leave you with just a couple of comments from members.

Tony Thiem wrote, "Without the older adult services, we would be at home and not know how to stay alive."

Mo See Cheung wrote, "Zumba, Jazz Line Dance classes and acrylic painting helped to save my health issues."

And Ruth Mandel wrote, "Losing Sirovich would be devastating. It stimulates my creativity. Can you imagine a New York City without the arts?"

My grandmother herself, as I said, comes to the Weinberg Center every day now. She is stubbornly independent and had hidden from us the fact (TIMER CHIMES) that she was having trouble cooking for herself and suffered a diabetic ketoacidosis attack. She almost died last year, so she herself wrote, "I would I only eat frankfurters at home because it's easy to cook. I need the food and the workers to take good of care of me."

Without these services my grandma and others like her would struggle to manage daily life. So, thank

you again for all of your work and advocacy. It means a lot to me and to everyone.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. And I know for so many of us, myself included, the work is very personal. And I am only chair of the Aging Committee, because of my experience caring for my mother who had Alzheimer disease. So I feel your emotion; I feel it deeply, and I know that it's... You know, your family members, including your grandmother, are very lucky to have you advocating for them. And I tell my colleagues and anybody who will listen all the time, that it is too late to advocate for older adults once you're already an older adult. And it is really dependent upon us, who are younger, to make sure that we are doing all of the advocacy. So, thank you. And thank you all for your testimony. Thank you.

I will call up the next panel: Mohammad Razvi, Susanna Hom, Kai Fai Lo, Dr. Cynthia Maurer, and Autrice Wildman.

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: We'll start on my left here and then go down the table, thank you.

MOHAMMAD RAZVI: Thank you Chairwoman. My name is Mohammad Razvi, and I run the possibly the only and

1 the largest Muslim Halal Senior Center. We actually
2 service clients in Brooklyn and we service... we're a
3 one stop shop; we also not just service seniors, but
4 you know, families and their children. We service
5 about 45,000 clients annually, of which, I actually
6 have my testimony already. I'm just gonna just
7 highlight certain items that I really wanted to talk
8 about.
9

10 Because of DFTA, we were able to have the Halal
11 Senior Center, and I encourage you and all the city
12 council members to support and continue supporting
13 them even more. Because of them, we were able to have
14 the first Halal Meals on Wheels in the country- not
15 the city, not the state, but the country. It has
16 added to the program where I thought I was only gonna
17 have 60 seniors, now we have over 1,300 seniors that
18 are coming to our office. Because of that, we
19 actually had to get resources from DFTA again for the
20 capital improvement, where we now have a 4,000 square
21 foot senior facility, which we needed desperately.

22 My testimony shows that, more and more budgets
23 are needed, not cut, and it really is a lifeline to
24 our community.
25

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.

SUSANNA LI HOM: Hi, Good afternoon, Chair Hudson and the Committee. My name is Susannah Hom. I worked for the Comptroller Office of New York for 16 in Bensonhurst. I retired in 2018, and then I joined the Homecrest Senior Center. And I love it. Every day, I look forward to going there. I learn a lot of things that I never learned, because all of us younger, we have to produce things for the family and go work for the for the life. So every day just going to work and coming home to take care of the family. And after I retire, I thought I was going be very poor, but I found Homecrest Center, and they provide a lot of things for us. And I was very happy. And I joined a lot of classes like tai chi for my movement so that my body will not feel stiff. And I learned a lot of skills to make these little things. Maybe it doesn't really matter, but to me, I'm very happy. And every day, I look forward to going there. And I make little things, and I give them to my friends over there, and they have joy. So I'm really thankful. And, every day, I go there and eat lunch and talk to my friends. And I volunteer also for the activities, because at least I am more mobile than a lot of older folks.

KAI FAI LO: Good afternoon, Chair Hudson and members of the Committee on Aging. My name is Kai Fai Lo, and I am a older New Yorker living in Brooklyn.

I worked for the USPS for 15 before retiring then joined the Homecrest community services. For me, Homecrest has become a place where I feel comfortable, safe, and welcome, especially after the pandemic.

At the center, I volunteer my time to support the center. I also participate in activities like tai chi and singing contests. And I eat lunch here every day.

Home Grace is not just a place where I volunteer. It is my safe space during the day, a community where I feel valued and connected. I enjoy helping set up for special events, such as birthday parties for fellow members. And these moments allow me to bond with others. At the center, I like talking with friends, playing board games, and singing karaoke. These activities are more than just entertainment, they keep me active and engaged after retiring.

If the budget can no longer support Homecrest and the center were to be closed, I would have no other place to go.

The Bensonhurst center is a place where I feel like I belong, and losing it will leave me without the support and community I need. I urge the City Council to stop these harmful cuts and instead invest

in services that allow older adults like me to live with purpose and connection. Thank you for listening to my story and considering my testimony. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.

DR. CYNTHIA MAURER: Hello, I'm Cynthia Mauer, from Visiting Neighbors, Executive Director.

First of all, I want to say that the City Council, you guys are our heroes. This is a very painful period in our lives right now going what's going on, and Visiting Neighbors is all about love, acceptance, and helping our seniors.

We work predominantly with the oldest adult, though we help people from 60 to 107. And by the way, the 107-year-old that we have, she's quite spry and very clear on her wants and needs.

Our seniors that we work with are determined to stay independent and home. They want to stay in their own homes. And actually, this is probably one of the most cost effective programs that saves the City a lot of money, and yet we do a lot with very little, but we need something. And we're so grateful that the City Council recognizes the seniors that may not go to a senior center. There are plenty of seniors that may want to get to a center, but they are not in a

position to because of clothes or finances or just being able to get out and about. Some don't want to, to be quite frank. They want to be around young people. For the ones who love to go to the centers, we'll get them there. But we will provide all kinds of services, everything from Friendly Visitors where we have volunteers, every walk of life. This is New York City. We have it all. Though every now and then we think we've heard every story and then we hear a new doozy that comes up.

The volunteers are amazing. They represent the best of New York City. And we match make based on interests and hobbies and find people that will enjoy an older person's company. And the seniors after a while, they forget that it's a volunteer- it's just their friend- and the friend says, well, "I'm a friend. Am I a volunteer?" Yes, you're still volunteering. And we have volunteers that have been with us for decades.

We also do shop and escort, getting people to and from every conceivable kind of appointment. But it's not just an arm to hold to get through the street, it's also being there when they find out that a diagnosis is terminal. Usually when we have the

1 younger seniors and we call the youngsters 60-74,
2 they are frail or something happened or maybe they
3 need us temporarily, we will be there to be a health
4 advocate. When a senior goes into a hospital, we let
5 the staff know that somebody's watching- because in
6 this day and age, if you don't have an advocate and
7 you can't advocate for yourself, then you better have
8 a friend who can be there to support you. Hospital
9 staff is overwhelmed- it's not necessarily anyone's
10 fault, we're not placing blame- we're just noticing
11 that seniors often get neglected in many settings.
12

13 We're here to let people know that our people are
14 determined, and we also provide wellness discussions
15 on every conceivable topic including some of the most
16 difficult ones like how to talk to their own family
17 members. (TIMER CHIMES)

18 We just want to say this, we're trying to light a
19 corner of our world and radiate it out. We're trying
20 to be there and let people know that seniors matter.
21 People want to stay home. They wanna be in their own
22 homes. They wanna be active in the community, want to
23 be vital. And we're thanking you for your support.
24 And please continue it, because as these great words
25 up here I'm looking at in this amazing hall, we are

for our senior people, all of our senior people. And these are senior— centers are important, our seniors are important, and if we're lucky, we will all become one one day, or we'll have a friend by our side to do it, too. Because being alone in this world is very tough and, especially now, we need more love and kindness. And...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Absolutely.

DR. CYNTHIA MAURER: to kind of deal with the other stuff that is presented our way.

So continue to be our champions, and we will continue to do, Visiting Neighbors, everything we can in our corner, including making connections for our seniors and information referral.

We do everything that a friend would do because a lot of our people have nobody. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you, so much. Thank you for your testimony.

ATRICE WILDMAN: Good afternoon, Chairperson Hudson and members of the committee. My name is Atrice Wildman; I'm a social caseworker at Encore Community Services, one of New York City's largest providers of aging services. Thank you for this opportunity to testify today about the urgent need

for increased funding to support our city's older adults.

Encore provides more than 750,000 meals to older New Yorkers annually through home delivery and at our Older Adult Centers. However, the City's current funding only supports a single meal per day, leaving thousands at risk of food insecurity. One in five older New Yorkers struggles with hunger and for many the meal we provide is their only source of daily nutrition.

We urge the Council to increase meal funding to provide three meals daily for older adults in need. Furthermore, the City's reimbursement rates must reflect actual cost of food and operations, particularly from weekend meals. Despite a modest FY23-24 increase, inflation and rising costs have outpaced the current reimbursement structure. A sustainable funding model ensures that older adults have consistent access to fresh, nutritious food.

New Yorkers' Older Adult Centers are aging alongside their members. At Encore, we struggle with outdated infrastructure, including malfunctioning elevators and deteriorating HVAC systems, which are unacceptable conditions for facilities that serve as

emergency cooling centers and daily lifeline for older adults.

The Department for the Aging's capital budget is simply insufficient to meet the growing needs of our centers. We call on the Council to establish a dedicated capital investment fund within New York City Aging to ensure our city's older adult facilities remain safe, functional, and welcoming.

Strategic investment now will prevent costly emergency repairs in the future and improve the daily lives of thousands of older adults.

Case management and financial case management are critical services that help older adults navigate public benefits, rental assistance, medical expenses, and provide economic stability. The need for these services is increasing, particularly as more older adults face housing instability, struggle with medical costs, and deal with rising living expenses on fixed incomes. The demand for these services far exceeds our staffing capacity.

We urge the Council to allocate additional resources to expand case management services and invest in financial case management programs that

Last year the Mayor and the Council made an essential step toward ensuring human service workers are paid a living wage. Still, we remain among the lowest paid of any sector in the City. This issue is personal to me and my colleagues. (TIMER CHIMES) It's the difference between barely scraping by and having a chance to get ahead. As you know, this disproportionately impacts women and people of color who compose most of the human services workforce. Consistent annual cost of living adjustments for human service workers should not be optional.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Thank you all for your testimonies, I appreciate it.

(PAUSE)

KAY MANTIN: Good afternoon, Chair Hudson and

members of the Committee on Aging. My name is Kay Mantin, and I'm an older New Yorker living on the

Lower East Side. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the importance of older adult services.

The threat of over a \$100 million in additional budget cuts would mean a loss of centers and services so urgently needed.

I attend the Grand Street Older Adult Center daily. It's my second home and a safe, supportive place which gives me a feeling of community and belonging. I'm able to engage in many activities such as tai chi, line dancing, and various educational programs.

The proposed cuts will result in isolation for many older adults, which lead to less opportunities to engage in physical and social activities. It will also impact their food security and lead to health issues both physically and mentally. Thank you for advocating for us.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.

PETER KEMPNER: Good afternoon, Chair Hudson, and council staff. My name is Peter Kepner; I'm the Legal Director at Volunteers of Legal Service, also known as VOLS.

VOLS was established back in 1984, and our purpose is to leverage private attorneys to provide

free legal services to low income New Yorkers to help fill the justice gap.

Our Senior Law Project serves low income, older New Yorkers aged 60+, primarily by providing last wills and testaments, powers of attorney, healthcare proxies, and other essential advanced directives—free of charge.

These life planning documents enable our clients to properly prepare for possible incapacity and death. They allow our clients to maintain income, avoid homelessness, ensure that their dying wishes are fulfilled, and empower our clients' caregivers to obtain services necessary for our clients to access, uh, including healthcare and other services, so they could age in place in the community.

While we strongly believe that all older adults should have the right documents in place as they plan for the future, we also have several initiatives and partnerships that focus on vulnerable subsets of the older adult population. These include veterans, immigrants, and LGBTQIA+ older adults. We have created these initiatives and partnerships because we know that it is important to deliver culturally

competent services that are tailored to the most vulnerable communities that we seek to serve.

The Senior Law Project also provides legal counsel to older adults on a range of other civil legal issues, including landlord tenant matters, access to benefits, consumer matters, and other civil legal needs. We provide training and ongoing support to social service workers, older adult center staff, and pro bono attorneys address our clients' issues.

I'm here to talk about legal services organizations and their role in the ecosphere of services provided to older adult New Yorkers.

Legal services organizations are there to represent clients in eviction proceedings, fight unlawful denial of benefits, and like our organization, help obtain the documents older adults need to live in the community securely as they age.

We want thank the Council for the funding that we've received in the past to help us ensure that our clients and their caregivers have all the tools they need in their toolbox to be able to allow our clients to age with dignity and respect in the community.

So thank you for your support.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Next?

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, hello, Chair Hudson.

My name is Christopher Leon Johnson. I'm calling on you as a Chair of the Aging Committee to support Intro... in the state senate S.924-A. That that will make it a felony for anybody to assault a Deliverista. I know this is not Transportation or Consumer Worker Affairs, but there's a certain amount of the baristas in New York City that are elderly. So I think that should count as part of the Age Committee.

So I am, advising, I know that I think it's kinda late for FY26, but I know that I know that Cuomo is gonna be the governor I mean, gonna be the mayor of New York City, Cuomo is gonna win this, and I'm calling on the City Council for FY27-FY28 to put a program to make the deliveristas start delivering food, like the food at Riseboro and Helping Hands the organization hand out the senior foods to the seniors. I think they should be... start doing delivering foods, too. Because I have a big feeling that all those organizations like Riseboro are really overwhelmed and understaffed with delivering food to the seniors. I think that the City Council should

1
2 implement a program to allow the deliveristas start
3 delivering food to the seniors. Not only it could
4 line... it could help line the pockets of these
5 nonprofits at the Worker Justice Project and
6 (INAUDIBLE) it could decrease the workload and
7 overwhelming of the workers at Riseboro and all these
8 work organizations when it comes to delivering...
9 like, when it comes to delivering the food to the
10 people. And it is less... and is it is more
11 convenient when it could deliver it with a with a
12 Ebikes. They could.... you guys could easily buy
13 out... buy the equipment that the guys need to
14 deliver the food to them.

15 And while at the same time, you should be able...
16 we should be able to start helping these guys get
17 their driver licenses. I know that a lot of these
18 guys here are mostly migrants, and I know there's a
19 anti-immigrant sentiment in the City Council with the
20 (INAUDIBLE) Caucus, at the same time, the City
21 Council's push... police put, like, \$25 million into
22 certain nonprofits that can get these guys these
23 driver licenses, conditional driver licenses, where
24 they can only use the drive to work to deliver the
25 food and back to where they pick up the food at.

1
2 I think the City Council should be doing that
3 when it comes to that. And we need to support our
4 seniors. We need to make sure that they don't be
5 abused by certain caregiver organizations, and the
6 City Council shouldn't be intimidated by certain
7 nonprofits, like CPC, that intimidate council members
8 into supporting them, while at the same time
9 intimidating the crap out of Christopher Marte and
10 trying to run someone against him like Jess Coleman
11 for City Council because he's calling the stuff out.

12 The city council should be more transparent when
13 it comes to protecting elders. If you really care
14 about elders, you will support Christopher Marte in
15 getting his bills passed to really put CPC in check.

16 (TIMER CHIMES) All right. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

18 SHARON BROWN: Hello, I'm Sharon Brown from Rose
19 of Sharon Enterprises. Remember, Israel released the
20 hostages, let Yahweh's people go.

21 Okay. For the aging population, they need housing
22 to be allocated for them without having the senior
23 housing labels. Now some have been moved out of their
24 homes when places closed or changed to different
25 housings that were senior housing. Like immigrants,

1 they changed one senior center into immigrant
2 housing, and an older gentleman, who was a veteran
3 was kicked out of his house or senior center housing
4 and they moved in all of the immigrants. So they need
5 to find a way to allocate housing just for seniors in
6 regular housing. And seniors need to be independent.
7 The help that they need should not be compulsory.
8 They should ask for it themselves and get the things
9 that they're requesting and needed. We need to fund
10 senior businesses, senior home ownership. We need to
11 invest for seniors, help them put money together to
12 get stocks, bonds, investment, and get wealth for
13 themselves so that they can own property, not just be
14 in senior housing.

16 We also need to look into why there are 50% of
17 false diagnosis for fatal diagnosis. This is in a
18 paper and they're showing that the diagnosis are not
19 correct. We also need to make sure when there are
20 illnesses that they are taken care of with funding,
21 with medical, funding and everything.

22 We need supplemental funding for seniors,
23 especially for the Jewish community for their safety.
24 We need to allocate extra funding, supplemental, for
25

rent, repairs, transportation, housing above what they already have.

Now we need to make sure that seniors have cash in hand, whatever that may be, food stamps or whatever, above what they're already getting if they're on some kind of retirement or social security or whatever they're getting, if they cannot afford food, they need to be able to have funding to get it from regular sources. We need to make sure that people are advocating that they can get public assistance, EBT, SNAP, social security for the interim time. They can get social security when they cannot meet their bills. We can't have our seniors hungry.

We also need them to start a program where they're growing vegetables maybe in the seniors homes, they teach them how to grow vegetables— or the seniors teach them— or they allocate spaces where seniors can grow food for the senior population (TIMER CHIMES) and they can get their food from their own senior owned food...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

SHARON BROWN: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.

SHARON BROWN: God bless.

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, calling witnesses to testify on Zoom, starting with Shaaranya Pillai.

(NO RESPONSE)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Shaaranya Pillai?

Kavita Shah?

(NO RESPONSE)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Kavita Shah?

KAVITA SHAH: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

KAVITA SHAH: Yes, Shaaranya Pillai, my colleague, she couldn't make it.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That's okay.

KAVITA SHAH: Thank you— should I wait for (INAUDIBLE)? I don't know if I should start.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: No, no, you can begin, thank you.

KAVITA SHAH: Thank you, Chairperson Hudson and the Committee for allowing us to testify. My name is Kavitha Shah, I'm the Program and Budget Director at India Home.

India Home is a nonprofit that serves South Asian and Indo Caribbean seniors. And I and we serve

1
2 culturally competent services. We provide congregate
3 meals. As you all know, we provide Halal and
4 vegetarian meals for our seniors at different
5 centers. We also provide case management. We
6 provide... we have mental health programs, other
7 recreational activities.

8 And the current challenge that we are all facing
9 is the budget cut. So I want to... I have my written
10 testimony, but I want to tell you my experience from
11 working with the seniors at India Home— how critical
12 the older adult program is for us, and for the City,
13 because the seniors really look forward to coming to
14 all the Older Adult Centers. They have created a home
15 for themselves. I have my seniors who have, like,
16 formed, their dance groups, and they go to all
17 different, you know, places where we have Indian
18 festivals and things to dance and perform.

19 Also, the meals in the past, I think I was
20 listening to... in regards to the meals, the Halal
21 meals, Chairperson in Hudson, you are right. The
22 Halal meals are expensive, because, as I'm a
23 Budgeting Director also at India Home, I know that
24 the amount of money that I get From Department of
25

Aging doesn't cover all of my Halal meal costs. So that is another challenge that we face.

Housing is another challenge for the seniors. As you know as well that, you know, affordable housing, you know, that's a big, issue for the seniors. And thanks to our Executive Director, she came up with this unique idea of a co-living for home for seniors. We have a one-of-a-kind seniors co-living home that we have started with where we match four seniors to live together in a home, and India Home is their support system.

Another challenge we have is, you know, the space where we conduct our programs, uh, after COVID, India Home Senior Center is thriving. We have... we get a contract for only 80 seniors, whereas on a daily basis at our Jamaica Muslim Center, we get over a 120 seniors. And so we are in a constant struggle to bridge that gap. That's another challenge we have.

And I would consider that all the seniors have worked all their life. So they look forward to that retirement because that's the time they can pursue their own hobbies and their talents. And this is the time they should not be worrying about how they can

do this and how the programs that support them will survive.

And we should also consider, you know, putting in dollars for our senior as an investment because the seniors have collected all these experiences and (INAUDIBLE)...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you, ma'am, your time has expired.

KAVITA SHAH: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.

Kalman Bacow (phonetic)?

(NO RESPONSE)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Kalman Bacow (phonetic)?

(NO RESPONSE)

KALMAN BACOW: I don't have anything to testify, I was just accompanying Kavita.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Oh, okay, great, thank you so much.

Moving on to Michael Singh?

MICHAEL SINGH: Hello. Good afternoon, Chair Hudson, and the Aging Committee.

My name is Michael Singh, and I am the Program Director for Catholic Charities, specifically

Brooklyn and Queens, the Peter J. DellaMonica Senior Center.

I just wanted to say I sent in my testimonies for our older adults. And for me, just wanted to bring up that New York City has long failed to prioritize the programs and services that help older adults remain in their communities as they age. It's with the proposed \$120 million cut, it's going be devastating to the older adult community. It will slash vital services across the board.

We all know that one in five New Yorkers make an older adult population by 2040. As we said before, it's gonna increase by 25%. With cuts, more older New Yorkers will be pushed out of their homes and onto the streets due to an ever weakening safety net, and then it's going be more weakened if we do have those cuts. We're gonna have a growth of hunger, homelessness, neglect.

I have a quote from Mahatma Gandhi, that says, "The measure of a society is how well we treat its elderly."

In the OSCs, we do have a lot of un-resourced things such as operations, transportation, social services, facilities, staffing. We do need better pay

for our staff members. We do need more accredited staff members, more trained staff members to deal with the older adult population.

Also, I think all the Older Adult Centers, there (INAUDIBLE) place where, you know, we start coordinating all community services for older adults so they can stay within the community and live independent. I do have a lot of what is it? Dignity. A lot of words to say about, you know, people, our older adult members. They want to feel valuable to society. They want dignity. They wanna preserve their independence. They want to live happy lives. We have a lot of food insecurity that's versus our food costs right now. We do have social isolation. So a senior center is a great place for people to come and socialize, to do activities. They do enjoy a lot of physical activities, uh, a lot of arts and craft. The senior center really helped them to learn and manage the delay of chronic diseases and improves their physical, social, spiritual, emotional, mental, and economic well-being.

So what I really want is that our proposal is to invest \$5 million a year in emergency repairs for our centers over the city, make about \$2.3 billion

investment in nutrition, housing, community services.

(TIMER CHIMES) We also (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you, your time has expired.

MICHAEL SINGH: Oh, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. And you said you submitted written testimony as well, right?

MICHAEL SINGH: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, so we've got that, thank you.

Calling Navdeep Bains next. Navdeep Bains?

NAVDEEP BAINS: Thank you to Chair Crystal Hudson and the Committee on Aging for holding this hearing and for giving us the opportunity to testify on the Fiscal Year 2026 budget.

I'm Navdeep Bains, the Associate Director Of Advocacy and Policy at the Asian American Federation, where we proudly represent the collective voice of more than 70 member nonprofit organizations serving 1.5 million Asian New Yorkers.

In 2025, New York's Asian community faces a fundamentally changed landscape. From a sharp rise in anti-immigrant policies and drastic cuts in federal funding to the acute targeting of Asian communities

through hate speech, we are facing an unprecedented crisis.

Asian older adults are the fastest growing older adult community citywide, making up 14% of New York City senior population. This population growth was coupled with a rise in poverty, and currently, 42% of Asian seniors are low income, making them among the city's poorest seniors. Furthermore, 25% percent of Asian seniors experiencing poverty live alone, and 84% percent of them have limited English proficiency.

The Asian American Federation works with 12 of our member organizations as a part of the Seniors Working Group, the first and only Asian specific seniors advocacy coalition in the city. Together, these organizations serve a 25,000 low income seniors annually from 10 different Asian ethnicities.

To highlight some of the work that our member orgs have done, India Home has come up with innovative strategies to create a co-living housing model for seniors. COPO (Council of Peoples Organization) operates the only registered Halal Meals on Wheels Program in the city, and Homecrest provides culturally competent programming and support to reduce isolation for our Chinese community.

On behalf of our organizations, we urge the City Council and the Administration to reverse the proposed \$100 million+ that are being proposed and commit to a robust increase in funding for older adult services— and especially increased funding to Asian-led, Asian-serving older adult service providers, so they can continue to provide the culturally competent programming, food services, and in language support that our seniors uniquely need.

Thank you. Thank you so much for your time.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.

Calling Tanya Krupat next, Tanya Krupat?

TANYA KRUPAT: Thank you, Chair Hudson, and members of the Committee on Aging, for your advocacy and dedication. My name is Tanya Krupat, and I am the Vice President of Policy and Advocacy at Osborne Association. Osborne is one of the largest and oldest criminal justice service organizations in the state, and we recently began providing a variety of reentry housing specifically for older people.

Meeting the needs of older people in New York City is critical, and this includes those who are incarcerated and returning here. Too often, the needs of older people in jails and prisons and those

1
2 returning to our communities are overlooked at an
3 enormous cost in dollars, lives, well-being, and lost
4 wisdom and contributions. Today, more than one in
5 four people in New York State prisons is over 50, and
6 as of this January, 967 older people are detained on
7 Rikers Island.

8 Given the annual cost of detaining someone on
9 Rikers, we are currently spending more than \$490
10 million to keep older people on Rikers. This is
11 almost New York City's Aging entire budget.

12 We oppose any cuts to New York City Aging and
13 advocate for shifting the focus of the City's
14 Proposed Budget so that Police and Corrections
15 budgets are not increased while critical services
16 that prevent arrest and incarceration are cut.

17 Among these, we need to invest in alternatives to
18 detention and incarceration and to train both
19 corrections to be age aware and community providers
20 of aging services to be incarceration aware. With
21 research on aging out of crime, we need to better
22 understand why older people are getting arrested and
23 why hundreds of older people are on Rikers.

24 In our programs, we see every day what is
25 possible when we address the needs and create

supportive communities to welcome older people home and support them in contributing to their families and communities.

In the community, when you walk into our Marcus Garvey housing program in Brownsville, you sense the joy, compassion, wisdom, and desire to help and contribute.

Most of our staff are themselves formerly incarcerated, and many residents like Mr. William, who feeds the fish in the community fish tank every morning, and Ms. Carmen, who offers cooking classes to residents, are finally experiencing their first home, their first stable and welcoming community.

We are all missing out when we aren't supporting *all* older people.

My written testimony includes other budget requests and provides specific recommendations for actions small and more significant the city can take now. Thank you for your dedication to supporting all older people.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Thank you for that testimony.

I am now going to call Shaaranya Pillai? Joan Pastore? Shaaranya Pillai or Joan Pastore, are you still on the Zoom?

(NO RESPONSE)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, if there is anyone who would still like to testify via Zoom, you can use the raise hand function.

(NO RESPONSE)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, if there is anyone in person who would still like to testify, you can fill out a slip with the Sergeant at Arms.

Seeing none, I would like to thank everyone who testified today, especially for those who have shared their own personal stories, and those doing the work in all of these older adult centers, through a lot of service providers who serve our older adults every single day. We appreciate all of the work that you do. And we appreciate you being here and your testimonies. Thank you so much.

This hearing is adjourned. (GAVEL SOUND)

(GAVELING OUT)

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date April 9, 2025