

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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September 10, 2024
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Diana I. Ayala
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Alexa Avilés
Chris Banks
Tiffany Cabán
Chi A. Ossé
Lincoln Restler
Kevin C. Riley
Althea V. Stevens
Sandra Ung

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

Scott French
HRA Administrator

Meryl Kordower
NADAP

Lanette Chever
Project Renewal

Daniel Hiraldo
GMHC Workforce Development Program

Katie Masie
Win Income Building Program Director

Towaki Komatsu

1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and
3 welcome to today's New York City Council hearing for
4 the Committee on General Welfare. At this time,
5 please silence all cell phones and electronic devices
6 to minimize disruptions throughout the hearing. If
7 you have testimony you wish to submit for the record,
8 you may do so via email at testimony@council.nyc.gov.
9 Once again that is testimony@council.nyc.gov. At any
10 time throughout the hearing, please do not approach
11 the dais. We thank you for your kind cooperation.
12 Chair, we are ready to begin.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. [gavel]
14 Good morning everyone and welcome to today's hearing.
15 My name is Diana Ayala, and I am the Deputy Speaker
16 of the New York City Council and the Chair of the
17 General Welfare Committee. Today, we are holding an
18 oversight hearing on the Human Resources
19 Administration Career Services offerings. HRA Career
20 Services offer cash assistance clients, opportunity
21 to help them increase their job skills and build a
22 career. Since 2017, career services have consisted
23 of three main programs delivered by contracted
24 dividers: Career Compass for adult clients; Youth
25 Pathways for clients age 18 to 24; and Career Advance

1 for clients interested in specific industries or with
2 specific needs such as limited English proficiency.
3 HRA also matches employers with job seekers through
4 HRA Business Link, partners with CUNY to support HRA
5 clients who are enrolled in CUNY schools, deliver
6 sector-specific workforce development programs in
7 construction and helps match clients age 16 to 24
8 with paid internships in nonprofit organizations
9 throughout the City. According to the most recent
10 Mayor's Preliminary Management Report, HRA helped
11 over 9,000 clients obtain employment in fiscal year
12 2023. As of April 2024, HRA has-- was on track to
13 help over 10,000 clients in fiscal year 24. Beyond
14 this, there is little other available data about
15 efficacy of these programs. Today, we seek to better
16 understand HRA's Career Services Program and learn
17 more about the immediate and long-term outcomes that
18 it has achieved over the last seven years. We also
19 want to delve into HRA's plans for the future and to
20 address the resumption of work requirements for cash
21 assistance clients. Prior to the pandemic, cash
22 assistance clients were required to participate in
23 work-related activities. However, in March 2020,
24 OTDA suspended this requirement given the public
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1 health crisis. Advocates have since expressed
2 concerns that the new rules would result in
3 exacerbating existing bureaucratic issues at HRA and
4 in people losing their benefits. It is therefore
5 critical to better understand how career services are
6 administered, the outcomes that HRA has achieved over
7 the last decade, and how the needs of vulnerable New
8 Yorkers can best be met within the framework of any
9 state and federal requirements. I look forward to
10 hearing from the Administration and advocates today
11 in gathering feedback on this oversight topic. I
12 would acknowledge my colleagues at this time, but
13 none are here yet, but we will acknowledge them as
14 they trickle in, but I'd also like to thank my
15 committee staff who worked really hard to prepare
16 this hearing, Aminta Kilawan [sp?], Senior
17 Legislative Counsel, Nina Rosenberg [sp?], Policy
18 Analyst, Julia Haramis [sp?], Unit Head, Elisabeth
19 Childers-Garcia [sp?], Finance Analyst, Andrew Skol
20 [sp?], Data Analyst, and finally my staff, Elsie
21 Encarnacion [sp?], Chief of Staff. I would now like
22 to turn it over to our Policy Analyst to swear in
23 members of the Administration.
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COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

COMMITTEE POLICY ANALYST: Thanks very much. Administrator French, please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: I do.

COMMITTEE POLICY ANALYST: Thank you very much. You can begin when you're ready.

ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Thank you. Good morning, Deputy Speaker Ayala. My name is Scott French, and I serve as the Administrator of the Human Resources Administration, HRA, within the Department of Social Services, DSS. I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify today on the topic of HRA's Career Services. While we have faced challenging times in recent years, we are very proud of the work we are doing to connect low-income New Yorkers to a diverse array of workforce development services to further clients' education, training, and employment goals. Career Services are an on-ramp to sustainability and independence for New Yorkers. We understand the job search process can be challenging, and as a city we want to serve as a strong partner in

1 helping New Yorkers achieve career success. Career
2 Services encompasses the kind of career guidance and
3 coaching any job-seeker might need. That includes
4 exploring career goals, connecting to educational and
5 training opportunities, building professional skills
6 and serving as a partner in job placement. HRA's
7 Career Services are a key support in connecting New
8 Yorkers on Cash Assistance with opportunities to
9 secure steady income and live sustainable lives.
10 While I will be speaking to HRA's Career Services, I
11 want to note that HRA's offerings exist within a
12 broader network of workforce development programs New
13 York City provides, including offerings led by the
14 Department of Small Business Services, SBS, the
15 Department of Youth and Community Development, DYCD,
16 the New York City Housing Authority, NYCHA, and the
17 Mayor's Office of Talent and Workforce Development.
18 Under the leadership of Mayor Adams, we continually
19 work to break down silos and build networks across
20 government and across our communities to connect New
21 Yorkers to the career services they deserve. Working
22 with HRA, Career Services providers use their
23 expertise to equip job-seekers with the tools they
24 need to build skills and experience to remain engaged
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1 in what can be a daunting job search process. By
2 offering wrap-around support services, HRA and our
3 provider partners work to assist our clients,
4 whatever an individuals' starting point. I would
5 like to spend some time walking through some of the
6 career services available to our clients. Career
7 Pathways is a suite of service programs that provides
8 orientation, intake, assessment, engagement services,
9 job development, placement, and retention services.
10 Career Pathways has three components: Career Compass
11 works with adult clients to assess their skills and
12 experience. It helps clients find employment,
13 training, education programs, internships, and
14 community service opportunities that suit their
15 abilities and goals. Career Advance offers career
16 education and training services in specific New York
17 City industries and neighborhoods, or to groups such
18 as those with limited English proficiency,
19 individuals who are involved in the criminal justice
20 system, homeless households, survivors of domestic
21 violence, or older adults. Youth Pathways works with
22 clients ages 18 to 24 to assess their skills and
23 experience. It provides career education and
24 training services, and helps clients connect to
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1 programs including internships and community service
2 tailored to the needs of younger adults. Note that
3 the new iteration of the Career Pathways program will
4 be the Pathways to Access to Careers and Employment,
5 PACE, workforce development program which I will
6 speak further about in a moment. Business Link
7 matches diverse employers with job seekers through
8 targeted outreach and skills assessment. Business
9 Link hosts job fairs throughout the year, and offers
10 access to job openings through alerts by text
11 messages through Text to Work. The Pathways to
12 Industrial and Construction Careers, known as PINCC
13 program, is a key initiative arising from the U.S.
14 Economic Development Administration's Good Jobs
15 Challenge within the American Rescue Plan of 2021.
16 This program bridges the gap between employers
17 seeking a diverse workforce and the public systems
18 seeking to place high-need, disadvantaged populations
19 in career track positions within the construction and
20 industrial transportation sectors. Jobs Plus is a
21 program-- is a place-based employment program
22 administered by HRA for residents in 40 New York City
23 Housing Authority developments or within proximity of
24 the development throughout the five boroughs. Job
25

1 Plus programs help residents build skills and
2 connects to the labor market to increase their
3 incomes and financial security. Jobs Plus programs
4 are located within the developments they serve or
5 within walking distance. CUNY EDGE, otherwise known
6 as Educate Develop Graduate Empower, is a joint
7 program between HRA and CUNY designed to help HRA
8 clients enrolled at CUNY schools with academic
9 counseling, support and employment services so they
10 can succeed in their studies and graduate in a timely
11 manner. Alternative engagement programs, known as
12 AE, assists clients interested in high-demand,
13 skills-based training in the fastest-growing
14 occupations such as green jobs, technology-based
15 jobs, careers in the medical field and much more.
16 Many of our training providers have employment
17 linkages as well. Finally, the Wellness
18 Comprehensive Assessment Rehabilitation and
19 Employment program, otherwise known as WeCARE,
20 provides comprehensive services to assist HRA Cash
21 Assistance clients with medical, physical and/or
22 mental health conditions that impact their ability to
23 obtain employment. Our goal is to help clients
24 achieve self-sufficiency through personalized
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1 assessments, rehabilitative supports, and employment
2 services. Having provided that overview of career
3 services available to our clients, I will now turn to
4 recent RFPs and the underlying thought processes we
5 are bringing to the future of HRA's delivery of
6 Career Services. HRA succeeds when we connect
7 clients with a long-term financial stability and
8 security that employment provides. Building on years
9 of experience, working to further hone our Career
10 Services offerings, and building upon concepts that
11 include an engagement with experts, provides and the
12 communities we serve. HRA recently released an RFP
13 in August 2024 with an anticipated contract start
14 date of July 2025 for the PACE program, and we will
15 shortly be releasing another RFP for the WeCARE
16 program. Key concepts undergird HRA's Career
17 Services model and inform our strategy in developing
18 these RFPs. Both programs focus on client-centered
19 assessment. That means assessments that identify
20 client needs and interests and counseling tools to
21 meet clients where they are. Client-centered
22 assessment connects with the concept of progressively
23 improving workforce development practices. That
24 means including an understanding that additional
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1 education and training may be the best pathway for a
2 client to meet their goals. GED, ESL, training,
3 vocational, or apprenticeship programs may serve as a
4 pathway into the career a client may have in mind. In
5 authoring the RFPs, HRA acts as a catalyst to
6 strengthen the network of career service providers to
7 include community-based organizations and local small
8 business partners. That is a step towards a
9 neighborhood-centered model, allowing clients to
10 receive services and supports within their
11 communities. Strengthening the network of vendors
12 also includes serving as a convener and platform for
13 sharing best practices amongst vendors. A final key
14 concept included in our RFPs is a holistic
15 understanding of client needs. Through a Strategic
16 Program Operation Target Goals, SPOT Goals, we can a
17 clearer picture of client advancement by taking into
18 account areas beyond employment like educational and
19 financial counseling. In addition HRA intentionally
20 sifted towards a one-door program model in the PACE
21 Workforce Development Program. This model unifies
22 the previously separate programs of Career Compass,
23 Career Advance, and Youth Pathways with the advantage
24 of reducing referrals from one program to the next.
25

1 I turn now to the larger legal and regulatory
2 framework in which HRA operates and the impacts on
3 the return to mandatory engagement. HRA operates in a
4 legal a regulatory framework that obligates us to
5 adhere to an extensive body of federal and New York
6 State laws, rules, and regulations. In addition to
7 the oversight at the city level, the New York State
8 Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, OTDA,
9 oversees our operations and provides directives.
10 That serves as important context for the return to
11 mandatory engagement and the imposition of sanctions
12 on clients who do not meet federal and state
13 standards for engagement. During the COVID-19
14 pandemic, this mandatory engagement was paused. The
15 federal and state government determined the timeline
16 for lifting this pause. Alongside other localities,
17 HRA was directed by New York State to resume
18 sanctioning clients who do not participate in
19 mandatory engagement. That said, over time, HRA has
20 been a strong voice in seeking and obtaining a
21 broader understanding of the rubric of mandatory work
22 engagement to include training, education,
23 apprenticeships and other programs. In implementing
24 return to mandatory, we have focused on ensuring
25

1 clients are not surprised by the end of the pause,
2 communicating with clients ahead of time about the
3 re-imposition of engagement requirements and the
4 potential sanctions we would be required by law to
5 impose. Furthermore, within the sanction process, we
6 offer opportunities for individuals to come into
7 compliance with the requirements or alternatively
8 clients may supply an explanation of the factors that
9 prevent their meeting the work requirements under
10 cash assistance programming. HRA is also leveraging
11 city contracting dollars to help secure employment
12 for clients receiving cash assistance through Hire
13 NYC Human Services. In brief, Hire NYC Human
14 Services, administered by Business Link, requires
15 contracted providers to hire a certain number of cash
16 assistance recipients based upon overall contract
17 value. The program requires providers to offer at
18 least work for at least 20 hours per week, paying at
19 least the mandated minimum wage, and work being for
20 at least one year. HRA also defines best efforts on
21 provider's part that ensures a provider that
22 genuinely submitted job postings, interviewed
23 candidates, and constructively engage with Business
24 Link on interviews can have work-- can have that work
25

1 taken into account to seek a modification or waiver
2 of an unmet cash assistance client hiring
3 requirement. Hire NYC succeeds in connecting Cash
4 Assistance clients with career opportunities. When
5 comparing their year over year number of Cash
6 Assistance clients receiving employment through Hire
7 NYC, that figure has grown for more than 2,300 hires
8 in FY21 to over 8,000 hires in FY24, representing a
9 historic high for this program. Expanding our optic
10 to include the broader work Business Link pursues to
11 match employers with job seekers. For FY24, there
12 were nearly 10,000 job placements through Business
13 Link programs. I will close where I began. We
14 understand job search anxiety. The search for the
15 next step in one's career can be daunting. We
16 understand that job-seeking is a process that
17 includes the moral of the job-seeker in building the
18 skills and resilience necessary to overcome the
19 challenges posed by a potentially very stressful
20 process. Our message to job seekers is there is a
21 universe of city workforce development and career
22 service programs including HRA and our partners at
23 SBS, DYCD, NYCHA, the Mayor's Office of Talented
24 Workforce Development, community partners, and many
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1 others. Collectively, we stand ready to assist job-
2 seekers-- assist job-seeking New Yorkers. On behalf
3 of HRA, our partners in government, and their
4 dedicated provider networks. I want to highlight
5 that the array of help and supports to any feeling
6 discouraged, help is available. While what we speak
7 to here today will necessarily focus on HRA and
8 primarily Cash Assistance clients-focused offerings,
9 as a city we seek to be strong partners in connecting
10 New Yorkers to employment. As HRA's fiscal year 2024
11 successes in connecting clients to employment
12 demonstrate, we have made important strides forward.
13 With the RFPs I have outlined, we lay out a pathway
14 for building on that success. I want to reassure the
15 Council that alongside our partners, HRA will
16 continue to work to help overcome the obstacles New
17 Yorkers face to achieving greater sustainability,
18 independence and career success. Thank you for the
19 opportunity to testify today. I welcome your
20 questions.
21

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Sorry. Just making
23 sure my phone is off. I want to acknowledge Council
24 Members Avilés and Cabán have joined us. Thank you
25 for your testimony. This is actually one of my

1 favorite hearings because it touches on something
2 that is really important to me. When I was a younger
3 parent of two, I had dropped out of school and I
4 hadn't finished high school, and a friend of mine had
5 gone to Bronx Community College, and she made it
6 sound so interesting that I was like, you know, maybe
7 I want to go back to school. And so it encouraged me
8 to go and get my GED, and so I went at night school
9 to Bronx Community College, and it was there that I
10 met what was, I guess, the-- that iteration of the
11 CUNY Educate Development program, and they made the
12 offer for parents that were single parents, primarily
13 on public assistance that would like to further their
14 education to come and meet with them, and I took them
15 up on that opportunity, and am sitting here before
16 you as a success story, right, of that program. And
17 I have always advocated for that level of programing
18 to exist specifically for, you know, young women like
19 myself who found myself in a position where I needed
20 kind of that hand-holding that the program provided.
21 So, I'm excited to hear about, you know, how it's
22 advanced in all of these years. My five-year-old is
23 now 34, so you've had quite a number of years to
24 perfect it. So I'm hoping that we've made some
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1 advances since then. But I'll start my questioning
2 with the RFP. So, the original RFP for the Career
3 Services contracts included a performance-based
4 contract structure in which contractors were paid
5 based on client outcomes. Do you know the current
6 contractors-- the current contracts in place to keep
7 providers from working only-- I'm sorry, I read that
8 wrong. Do the current contracts use a performance-
9 based contracting structure, and were there any
10 safeguards in place to keep providers from working
11 only with clients with fewer barriers to work, who
12 are more likely to reach a higher value of outcomes?

14 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Sure, thank you
15 for the question. So, during the pandemic, we did
16 not do performance-based contracts. We did cost-
17 based reimbursement, so we did not hold providers to
18 the performance-based measures that were in the
19 contracts, because at that point also all engagement
20 in Career Services was completely voluntary because
21 the mandatory engagement requirements were waived at
22 that point by the State and Federal Government. So,
23 while we encouraged the providers to engage with many
24 clients as possible, we did not institute the
25 performance-based payments at that point, and

1 reimbursed them for their actual costs. We are in
2 the process during this last sort of gear of the
3 contracts, reinstating some aspects of the
4 performance-based. We're still finalizing that plan.
5 It's not something that we're just going to resume
6 100 percent of what it was, right? We're very close
7 to having a sort of ramp-up, ramp-down plan for that,
8 but until that's instituted as well, all providers
9 will be on a cost reimbursement basis.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. And were there
12 any safeguards in place to keep providers from
13 working with only certain kind?

14 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: No, no. We, you
15 know, made sure that all of our clients were aware of
16 the offerings, and our providers are required to
17 engage and work with any cash assistance clients that
18 presents themselves wanting to receive services.

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, so can you
20 explain what those safeguards are?

21 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: So, I mean, if we
22 hear of providers rejecting clients who we refer-- we
23 refer the clients to the providers, so the providers
24 need to receive the right-- the clients that we refer
25 to them, they can't-- right-- reject clients unless

1 they come back saying we referred someone to Career
2 Services provider, and say, during their assessment
3 they said it appears this individual has some
4 barriers to employment and they might be better
5 served by WeCARE. We would then re-refer that client
6 to a WeCARE provider, but the providers need to serve
7 those clients. We have not heard of any instances
8 where clients would refuse to serve them and given
9 that the performance-based reimbursements were paused
10 during this period of time, there wouldn't have been
11 an incentive for anyone to not serve clients that we
12 have referred to them. Obviously, if someone has
13 heard otherwise, we would want to hear that, but I
14 have not had anything reported to me where providers
15 refused to serve Cash Assistance clients we referred
16 to them.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, yeah. When I--
19 when-- I mean, when the WEP program was available, I
20 know that, you know, folks ended up everywhere, and
21 so there wasn't any skill-building ability really.
22 So, I would love to-- again, this is new terrain for
23 me. How is it different than it was back then? So
24 back then, if I remember correctly through the WEP

1
2 program, you had to work four days and then on the
3 fifth day you did some sort of like training.

4 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: One of my concerns
6 were-- for instance, as an example, we had a
7 gentleman that worked at one of our senior centers
8 that had muscular dystrophy, I think it was. He had
9 a disability and it was really hard him. And
10 actually, he was in line for the kitchen right? And
11 so he had to work with knives. He had to work with
12 equipment that he really couldn't work with. He
13 should never have been sent there, you know, in the
14 first place.

15 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: He should have been--
17 at some point throughout the screening process,
18 somebody should have picked, right, that his
19 disability probably afforded him the possibility of
20 being approved for SSI or for other benefits that
21 would have been better suited for him. How do you
22 ensure that that doesn't happen now? And is the
23 process similar to what it used to be?

24 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: No. You know, we
25 did away with WEP in the prior Administration.

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2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: No, I know that WEP
3 is no longer around.

4 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Right.
5 Commissioner Banks felt very strongly, similar to
6 you, that that was not a program that was actually
7 benefiting Cash Assistance clients and giving them
8 access to experience, education that will help
9 someone to find what they want to do in the future.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah.

11 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: So, in that place
12 we put a strong primacy on internships. We created
13 an internship placement service contract that is
14 specifically about developing internships across the
15 City with nonprofit organizations and others that
16 actually provide a well-rounded experience for
17 individuals, and then we will connect individuals
18 with specific interests to internships that were
19 developed for that specific interest, whether it's a
20 nonprofit that's focused on healthcare or deserving
21 children or other types of things. So, all of our
22 providers are very much held to the expectation that
23 the experiences that they develop need to be a well-
24 rounded experience that is very different from WEP.
25 Additionally, yes, through the assessment process it

1
2 sounds like that individuals, right, should have been
3 connected to WeCARE, right, where he could have been
4 assessed on are there other services that could have
5 supported him better, or truly he would best be
6 served through SSI. WeCARE would have helped him
7 submit an application to SSI and go through that
8 process and program. So, that's what we're really
9 focused on at this point and that's what we've put
10 into place, and we'll further sort of emphasize in
11 the new round of contracts that will be coming in a
12 year.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Can you tell us how
14 long the contract terms are typically?

15 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Typically, they
16 are three years with a three-year option for
17 extension. The current contracts, I believe, will be
18 a little over that as we needed to do an extension on
19 those contracts while we procured the new PACE
20 program and the WeCARE program. But typically there
21 a three-year contract with a three-year-- potential
22 of a three-year extension.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, the last one
24 would have been three years ago?

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2 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: No, it would have
3 been in 2016, 17. It was the last contracts were
4 procured under the prior administration. That was
5 the original sort of shift to the Career Pathways
6 approach for HRA.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And when did--

8 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: [interposing] We
9 can get back to you with the specific dates on that.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And when do you
11 expect to issue a new one?

12 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: The new contracts,
13 we anticipate the new PACE program and WeCARE
14 programs to start next July 1st, 2025.

15 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. Will future
16 RFPs use the same program model? And if not, what do
17 you expect may change?

18 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Sure. So we
19 always want to build upon our program models and
20 build upon the lessons that we've learned to
21 incorporate, right, improvements to the program, but
22 also change things that maybe created unintended
23 challenges for individuals. So, the prior contracts
24 that were awarded, there were 27 individual contracts
25 between Career Compass, Career Advance, and Youth

1 Pathways. The thought process behind that at the
2 time was wanting to make sure we had a lot of
3 specialized services. An unintended consequence of
4 that was there were a lot of referrals and a lot of
5 expectation on clients having to go from one provider
6 to another. That created some challenges around
7 engagement. And so through sort of looking at what
8 happens, talking to the providers who also provided
9 these services as well as clients, we determined that
10 a one-door model would be a better way to serve
11 clients in creating a real foundation and sort of
12 home-base for individuals in the Career Services
13 program. so we anticipate nine contracts in the new,
14 where an individual will be connected to a provider
15 who will be their sort of like foundational, and then
16 that provider is responsible for creating the
17 relationship and the partnerships with education and
18 training providers, developing employment
19 opportunities with employers, and really being the
20 person that helps each individual work through the
21 system and work through the plan that's specifically
22 tailored to them. So, that's one of the things that
23 we've implemented. Additionally, you know, we're
24 further even going to look at a whole of person
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1 approach especially as it relates to the assessments.
2 In the past, right, assessments may have really just
3 focused on more a quick attachment to work approach
4 as to what type of employment are you ready for now.
5 We believe that long-term success is really about
6 understanding the whole experience of a person,
7 right? What has sort of brought them to where they
8 are with us today? What are their particular
9 interests, needs? Where may there be some gaps that
10 would best serve them, as I said in my testimony.
11 Where might actually more education and training
12 actually better serve someone in their initial
13 connection to us that will really set them up to be
14 able to secure a sustainable job in the future? So,
15 that is another thing that we're really, you know,
16 taking into account and implementing even further.
17 And then lastly, really bringing a hybrid approach,
18 right? COVID really made us quickly adapt to how can
19 we provide services that aren't in-person, which was
20 very much the pre-COVID way in which people engaged
21 with HRA services. You know, we realized that we
22 could actually really provide services that were
23 beneficial to individuals, and actually helped also
24 encourage further engagement by utilizing a hybrid
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1
2 model, which we will further incorporate into the new
3 programs. We also think it's a really great way to
4 mirror what actually the current workforce
5 environment is for individuals. So for people who
6 maybe haven't been in the workforce having to engage
7 with us both through an in-person, you come
8 sometimes, and sometimes you do something online from
9 your home, really will also build the skills of what
10 it may be like to engage in the workforce where many
11 of us also operate from a hybrid model. So we think
12 that's extremely important for us to implement as
13 well.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yes?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Just a quick
16 point of clarification. You noted 27 contracts
17 across several different programs, and a one-door
18 model saying nine contracts. So, are-- is this all
19 consolidated or are you cutting contracts? 27 to
20 nine is a very significant--

21 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: [interposing] Yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Can you explain
23 that?

24 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Sure. So, I mean,
25 first and foremost, it was really in response to what

1 we were hearing from clients and providers, right,
2 that we-- that they were being asked to move from one
3 provider to another, which initially we wanted to
4 have things very specialized, but we ultimately
5 learned through that, that that actually created a
6 barrier for them which is why we consolidated the
7 entry as part of the contracts. There was a very
8 strong focus on an expectation requirement that the
9 providers who are selected had strong subcontracts
10 with providers in their communities. so with
11 educational, training and other providers and
12 employers, so that it's not just one organization
13 someone will be dealing with, but one organization
14 will be responsible for helping facilitate that
15 individual's specific plan and what they're looking
16 to explore and making sure they have those
17 connections, and also be the place where the person
18 can go if they're having challenges of-- they have
19 set staff that they've crated those relationships
20 with that they can go back to and can help them sort
21 of navigate any challenges that may come up. So
22 that's the thought process behind it. Obviously, as
23 we implement things, we will be paying close
24 attention as well to make sure that there aren't
25

1
2 unintended consequences behind this that we would
3 want to adjust for.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: So, I think I'm
5 hearing a rejiggering of process and entry point, but
6 I guess looking at such a significant decrease in the
7 contract, the immediate thing is capacity and
8 everybody is over capacity at this point in their
9 service provision. So I guess the red flag for me
10 that I'm not entirely understanding-- maybe this will
11 be clearer, is ensuring that there is no cut in
12 services as a result of rejiggering, no cut in
13 funding, but really just improving what's there and
14 doing better.

15 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: There's not a cut
16 in funding. There's not a cut in services. In fact,
17 I think by consolidating some of these services it
18 will allow us to ensure that as much of the funding
19 as possible is going actually to support services and
20 isn't necessarily being distributed say for a variety
21 of overhead and other types of things that-- right--
22 maybe were not actually right in the current
23 contracts. it will allow us to really focus on the
24 amount of money that will be going to support
25 individual's engagement with service provision and

1
2 help to be more efficient from a administrative
3 overhead cost expense.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great. Thank
5 you, Chair. Thank you so much.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. Is it
7 possible that groups may not receive their full
8 contract amount based on performance targets?

9 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: in theory, yes,
10 but we-- you know, the last-- just like we don't want
11 to punitively part [sic] Cash Assistance clients
12 who's having challenged engagement, we also don't
13 want to, you know, take punitive action against
14 providers. so we work very closely with providers
15 around performance targets and what are not meeting
16 and definitely want to understand what the challenges
17 might be and where can we help mitigate, you know, if
18 they're facing some types of things. So, you know,
19 it is not something we want to do or, you know, would
20 do without having exhausted every other possible
21 action to try to address what might have been a
22 challenge the provider was experiencing.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Can you tell us a
24 little bit about what performance metrics are part of
25

1
2 these contracts, and how often HRA receives progress
3 reports from the providers?

4 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Sure. So,
5 performance contracts, there's a variety of different
6 measures and the new contracts will have them as well
7 that really focus on a variety of different things.
8 Some of them are, you know, how many assessments did
9 you complete, right? Others sort of process measures
10 to ensure that clients who are referred to them,
11 right, are provided the services we expect. There
12 are other measures where we're tracking how many
13 people are enrolled and engaged in education and
14 training and in completion rates, numbers of people
15 connected to employment, salaries around employment,
16 and retention rates around employment in regards to,
17 you know, are people still employed 30 days later, 60
18 days, 90 days, 180 days. So those are the types of
19 measures--

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: [interposing] Okay.

21 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: that we implement
22 and we track, and we, you know, track ongoing quality
23 assurance, quality control as part of our daily
24 operations, and we meet with our providers regularly.
25 We want to make sure that we have a very strong

1
2 feedback loop from them, because they are on the
3 ground and on the front lines so that they can let us
4 know where there may be some challenges in the
5 sectors that we maybe aren't aware of initially so
6 that we can sort of address any issues that we need
7 to address when it comes to performance measures and
8 challenges they may be having.

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. can you walk
10 us through the current Career Services model, like,
11 you know, for instance, what happens after a client
12 enrolls and how are they assessed and matched to
13 either a work experience, training, or other
14 employment support?

15 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Certainly. So,
16 after a client, you know, applies or recertifies for
17 Cash Assistance, as part of that they have an
18 interview, right? In the interview we conduct what's
19 called and employment plan which assesses if someone
20 is employable and if they have any barriers to
21 employment or if they would have engagement
22 requirements. Based upon the outcome of that, they
23 currently would be referred to either a Career
24 Compass provider that is located near their
25 residence, or in terms of youth to a Youth Pathways

1 provider. When they go to that provider, the
2 provider will provide them with first orientation to
3 all of the services that are offered, right, and then
4 they will conduct an assessment that looks at both
5 the individual's skills, their experience, but more
6 importantly look at what are the individual's goals
7 and aspirations, what are their career interests,
8 right, and based upon sort of all of that, they'll
9 develop collaboratively a plan for that individual.
10 So, for someone who say didn't graduate high school
11 and is like, the first thing I want to do is graduate
12 high school, it would be about connecting them to a
13 GED program that meets, right, what they need.
14 Similarly, if someone say needed an ESL class, or
15 someone was interested in a vocational training, they
16 could connect them to that. for individuals who come
17 in and say I really want to be connected to
18 employment, right, I know exactly what I want to do,
19 then they would connect them to those either through
20 themselves or to our Business Link program, right,
21 which also has a whole array of employment
22 opportunities. And so individuals would then be
23 assigned to their engagement which has certain hourly
24 requirements that would be tracked on an ongoing
25

1 weekly basis, right? And then the provider would be,
2 you know, following up with them. For some
3 individuals they would be referred from Career
4 Compass to Career Advance. Say they wanted to look
5 and work in a specific industry and there's an
6 advance provider who works in that industry, they
7 would be transferred to them to be connected to their
8 services and supports. And then the providers would
9 ongoingly [sic] track an individual's engagement. If
10 there seems to be some challenges with an individual
11 engaging, they would proactively reach out to them to
12 try to understand what's going on, if there's a
13 short-term barrier that's presented itself or some
14 other thing that is causing it difficult for the
15 person to engage to try to remediate that, and then
16 ongoing there would be periodic check-ins and
17 tracking of progress. That's sort of general.
18 Obviously, each individual situation is somewhat
19 different.
20

21 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: That's pretty
22 extensive. Council Member Cabán has a question, but
23 we've also been joined by Council Member Restler.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: thank you. Good
25 morning. I want to focus my questions on GMHCs HASA

1 workforce program, and just for the record I want to
2 give a little bit of background before I ask my
3 questions. So, as you know, since 2014, GMACs RISE
4 program has helped around 674 clients find employment
5 by providing culturally-competent and individualized
6 assistance, resume building, vocational training,
7 internships, employment, benefits counseling, job
8 placement, retention assistance for unemployed and
9 under-employed workers-- the list goes on. And in
10 fiscal 2025, the Prelim Plan, HRA eliminated the RISE
11 contract as part of the agency's PEG plan in response
12 to the Mayor's budget reduction mandate. The
13 elimination generated over 284,000 in "savings"
14 starting in fiscal 2025, although we can argue what
15 those cuts do in the longer term in terms of the
16 effects in the community. And the agency indicated
17 that clients would continue to be served by other
18 employment programs. So, these are my questions. At
19 the fiscal 2025 Exec Budget hearing, HRA indicated
20 that the agency was in discussion with GMHC regarding
21 the ramp-down of the RISE program and indicated that
22 the conversations included how clients who were still
23 required employment services would be connected with
24 other existing HRA employment programs. So it's been
25

1 four months since that hearing. Obviously, what I'd
2 like to hear is an update. Have you identified which
3 of the programs will provide those specialized
4 services to those clients that were in the RISE
5 program, and also for the clients that were enrolled
6 in RISE as of June 30th, 2024 when that contract
7 ended, which specific programs were they transferred
8 to and when? How many clients were transferred? For
9 those who were not transferred, why not?
10

11 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: sure. Thank you
12 for the question, and as we discussed as well during
13 the budget hearings, there were some difficult
14 decisions we had to make and this decision was not a
15 comment on the benefit and the services that GMHC
16 provided, but as an agency we had to make some
17 challenging decisions across all of our programs, and
18 unfortunately, this was one of those. So, all of the
19 individuals who were engaged with RISE, right, are
20 current active HASA clients. So they remain HASA
21 clients where they have their case managers who are
22 responsible for periodically checking in with
23 individuals to make sure, you know, to check with
24 them on anything that they may need. For clients
25 actively engaged in RISE, they were transferred to

1
2 the HASA Vocational Rehabilitation program that we
3 have which is a small program within HASA facilitated
4 by city workers that offers computer training,
5 assistance with work readiness and--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: [interposing] And
7 that was every-- was that every single client?

8 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Yes.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Every single--

10 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: [interposing] They
11 were at the--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: [inaudible] client?

13 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: At the end of the
14 program based on the data I have, there were 16
15 individuals actively engaged with the program, all 16
16 were transferred to the Vocational Rehab program. Of
17 those 16, eight people were actively employed, so
18 they needed retention services that we are providing
19 them. The other eight were engaged around what their
20 specific interests were. I don't have specifics on
21 the eight. We could follow up on that if you would
22 like.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: The clients that
24 were transferred, the HASA program that they were
25

1 transferred to, is that HASA program designed
2 specifically for the LGBTQIA+ community?
3

4 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: It's designed
5 specifically for individuals with HIV and AIDS which
6 would include individuals, right, for the LGBTQIA+
7 community, not solely just for that, right? It is
8 available to any HASA client who would like to avail
9 themselves of it. So, it's not specific in that way,
10 but all of the services and the expectations are
11 that, right, services are provided in a culturally-
12 competent manner.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: And what's the
14 make-up of the employees of that particular HASA
15 program in terms of the folks who are working and are
16 part of that community, whether it's at the
17 intersection of the HIV/AIDS community or the queer
18 community?

19 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: I'll have to get
20 back to you on the specifics. I don't have those
21 off-hand in regards to those specific staff members.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: And then I just
23 have one other follow-up. As was discussed in fiscal
24 2025 Exec Budget hearing, the-- the GMHC, the
25 community that they serve, obviously, has-- often has

1
2 a mistrust in government in health-related service
3 delivery due to the challenges that they've
4 experienced, again, at the intersection of their
5 identities and their health needs. So, I know you
6 said that obviously that it's geared towards folks
7 with HIV and AIDS, where they were transferred to,
8 but can you talk more about the customized approach
9 to provide those services to this particular
10 population that was previously being served by GMHC?

11 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: So, all of our
12 services in our HASA-- all services through HASA need
13 to be developed through an individualized approach,
14 right, and our case managers as well as those working
15 in the vocational program are trained to be able to
16 approach thing similarly to the Career Services
17 program from a whole-of-person approach. So that
18 means including intersection of someone's identities.
19 So it's really about understanding what individuals
20 are interested in and then being able to connect them
21 to those services that best meet their needs. I
22 don't have specifics on each of these individuals.
23 Again, I'm happy to get some more information and
24 follow up with you, but all of our services are meant
25 to, you know, engage folks in that way. You know,

1 while we did have to cut this program from GMHC,
2 right, we did retain and keep a program with them
3 around financial management which does serve, you
4 know, similar clients as those in the RISE program. I
5 know it's not the same. I did want to just--

6
7 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: [interposing] And
8 I just-- I understand what you're saying, and I just
9 kind of want to like offer a broad statement to--

10 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: [interposing] Sure.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: kind of make a
12 point. Like, I understand the intention to have a,
13 like, individualized, customized approach for every
14 person and that is what professionals do in different
15 settings, and we can endeavor to do that, but I do
16 think that we have to acknowledge that there is a
17 difference when like-- let's say I am-- I'm going to
18 give a personal example. I'm seeking therapy
19 services, right? Presumably, a whole host of
20 organizations or clinics are going to say, hey, we do
21 an individualized approach and we can-- come as you
22 are and we can do that, but there's a reason why I
23 then do the extra work to say, actually, no, I need
24 to find a therapist who is a woman of color, who is
25 like queer-identifying, or specializes in that work,

1
2 or has spent a significant amount of time focusing
3 their practice on a particular kinds of trauma
4 histories, and so like I think we can endeavor to do
5 that and that's great and it's the baseline, but I
6 think we do have to acknowledge that there is a
7 difference between some of these, like, really,
8 really targeted organizations and service providers.
9 And I'll leave it at that, and thank you, Chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. We've
11 also been joined by Council Member Banks. Okay. I'm
12 going to move on to the employment services contract
13 area. there is \$128.2 million budgeted in fiscal
14 year 2025 for the Employment Services Contract
15 program area of which \$126.7 million is budgeted for
16 contractual services which includes 62 contracts for
17 employment services. What is the budgeted funding
18 for employment services contracts in fiscal year 26
19 and in the out-years? If the budget is declining,
20 why is the budget declining?

21 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: So, I'll have to
22 get back to you specifically on FY 26. There is no
23 intention of a budget declining for the employment
24 services contracts. So, but we can get back to you
25

1 with specific figures that were included in the
2 projections. I just don't have that.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, we would just--
5 we were referring to the OMB documents of funding to
6 this program which were-- which was at \$120.2 million
7 in fiscal year 26, \$118.5 in 27, and \$117.5 in 28.

8 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: I will get back--
9 I'll have to get back to you on that specifics.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. And then are
11 all 62 contracts for direct employment services for
12 HRA clients?

13 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: They are not all
14 exclusively for HRA clients. They all can serve
15 them, but there are-- right-- the Career Services and
16 WeCARE contracts are for individuals on Cash
17 Assistance who have engagement requirements. There
18 are other programs that we offer that serve HRA
19 clients and other low income populations. So, the
20 Jobs Plus programs at NYCHA is for low income
21 individuals. You don't have to be on Cash Assistance
22 to participate in those programs. The PINCC program
23 that I mentioned is for individuals 18 and older at
24 or below 300 percent of the federal poverty level.
25 Obviously, we focus on Cash Assistance clients, SNAP

1 recipients, Medicaid recipients, but those programs
2 are not exclusively just for those individuals. So,
3 there is-- there are some programs that are for a
4 broader population of low income New Yorkers.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. And for direct
7 employment service contracts, who are the contracted
8 providers and what employment services and programs
9 do they provide?

10 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: It's a large list,
11 so we are happy to follow up with a list of the
12 providers and which services and their contract
13 values.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: [inaudible] have a
15 question. Does the release of the RFP require any
16 changes to what is budgeted, and if so, what and when
17 will that-- they be made?

18 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: I'm not sure I 100
19 percent understand that. In regards to the contract
20 values? So, the final contract values are still
21 being, right, determined. We have estimated values
22 for each of the service areas which are the boroughs
23 that are listed in the RFP. So that is what we're
24 currently providing for Career Services, but eh final
25 contract values will ultimately for each provider

1 depend on their proposal, right, and the outcome
2 through the negotiations, but the overall amounts in
3 the RFP are what we are going to be awarding.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. Council
5 Member Ung just joined us virtually. Happy birthday,
6 Sandra. I'm moving on to the Comptroller's audit.
7 Can you tell us what does HRA plan to do to achieve
8 its own retention rate of 80 percent at 180-day mark
9 of a client's employment? And participants of Career
10 Pathways-- well, answer that one first, and then
11 we'll get to the other one.

12 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Sure. So within
13 our contracts, right, we have-- now that we have
14 shifted back to mandatory engagements. So I think
15 one of the things to understand is that, you know,
16 within the audit, that was during voluntary
17 engagement which is a very different experience in
18 time and isn't really comparable to say what happens
19 in 2019, right? Which also won't be comparable to
20 what's happening now as we ramp up mandatory
21 engagement in the process, right? Versus where we'll
22 be from a year from now. So, I just want to sort of
23 give some context there within the overall audit and
24 the numbers that were being referred to and the marks
25

1 that were met. But you know, we track with our
2 providers on a monthly basis where, you know, we are
3 making placements and how that is tracking against,
4 sort of, overall goals that we have, and so as that
5 sort of happens overtime, if we see areas where
6 things are going to start to lag or specific
7 providers that maybe are having challenges, we'll
8 meet specifically with them to understand what's
9 going on and determine what might be some
10 intervention measures that could be, whether it's
11 something we could do or something we could do in
12 partnership with say one of our sister agencies like
13 SBS and Workforce One centers. So, you know, it's
14 part of the ongoing quality assurance and quality
15 control measures we have, where we're measuring our,
16 you know, progress to our goals, and if it looks like
17 we aren't on track, we then sort of look specifically
18 at what's not working or what might be causing that
19 and adjust as possible, right? Or take into account
20 maybe there's been a change in the workforce
21 environment in a particular sector. That means it's
22 not sort of operating the same way it had been, which
23 means we should adjust what we think our goals may
24 be.
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Council Member
3 Restler has a question.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so
5 much, Deputy Speaker, Chair. We're very lucky to
6 have you at the helm at this committee. And it's
7 good to see you Administrator French. Is that what
8 I'm supposed to call you?

9 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: we've known each
10 other very long, it can be Scott.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Scott's okay?
12 Alright. Scott, it's good to see you, and really
13 happy that you're in this role, and also just want to
14 take a moment to congratulate Jamar behind you on his
15 promotion which is well-deserved and a really good
16 thing for the Department of Social Services. Just
17 have a few questions. I wanted to just start with
18 one of my favorite workforce development programs and
19 just get a little bit of a status update on how Jobs
20 Plus is doing. How many NYCHA developments is Jobs
21 Plus currently in?

22 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: It serves 40
23 developments--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]
25 Okay.

1
2 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: across 11
3 contracts. So,--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] And
5 has there been any increase in the Adams
6 Administration in the number of developments that
7 we're serving or the number of people we're serving?

8 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: There-- it has
9 remained consistent, but there has not been an
10 increase or expansion at this point.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And is that
12 something that you think would be merited?

13 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: I mean, I think
14 that we look at Jobs Plus on ongoing basis. We're
15 currently looking at the model as we'll be-- it'll be
16 an RFP in a couple of years. So we're currently
17 assessing how it's operating and if there are ways in
18 which we can be more efficient or more effective at
19 that point. Right now, we are looking at it within
20 the current funding that we have.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Well, I certainly
22 think when we have successful workforce development
23 models that are reaching NYCHA tenants and connecting
24 them to good jobs, we've got to maximize them, and
25 this is one that works. There are other, for

1 instance, training academies that I also am a big fan
2 of, but I just think we should be putting a whole
3 lot more resources in, because that's where they're
4 needed. Several months ago, DSS celebrated kind of
5 clearing of the backlog of food stamps and Cash
6 Assistance cases. It's all very good news. Could
7 you just give us a status update? Have we maintained
8 that clearance of the backlog, or has the backlog
9 grown since, you know, that announcement? I think it
10 was May or June. I don't recall exactly when the
11 mayor did it.

13 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: You know, we
14 continue to maintain on a monthly basis, right? We
15 still are experiencing very high volumes which speaks
16 to the need that's existing, right, in the
17 communities, but like we did-- eradicating the
18 backlog, we continue to focus on the different
19 pillars that we were working on then. So, hiring,
20 right? We are primarily-- we are very much focused
21 on making sure that we are replacing staff as they
22 leave so that we can retain the hiring progress that
23 we made over the last year where we brought on the
24 thousand new staff. Additionally, we continue to
25 look at different ways in which there are

1 efficiencies in the process that we can implement,
2 both on our own or in partnership with OTDA to make
3 the process first and foremost easier for individuals
4 coming to us looking for help and support, but also
5 from a processing point of view minimizing those. So
6 we track it on a monthly basis to make sure that we
7 remain on track while meeting the increased demand
8 that is still out there in the community.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Very happy to
11 hear that you've been able to-- with some increased
12 staffing and other approaches and effective
13 management maintain the cleared backlog. You know,
14 what I have found really troubling is that, you know,
15 pre-pandemic, January 2020 it's about a five percent
16 rejection rate on Cash Assistance applications based
17 on the data that I was reviewing, and as of this past
18 summer, or at least summer of 23, excuse me, we were
19 upwards of close to 45 percent denial rate on Cash
20 Assistance applications. So, that is almost a 10-
21 fold increase in denials, and with the reinstatement
22 of work requirements as of this summer, I'm very
23 concerned about the combination of increased
24 bureaucratic hurdles and complications that are
25 leading to almost half of Cash Assistance applicants

1 getting denied with the additional responsibilities
2 now of the work requirements potentially having the
3 impact of increasing those denials to even higher
4 rates, and these are the folks in New York City who
5 need our help the most, and I have long-admired HRA
6 and their operational skills as an agency, and I'm
7 happy that you're at the helm, but I'm very, very
8 concerned about these trends. And seeing nearly half
9 of Cash Assistance applications get rejected, and now
10 we're adding additional hoops that people need to
11 jump through with work requirements, I'm concerned
12 that this is going to lead to an even higher rate of
13 denials, and potentially people then losing their
14 food stamps, losing housing subsidies and other
15 things that they desperately, desperately need. And
16 so, I just-- a few questions there. One, were you
17 required by the feds to reinstitute these work
18 requirements as of July of this year, or was that a
19 choice that HRA decided to make, or the state or
20 feds, or was that at your discretion? Secondly,
21 since this was implemented six weeks ago, have you
22 noted any increase in rejections of Cash Assistance
23 applications? Has there been any fluctuation in the
24 denial rate? And thirdly, are you concerned, as a
25

1 thoughtful and compassionate government leaders, that
2 this is going to lead to further denials of Cash
3 Assistance applications and further kind of erode
4 people's access to the benefits that they depend on?
5

6 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Certainly. Thank
7 you for the questions. So, first, we were ordered by
8 the State and Federal Government to reinstitute
9 mandatory engagement and the sanction process. We
10 delayed it as long as we could, and we also did it in
11 a tiered approach. So we implemented mandatory
12 engagement in say October or November where we just
13 started to reintroduce the concept to individuals,
14 especially to those who are completely new to case
15 worker who have never had to engage with-- what do
16 you mean a work requirement and an engagement
17 requirement is? And so we started that process to
18 really educate folks and we only just restarted the
19 sanction process on August the 19th. So, that period
20 in between, there wasn't negative implications on
21 folks if they didn't engage with mandatory
22 engagement, but we really wanted it to be that place
23 where we're not catching people off-guard, and we're
24 explaining to them this is actually a value and a
25 benefit to you. This is meant to help you and not

1
2 meant to be punitive. So, in that way, you know, I
3 will say that. And then, in regards to denial rates,
4 you know, I think one of the challenges or one of the
5 drivers behind the increase in the percentage that I
6 think Commissioner Park has also spoken to is there
7 are also a lot more people applying to Cash
8 Assistance than did before. We made it much easier
9 which we are very happy about it to apply for Cash
10 Assistance. You can do it 24/7 right from your home,
11 from a phone, from a computer which as we've seen is
12 record-high numbers of applications. Increased
13 applications doesn't necessarily mean that's
14 increased number of people who are actually
15 ultimately eligible for the benefit. But I hear you,
16 and we certainly don't want to be negatively denying
17 individuals who are eligible. I will say seeing that
18 the Cash Assistance caseload does continue to
19 increase month over month, I feel like that is a
20 counter to say that we are still finding individuals
21 who are eligible for Cash Assistance and they are
22 entering the caseload. But we obviously don't want
23 any unintended consequences on increasing denials.
24 Since the imposition of sanctions, we have not seen
25 an increase in denials in that way. We probably

1 wouldn't see an engagement in that way because the
2 sanction process would only happen once you've
3 actually been accepted onto Cash Assistance, but we
4 have also, you know, to your second point, around
5 imposing this-- will that mean more people are then
6 ultimately denied or taken off Cash Assistance. The
7 Administration, going back to the prior
8 Administration as well, worked very hard on expanding
9 how we look at mandatory engagement, what is eligible
10 for that, and then the process by which we go through
11 sanctioning someone-- and I would say we have an
12 extensive process that is really focused on engaging
13 someone in services we think are beneficial to them,
14 and only in the most extreme situations actually
15 sanctioning someone's case. So, it takes
16 approximately eight weeks or more from when someone
17 say doesn't comply with an engagement requirement
18 until we would actually start imposing a sanction on
19 someone's case, and in that period of time, we have
20 extensive outreach and engagement with individuals to
21 make sure, A, they understand what are your rent
22 responsibilities as part of Cash Assistance? What
23 does this mean, right? How do you have to be
24 connected? Has something changed since we initially
25

1 assessed you that leads to you having a barrier to
2 being able to engage-- that we can reassess that.

3 And so we do that first through our providers who
4 proactively outreach to individuals assigned to their
5 services who do not show up for the services they
6 need to engage in. we give that a couple of weeks
7 where it's just about the provider, and then the
8 agency and agency staff also start to communicate
9 with individuals through mailings, text messages,
10 emails, meetings that outline multiple times here are
11 the requirements and here's how you're not meeting
12 those requirements. Is there some reason that you're
13 not able to meet these requirements at that time?

14 And if there is, say, an imminent short-term issue
15 that comes up-- someone broke their leg. They're not
16 able to transport to somewhere, right? We then take
17 action to make sure someone isn't negatively
18 impacted. So we've really put in places where
19 someone can also cure any issue immediately. We, you
20 know-- in the prior Administration advocated for and
21 ultimately we were able to get non-durational
22 sanctions impacted for New York City, how it is
23 across the rest of the state which means someone can
24 cure their issue immediately and resume their
25

1 benefits, especially for Cash Assistance. SNAP,
2 depending on the situation, does still have some
3 durational benefits because it's run by the Federal
4 Government, but we've implemented a lot of different
5 ways to try to avoid this. And I will say, prior to
6 COVID, 2019 was probably the first full year where
7 this process was in and very, very few people who
8 entered the process ultimately ended up being
9 sanctioned.
10

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: That is all very
12 helpful. I will say, in the conversations we have
13 with constituents who are applying and with
14 advocates, we have concerns about the increased
15 denial rate and technology and bureaucracy and
16 challenges that folks are facing that have led to, I
17 think, increase in unfair denials. Appreciate the
18 caseload has increased. Appreciate there are a lot
19 of good and smart policies in place, and yet, the
20 massive increase in denials, nearly 10-fold, is
21 concerning. And so, I would love to drill down
22 further on that with you and your team. I want to be
23 mindful of the Deputy Speaker's time and generosity
24 in letting me speak. I just would love to ask one
25 parochial question in conclusion. You know, we had a

1 tragic issue yesterday at Schermerhorn site where a
2 fight broke out, led to a stabbing on the corner. I
3 hope the-- I've been told the person is okay. we
4 just-- you know, and for-- I assume it was in
5 reaction to that tragedy that some of the operations
6 internally were modified, but you know, we had people
7 out in line outdoors for over a block and a half
8 yesterday until five o'clock at night, until the end
9 of the day for eight hours, you know, seven/eight
10 hours. And we often have extremely long lines at the
11 Schermerhorn site, and I reach out to you when it's
12 really hot. I reach out to you when it's really
13 cold. I continue to hope that there are operational
14 improvements that you all can identify. I'd be happy
15 to come on a tour. I've been inside the site many
16 times, but I haven't-- it's been probably a decade.
17 So, I'd be happy to see if there's any ideas we can
18 come up with together to try and provide people with
19 a more customer-friendly experience rather than
20 waiting on the street for, you know, hours on end.
21 And relatedly, I know that there was a plan in the
22 previous Administration to shutter some of the
23 downtown Brooklyn HRA sites, and there's shifting of
24 where services are being provided. I would really
25

1
2 love to get a briefing on the timeline of those plans
3 and which sites are being activated when and which
4 sites are closing when. Is that something that we
5 could set up with somebody on your team?

6 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Yeah, I'm happy to
7 follow up with you both on a visit to the site to
8 walk through it and talk about it, as well as the
9 longer term plans.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you. I
11 would really appreciate it. Thank you very much,
12 Scott, and thank you very much, Chair. I really
13 appreciate the time.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. He loves
15 this stuff. I actually had a question. I wanted to
16 go back to the Jobs Plus program, because you noted
17 here that there are-- that HRA is administering 40, I
18 guess you know, New York City housing developments or
19 within the proximity of a development. But have--
20 were there any cuts to Jobs Plus this fiscal year?
21 Because I remember-- I know mine was cut--

22 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: [interposing] Yes,
23 yes. So, the program serves 40 developments. Yes,
24 there were two contracts as part of the overall PEG
25 plan that we discussed that we ultimately had to end.

1
2 What I can say on both of those is the provider in
3 East Harlem continues to provide services in the
4 community through other funding that they had to
5 individuals they were engaging. It's not a Jobs Plus
6 program, so I'm not going to--

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: [interposing] HRA-
8 funded program?

9 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: pretend that it
10 is. It was other employment funding programs that
11 they--

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: [interposing] If
13 you're not funding them, how do you know?

14 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Because that's what
15 they've been reporting to us, and I double-checked
16 this morning with my team. Are they still providing
17 services? And they indicated that they were. And
18 then the south Bronx location, the provider there
19 actually inherited a different south Bronx contract
20 because the provider chose not to continue on, and
21 they are serving both that catchment area as well as
22 their original area within that contract. So they
23 have continued services to both of those South Bronx
24 communities.

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COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I find it really ironic that only the-- the only two that were cut were in my district, but I'll leave it at that. So, they-- so were there 42 locations and now we're now we're down to 40, or are we down to 38?

ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Let me follow up with you on that. I know currently it is serving 40 developments, but each provider-- some providers serve multiple developments, so I want to be specific on what were the numbers and what is the numbers now to account for what these two contracts that we were just talking about.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I mean, I appreciate the concept, you know.

ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: It was 44 developments and now it is 40.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. So there were two-- four that were cut, then.

ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Four developments were impacted by the two contracts.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: By the two contracts.

ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Oh, okay, okay.
That's right because they had expanded to East Harlem

1 as well to Clinton and-- [inaudible] remember it was
2 Johnston [sic]. Okay. Now, I lost my track of
3 thought. But you know, the jobs-- one of the things
4 that I really appreciated-- I appreciate about the
5 Jobs Plus program is that they actually follow up
6 with the individuals for way over a year. Now, HRA
7 opts to do, I guess, through your contracts a six-
8 month?
9

10 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: The retention that
11 we look at is up to six months, and the providers,
12 right, are-- need to be tracking that, and also, you
13 know, individuals can come back to the providers if
14 they need additional assistance, but it's not for as
15 long and constant contact as with Jobs Plus.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And what is the
17 percentage of participants that remain employed six
18 months out?

19 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: I'll have to get
20 back to you on that, because 2019 would be the most
21 appropriate numbers, because we don't have, I think--
22 we need a little bit more time to be able to develop
23 some numbers for what we're seeing now which I'm
24 anticipating may look different, but I'm happy to
25 also keep you updated as we develop more data and

1
2 really understand what the trends are and where it
3 looks like we're going. But if you would like, we
4 could follow up with 2019 numbers. It will just be
5 from a different, sort of, place and time in regards
6 to the services because during COVID years it was all
7 voluntary. So it wouldn't represent really the
8 programs as they were intended, given it was
9 voluntary engagement.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. You said, I
11 think-- believe you mentioned that there's going to
12 be a new RFP for the Jobs Plus program?

13 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: In a couple of
14 years.

15 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: In a couple of years.

16 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: We're just
17 starting to talk about it right now.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay.

19 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: but we like to
20 think in advance of when the current round of
21 contracts will be renewed, so.

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Has there been any
23 consideration to changing the terms? I mean, I know
24 that they're very specific to NYCHA and to these
25 specific development which becomes a little bit of a

1 hindrance, because if you're a young person, for
2 instance, and you live at one development and now
3 you're traveling to another development, there may be
4 a problem, right? We've seen that, you know-- people
5 are discouraged from participating in activities at
6 other developments, because they may not feel, you
7 know, safe, specifically in the youth population. So
8 that's one of the-- that's something that I would,
9 you know, reconsider is really the placement of those
10 sites. See, in the East Harlem part and even in the
11 South Bronx, we were very lucky that those places
12 were kind of neutral and so it didn't matter where
13 you came from. You know, you could feel free--

14 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: [interposing] Yeah.

15 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: to walk in any day,
16 but that's not always the case. And then too, the
17 types of employment opportunities that are being
18 afforded to folks, sometimes there are instances
19 where Jobs Plus-- the Jobs Plus program has a
20 connection to some sort of training, maybe security
21 trainings or, I don't know. But for the most part,
22 folks are being directed into retail or you know,
23 minimum wage jobs, right? And that's not going to
24 allow, especially you know, with the expenses in this
25

1 city for folks to gain that level of independence
2 that we're looking for, and so I wonder if there's
3 been any thought to kind of ramping up a little bit of
4 what it is that they're offering at the Jobs Plus
5 programs so that we're offering skills-- an
6 opportunity to develop those skills in a way that is
7 realistic, but also allows folks an entry into
8 middle-class jobs, right? Connecting them to city
9 jobs-- we have an abundance of jobs that are
10 available. I mean, are we connecting folks. These
11 are the same agencies, right? Like, are we
12 connecting folks to those job opportunities? Are we
13 training them? In East Harlem, we had a program
14 called Strive, and at some point they worked with one
15 of our nonprofits, Union Settlement Association, and
16 they created this partnership with Mount Sinai
17 Hospital. And so Mount Sinai Hospital would say,
18 well, we need some phlebotomists, and so they would
19 train the phlebotomist and then Mount Sinai would
20 hire them. Those type of partnerships are more in
21 line with what I think, right, these opportunities
22 should look like. It's not just-- it's not so much--
23 it's, you know-- it isn't just about getting somebody
24 a job, right? But we're looking to self-sufficiency,
25

1 right? We're looking to ensure that people are able
2 to stay in the City, that are able to pay rent and
3 still be able to put food on the table, and that's
4 very difficult when you're making, you know, minimum
5 wage. And so I would love to see some, you know,
6 diversity there in terms of the types of jobs that
7 are offered and the types of training opportunities,
8 as well. Because I think that, you know, you have a
9 lot of entrepreneurs, people that working from home
10 baking cakes that they could be selling at La
11 Marqueta [sp?], that they could be working, you know-
12 - you could be working with EDC to try to identify
13 low-cost space, you know, so that they can begin
14 their small businesses. We have organizations. So,
15 I think that there has to be a-- you know, there are
16 way-- I agree that there are way too many contracts
17 and it makes it very difficult to do an adequate
18 assessment. Even for me, I'm like still confused
19 about all of this, because there's just so much look
20 at. It's distracting. But I think when you start to
21 consolidate it should help alleviate some of that,
22 because then those partnerships are a little bit, you
23 know, they're stronger. And we know where they exist
24 and where those opportunities exist, but I just-- you

1 know, one of the points of contention that I have is
2 really the type of jobs that we are, you know,
3 prioritizing for Black and Brown folks, right? You
4 know, there's no shame in any job, but we also have
5 skillsets, right, that allow us an opportunity to
6 work in spaces where we haven't been allowed or don't
7 know how to get into. And so it's important that
8 those opportunities are also a part of the equation,
9 and maybe those-- you know, that should be first,
10 right? They should have first dibs to those jobs, at
11 least, you know-- I'm not saying that you're mandated
12 to give anybody, you know, a job, but they should at
13 least have first dibs at applying for and being
14 considered should they have the qualifications. And
15 if they don't, maybe that's the pipeline, right, that
16 we need to create-- is a, you know, a pipeline to
17 those jobs so that we're creating that self-
18 sufficiency that we're looking for.

19 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Right. And we
20 definitely agree. I just want to say I think with
21 everything you say, and that really does inform all
22 that we're doing, and it is about finding good jobs
23 and connecting people to good jobs that also have
24 career paths to them, right? Just like all of us, we
25

1
2 have jobs and then we look to see what might be next,
3 and we want to make sure-- you're right, individuals
4 on Cash Assistance have the same access to those
5 jobs, right? They have the same goals, same
6 interests, same, you know, futures that they want to
7 look at. So, we are very much focused on that which
8 I think we're doing through the PINCC program, right,
9 where we've created a lot of relationships with local
10 unions which is one pathway also into really good
11 jobs, union jobs, you know, other types of things as
12 well as looking at ways in which we can retain people
13 and recruit people into, you know, city jobs. I know
14 HRA, you know, as part of Jobs NYC, and just are the
15 work of Business Link. We are constantly reaching
16 out to Cash Assistance clients and others about
17 vacancies that we have, right, working in benefits,
18 in my agency as well as other agencies. So, we agree
19 with you. I'm very happy to also, you know, take any
20 thoughts and recommendations you have, but from a
21 perspective of what we think the goal needs to be,
22 we're definitely aligned as to where we need to be
23 going.

24

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Is there a list of
3 industries that are of interest to HRA when you're
4 contracting with these organizations?

5 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Yes, we can
6 provide-- right. We-- depending on programs we look
7 at different things, but you know, there are some
8 programs that focus on say green jobs or technology
9 jobs, but then for the PINCC program we're looking at
10 industrial, construction, and transportation and sort
11 of breaking down those barriers of how does one enter
12 into that, right? How does one get into a training
13 program that will connect you then to a job where you
14 can then sort of go up the ladder of experience in
15 providing wrap-around supports to help people manage
16 and facilitate that process. So, those are some of
17 the few things, but happy to follow up with the
18 variety of different sectors and things that we're
19 looking at in relationships we've created.

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. And how soon
21 after an individual is linked to a job do they lose
22 their benefits?

23 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: So, it will depend
24 on how much the job pays. So that impact would be
25 different depending. For Cash Assistance clients,

1 right, there is a six-month earned income disregard
2 that is up to 200 percent of the federal poverty
3 level, if I'm remembering that correctly. I know
4 there is interest in advocating at the state level to
5 see if that could be increased, but for individuals
6 who secure jobs who still-- who would still be at or
7 below 200 of the federal poverty level, they would
8 remain on Cash Assistance for six months. So there
9 would be a ramp-down period of understanding, right?
10 In six months, this part of your income, right, will
11 be reduced, but it allows a period of time for them
12 to adjust to what does it mean for full-time
13 employment, right? What are some of the other things
14 I need to put in place? For other individuals who
15 get higher paying jobs, the change could be quicker,
16 right, given-- depending on how much they're actually
17 making. So it would vary depending on that, but we
18 definitely try to look at, right, the benefits clip,
19 as people say, and other things that would impact
20 people and through our services really provide people
21 with services and understandings around what does it
22 mean to transition to employment. What does it mean
23 to transition off benefits, which can be challenging
24

1
2 depending on how much experience someone has or has
3 not had with the workforce?

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Is there any
5 assistance in terms of transportation costs and
6 childcare?

7 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Yes. So, for Cash
8 Assistance clients, there is for those eligible-- for
9 those people who leave the caseload there is 12
10 months of additional childcare that is offered to
11 individuals which is a great help, right? And you
12 know, some other individuals do receive some short-
13 term transportation assistance as they transition.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Short-term meaning
15 what?

16 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Metro cards--

17 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: [interposing] A month?

18 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: I think it's--

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: [interposing] How
20 short term is short term?

21 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: It's about a month
22 for folks.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. See, that's
24 something that Jobs Plus does better. They-- if you
25 bring your paycheck stub, your pay slip, they'll give

1
2 you a metro card for the month. And so, you know, I
3 mean, transportation is expensive--

4 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: [interposing] Yeah.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: in New York City.

6 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: It doesn't matter how
8 you--

9 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: [interposing]
10 That's why it's important everyone knows about Fair
11 Fares.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: how you're getting to
13 work. But that also leads back to my first concern,
14 right, about the type of jobs that we're connecting
15 folks too, because the idea is not to connect the
16 person to a job and then they still qualify for
17 Medicaid and food stamps, right? That's, you know--
18 that's not success to me, and it just-- it means that
19 we're paying for it twice, when we could do it
20 properly the first time by, you know, taking time to
21 educate folks, give them the option to go back to
22 school, provide them with the level of training that
23 they need, and then connect them to, you know, higher
24 wage employment opportunities. That's, to me, what--
25 you know, that's the goal, right?

ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: That should be the goal.

ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: And HRA has advocated for that for the last many years, often getting the state to expand their requirements, especially around education which used to be very limited, which is-- has more options now for individuals and making it clear that training and education are the foundation for some people to connect them to sustainable employment, and that that-- engaging in that should be considered an equivalent activity as someone who gets a job.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah. Yeah, no, it's not easy out here in the streets. Okay, so I just have a question, a couple of questions regarding the Career Services programs. HRA introduced the Pathways to Industrial and Construction Careers program to support workforce development in the local buildings and construction and transportation, distribution and logistics industry. Is HRA considering similar programs for the industry? If so, which industries, and what is the projected timeline for such program?

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2 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: So, currently,
3 we're in the midst of implementing the PINCC program.
4 The model itself we think is a strong model and is
5 something for us to look at in other ways, right?
6 There isn't right now other industries we are
7 currently expanding to, but we are learning from this
8 implementation as to how we really do create those
9 relationships from the training providers to
10 apprenticeships or say unions to actual employers and
11 how do you create pathways that are sort of seamless
12 for individuals where they can enter it and they
13 continue on a path that ultimately results in
14 employment. So, while we're still implementing that
15 program, we are definitely seeing the model itself as
16 something that is very effective, and we think we're
17 actually also creating really strong partnerships
18 with, you know, other stakeholders who are essential
19 to the success of a program like that. Say it's the
20 unions or other large-scale employers up to the value
21 which then we will look in the future to leverage to
22 create similar programs in other industries.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. Do we know how
24 many clients HRA refers to other agencies for
25

1
2 workforce development opportunities like Parks
3 Department or?

4 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Some of them I
5 would be able to know, right, in regards to Parks
6 Department, right, in the Parks JTP program that's
7 now being facilitated by Parks. We do do ongoing
8 referrals, so that is something we could probably get
9 and get back to you for. Other referrals, right, we
10 may not have those numbers, say someone who's going
11 to a Workforce One center, or we've just made them
12 aware of other options in the communities to them.
13 So, there are some where we have more formalized
14 partnerships. We have those. Others, we may not
15 have that exact data, but I can say under the Adams
16 Administration and the Office of Talent and Workforce
17 Development, all of the different agencies that work
18 in the workforce development space work very
19 collaboratively together. There are constant, sort
20 of, meetings and connections between us all to make
21 sure we A, understand each other's programs, and then
22 leverage what someone else may do better than you do,
23 right? So, I always say HRA-- our programs aren't
24 meant to be a silo of the only program. There are
25 certain things we provide that are really important

1
2 and essential, and then we should know where someone
3 else maybe is more successful than something else and
4 make that connection for someone so they're being
5 able to access the best that is out there.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah. Maybe also
7 helping to advocate for more programs like the Parks
8 opportunity program in other agencies, right, other
9 models that are similar in nature? I love that
10 program because I think that it-- it allows that
11 level-- that initial hand-holding period that a lot
12 of first-time employees, right, need, younger
13 employees, old people that haven't had employment in
14 a really long time. You know, it helps build self-
15 esteem and also it helps break barriers to these
16 opportunities, because there are barriers that still
17 exist.

18 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Right.

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: You know, I mean, we
20 have all of these available positions throughout the
21 city and yet, you know, folks apply and are not
22 necessarily getting in, right? The application
23 process is, you know, is a little-- it gets
24 complicated. You know, getting places is difficult.
25 There's just, you know, too many inconveniences I

1 think that, you know, should be looked at and
2 eradicated, because the goal here is to try to make
3 everybody-- make things as simple as possible, and
4 you guys have done a really good job of that, and I
5 want to thank you. I think, you know, like in hearing
6 a lot of this I'm excited about the opportunities
7 that exist for HRA clients. I would love to see that
8 expanded and I would love to be able to see how,
9 again, you know, we could work with other city
10 agencies to kind of help build that support system
11 that you need, right? Because we all need to kind of
12 be working together on this. Can you tell us how
13 many of these jobs-- well, how many Cash Assistance
14 clients has HRA placed into jobs through the Business
15 Link and how many of those jobs have been sustained
16 for six months or more?

18 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: So, I can say for
19 Business Link, we just announced yesterday that for
20 FY 24 almost 10,000 individuals were connected to
21 jobs through the Business Link programs which is, you
22 know, the highest since COVID numbers that have gone
23 through Business Link. As I mentioned, the Hire NYC
24 Human Services saw an overall high of over 8,100 Cash
25 Assistance clients connected to jobs with providers

1 who have contracts with the city in human services
2 which is the largest number it's ever been. So,
3 those are numbers that we can say. As it relates to
4 retention data, we don't track that retention data.
5 We don't have that necessarily because many of these
6 people who do get jobs then go off of Cash
7 Assistance, and so we don't have a way to track them
8 in that manner.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. Do we know how
11 many clients are currently enrolled in the CUNY Edge
12 program?

13 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Yes. So at-- for
14 the beginning of the fall 2024 semester there were
15 265 enrollments, but that number is expected to
16 increase quite a bit as the semester begins and even
17 more people are engaged and outreached about the
18 program and what it really offers them. I can say
19 that since January 2024 for CUNY Edge, the enrollment
20 has been 1,319. And then since spring 2020, CUNY
21 Edge students have earned a total of 5,336 degrees.
22 That's 2,421 associate degrees and 2,915 bachelor's
23 degrees.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Can you repeat that?

25 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Sure.

1 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: How many associates?

2 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: 2,421, and then
3
4 2,915 bachelor's.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: That's great.

6 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Yeah.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I was going to ask
8 whether these are associates or bachelor's degrees.
9 That's wonderful. I'm so excited about that. That
10 was a really good program. It was a really, really--

11 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: [interposing] It's
12 an excellent program.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: good program.

14 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: We're very proud
15 of it. we're very proud of our relationship with
16 CUNY, and we think it really does-- similar to how
17 other job experiences allow people-- give them
18 supports to sort of acclimate to the workplace, this
19 also is hugely helpful and supportive of individuals
20 to help them understand how they sort of maintain
21 education as well as whatever else might be going on
22 in their lives, and that knowing they have this place
23 to go to seek support--

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: [interposing] Yeah.

25

1
2 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: to help them
3 navigate through it and stay with their education is
4 really essential and something we're very proud of.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: No, absolutely. Now,
6 are all of these schools tied to-- I mean, I'm
7 assuming that most of them are-- to childcare
8 services?

9 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Yeah, there are
10 child-- childcare supports are offered through CUNY
11 Edge as well as transportations reports which also is
12 connected to someone's Cash Assistance case, right?
13 So individuals on Cash Assistance who have a
14 childcare need, we will provide them with childcare,
15 and so we coordinate that through and with their
16 schedule with CUNY and provide those services to
17 individuals.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: That's perfect. Yeah,
19 the one that I went to was at Bronx Community and
20 they had a daycare. So I had two children at the
21 time. One was going into kindergarten. The other one
22 was going into what would be now pre-k-- 3-K, and I
23 was able to get them in. So they had an elementary
24 school on campus which was perfect, because I would
25 go in. I would drop off the kids and go to school and

1 we would all be in school the whole day, and then we
2 would go home at three o'clock, and you know, come
3 back against the next-- the following day, but it
4 really gave me the peace of mind, you know, to be
5 able to focus specifically on the schooling and not
6 have to worry about, you know, traveling and you
7 know, who's going to take care of the kids today, and
8 you know, everything was square away. It was part of
9 like a package deal, and it worked seamlessly. I
10 don't know why, you know-- I had never heard of it
11 before, but I'm really proud the fact that we have
12 that. The Work Progress program, assists a nonprofit
13 organizations to provide beneficial internship
14 opportunities to low-income young adults in all five
15 boroughs of New York City. How many nonprofits--
16 nonprofit organizations are currently WPP providers,
17 and how many young people are placed in WPP
18 internships annually?

19 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Sure. So,
20 currently there are 55 nonprofit organizations that
21 had expressed interest in participating in WPP for
22 FY25, and on average WPP serves 1,455 young adults
23 annually.
24
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: That's great. Moving
3 onto Career Services. I'm sorry, I'm asking a whole
4 bunch of questions, because there's a lot--

5 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: [interposing]
6 That's okay.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: that we didn't know,
8 and I want to just make sure that we get you on
9 record on some of these. HRA holds contracts with
10 the nonprofits to deliver three career programs,
11 Youth Pathways, Career Compass, and Career Advance.
12 For each of these programs, how many unique clients
13 are served per month and how many annually? And
14 currently, how many clients are enrolled in each of
15 these programs?

16 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Sure. So we can
17 provide you historical data if you would like. It
18 would be from 2019, because that would be the last
19 year where there was actually-- right? Services were
20 operating in their sort of full capacity. So if that
21 would be helpful to you we could, but for years
22 during the COVID, those numbers wouldn't be
23 representative of the program, but we can provide
24 2019 data that we have on the list of these questions
25 that you have here, if that would be helpful to you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah. Do you have the
3 list?

4 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Yeah, I have the
5 list of questions from you, yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, great.

7 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: We know what
8 you've asked--

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: [interposing] Yeah,
10 you could go to--

11 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: [interposing] and
12 so we can follow up with what we have in regards to
13 those specific questions for the data we have pre-
14 COVID.

15 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: That's awesome. Does
16 HRA usually publish the outcomes of the data?

17 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: There are certain
18 outcomes that we do publish. I'll have to double-
19 check what that was given we haven't really been
20 publishing things recently given that we haven't been
21 in the mandatory engagement, but I know that there
22 are reports that we do publish publicly that does
23 give insight into what is happening in the system.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. Let me just
25 make sure I didn't forget anything.

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COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Of course.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. You're off the hook. I wanted to acknowledge that Council Member Stevens is here. Did you have any questions? She needs like two minutes, so yeah. If you could give us one second, I'll find one to hold her off.

ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: We can wait two minutes.

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Hi. Good afternoon.

ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Hello.

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Good morning. Oh, it's good morning. I just had a couple of questions. As you know, I'm the Chair of Children and Youth Services and one of the things I'm always trying to think about is like how is the city reimagining workforce for young people, and I see that you guys do do work with DYCD. So could you talk a little bit about that partnership, what that looks like, and how do you think HRA could play a role in this reimagining workforce development for young people in the city?

ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Sure. So, we work closely with DYCD along with other, you know,

1
2 workforce development partners in regards to first
3 and foremost making sure that we-- you know, we're
4 very aware of the services and programs they offer.
5 There is a little difference in regards to HRA's
6 Youth Pathways program. It's specifically for
7 individuals on Cash Assistance. So that's part of a
8 requirement that is there, but we make sure that all
9 of our providers are aware of DYCD programs that may
10 be activities or engagement that an individuals would
11 want to participate in, and so--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: [interposing] But
13 even what you-- because I know you're saying like a
14 lot-- your programs are different because it's folks
15 who are on Cash Assistance.

16 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Right.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: But even with
18 that, like, I think there's a real connection because
19 a lot of the young people we serve families are on
20 Cash Assistance, and so one of the things that I've
21 been doing a lot of pushback on the DYCD side is
22 like, how are we surveying that and really looking at
23 this more holistically instead of like in pockets.

24 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Sure.

25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And so I think
3 that that's where I'm trying to get more around.
4 Like, how are you guys holistically working together
5 to see like, alright, well what families are getting
6 this work, and also like, how are we creating a
7 pathway to workforce development? So, I'm just
8 trying to think more holistically of like how--

9 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: [interposing] Sure.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: you guys are
11 working and interacting.

12 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: So, I would say
13 what we are looking at right now and really focusing
14 on as we short of shift and then the next year to a
15 new set of contracts, is looking how we can more
16 systemically create those connections with DYCD
17 around the services that they have and create those
18 avenues and leveraging the strengths that we all have
19 to better serve families and young adults. So I
20 would say, one of the things we are looking at and
21 would love to talk more about, right, your thoughts
22 as well, is how can we more sort of formalize some of
23 those relationships. We definitely have referral
24 partnerships, right? And we work closely on overall
25

1 city initiatives, but would definitely be interested-

2 -

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4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: [interposing]

5 Yeah.

6 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: in making sure we-

7 -

8 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: [interposing] I

9 would absolutely love to be part of those

10 conversations. This is something that I've been,

11 like, yelling about for the last three years. And

12 also just thinking about, you know, even the young

13 people that we're serving in our programs, like, if

14 there's a way for us to connect the services, right?

15 A lot of times they need-- you know, whether it's

16 Cash Assistance. Because they don't just serve young

17 people, right?

18 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Yeah.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Even when you

20 think about, like, SYEP, we have young people who are

21 up to 24 there. So, like, some of them are on Cash

22 Assistance during a regular year, because that's the

23 only way that they're able to have means. So, how

24 are we then connecting the services, making sure the

25

1 providers are all on the same page? So, please count
2 me in, too,--

3 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: [interposing] Sure.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: for us to talk
5 and work together, because like I said, we are out of
6 place where we need to reimagine workforce for young
7 people in New York City, and I think this is a good
8 place that we can start.

9 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Absolutely.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Thank you.

11 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And just to piggyback
13 off of that, I think, you know, one of the reasons
14 why I was so upset about the loss of the Jobs Plus
15 program is that I thought, you know, it was a missed
16 opportunity because of the high rate of, you know,
17 youth-on-youth violence and unemployment, right? The
18 correlation between violence and, you know, poverty
19 is real, and we-- you know, I think missed an
20 opportunity to really help address it, and I hope
21 that, you know, through the new RFP process that
22 you're rethinking that, that you're looking at the
23 data so that, you know, these programs continue to
24 exist in communities that really need them, but then
25

1
2 also not make them as restrictive so that, you know,
3 there is a little bit of flexibility, because we have
4 a lot of young people in the community that would
5 love to be able to walk into a Jobs Plus program but
6 maybe live across the street from a NYCHA. And you
7 know, I don't-- I think-- you know, after a while,
8 you've already hit the whole development. Like, you
9 can't, you know-- what else is there to do? So we're
10 kind of setting them up for failure, right? They'll
11 be successful for a couple of years, but then they'll
12 have no one else to talk to, because they've already
13 spoken to everybody. You can--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: [interposing] I
15 just-- even with that, when you think about the
16 impact of NYCHA, right? Like, we can't just say
17 we're going to have a concentration of NYCHA because
18 it's a community. so we have to think about this in
19 a, again, a holistic way of like if you're serving
20 NYCHA and you're not serving the folks that's outside
21 NYCHA, that's still going to effect the residents of
22 NYCHA, right? So, because that's all going to bleed
23 into it, and so I just wanted to support what you're
24 saying just around it's important for us to think
25 about how do we look at this in a holistic way and

1 look at it more community, opposed to thinking about
2 a development.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah. I would also
5 love to see more around, you know, programming around
6 young mothers that offer, you know, a more
7 comprehensive level of support. We have a lot of
8 students here today. Hi, young people. We're
9 talking about young-- but it's really-- it's
10 important, you know, that-- you know, because
11 sometimes we're starting from zero, right? We don't
12 have that foundation, and that was true, you know,
13 for me, and even for my children, and I see the
14 difference in the generation. I'm like, these kids
15 are a little bit more privileged. They don't really
16 understand, right? I remember when my mother used to
17 say that to us, like, you don't understand. We used
18 to have to walk to school 100 miles, no shoes. But
19 you know, it's true, right? It shifts, but you know,
20 seeing them struggle even with their privilege to
21 find, you know, employment, and you know, mom-- yeah.
22 Mom can't really help too much, right? I'll end up
23 in the New York Post, but they-- you know, it's
24 really important for me to kind of witness that
25 firsthand, because then it allows me to see kind of

1 where the gaps are and, you know, specifically
2 speaking for single mothers that are struggling in my
3 community. I see a lot of needs in that area, and I
4 also see-- you know, really want to highlight the
5 need for employment resources and opportunities for
6 young people who may not want to go to college,
7 right, who maybe that's not an option for, who maybe
8 dropped out of high school and are-- you know,
9 hopefully none of you are dropping out of high
10 school. But you know, are kind of in that in-
11 between space, right, where they're trying to figure
12 out who they are as adults, right, what the next
13 phase of their life is going to look like. And I
14 really did, you know, enjoy that linkage between the
15 Mount Sinai and the strives [sic], right, where you
16 know, you're building a workforce field. Right now,
17 we have a huge need for social workers. You know, we
18 have a huge need for mental health providers. Who
19 are better advocates for these resources, right?
20 When you're talking about, you know, making sure that
21 they are culturally-relevant, right, that we're
22 meeting people where they are. So, you know, just a
23 couple-- a little bit of, you know, food for thought,
24 and hopefully we can turn some of these ideas into
25

1 something great. But thank you so much for being
2 here today. We really enjoyed this conversation.

3 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Thank you so much
4 for bringing attention to it, and I do look forward
5 to continuing to talk and work with you on how we can
6 continue to provide the best services to New Yorkers.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. We'll
8 bring you back when you have more information.

9 ADMINISTRATOR FRENCH: Absolutely. Thank
10 you.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Alright. I now want
12 to open the hearing for public testimony. I remind
13 members of the public that this is a government
14 proceeding and that decorum shall be observed at all
15 times. As such, members of the public shall remain
16 silent at all times. The witness table is reserved
17 for people who wish to testify. No video recording
18 or photography is allowed from the witness table.
19 Further, members of the public may not present audio
20 or video recordings as testimony, but may submit
21 transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant of
22 Arms for inclusion in the hearing record. If you
23 wish to speak at today's hearing, please fill out an
24 appearance card with the Sergeant of Arms and wait to
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1
2 be recognized. When recognized, you will have two
3 minutes to speak on today's hearing topic: hunger
4 and food insecurity-- sorry, wrong topic. HRA Career
5 Services. If you have a written statement or
6 additional written testimony that you wish to submit
7 for the record, please provide a copy of the
8 testimony to the Sergeant of Arms. You may also email
9 written testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within
10 72 hours of this hearing. Audio and video recordings
11 will not be accepted. First panel will be Meryl
12 Kordower, who's joining us virtually.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has begun.

14 MERYL KORDOWER: Hello, good morning
15 everyone. My name is Meryl Kordower and I'm the Vice
16 President for our Workforce Services at NADAP. I want
17 to thank the Committee for the opportunity to
18 testify. Today. Founded in 1971, NADAP is a not-
19 for-profit organization that focuses and helps
20 approximately 35,000 New Yorkers, both adults and
21 youth, across all five boroughs and Long Island. The
22 central focus of our work is helping New Yorkers who
23 experience multiple barriers to employment and a
24 promising career, primarily due to long histories of
25 unemployment, lack of education, training, vocational

1 skills, histories of substance use, and/or mental
2 health and other disorders. Over the past seven
3 years, NADAP has had the privilege working closely
4 with HRA and operating two Career Compass programs,
5 one in Harlem and the other in Bushwick, East
6 Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Our Career Compass programs
7 as part of HRA's Career Pathways initiative was
8 initially designed as an in-person services program
9 offering Cash Assistance applicants and recipients an
10 introduction to HRA and the Career Services programs,
11 including all of its overall training, job placement
12 and educational offerings. In 2020, as a result of
13 COVID, we pivoted to a fully-remote voluntary
14 program. During that time, NADAP created an online
15 learning management system, Learn at NADAP, where
16 participants in all of our programs had access to
17 more than 100 employment preparation, financial
18 literacy, skill-building and vocational assessment
19 workshops that were available to our clients 24/7.
20 Currently, we are back in mandatory participation--

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Your time
22 has expired. Thank you.
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1 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you so much.
2
3 You can also submit your full testimony to us within
4 the next 72 hours.

5 MERYL KORDOWER: Okay, thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, you can submit
7 it to testimony@council.nyc.gov. We will now call on
8 Lanette Chever.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has begun.

10 LANETTE CHEVER: Good morning. So my
11 name is Lanette Chever and I am the Senior Director
12 of Workforce Development at Project Renewal, a New
13 York City homeless services nonprofit agency. Thank
14 you to Chair Ayala and the City Council for convening
15 this hearing. For over 55 years, Project Renewal has
16 provided shelter, housing, healthcare, and employment
17 services to New Yorkers experiencing homelessness.
18 We are grateful to the City Council for supporting
19 our programs. Our vocational training, job placement
20 and job retention services help individuals who face
21 significant barriers to employment, including
22 histories of substance use disorder, homelessness,
23 justice involvement, and mental illness. These
24 programs ensure all New Yorkers have the opportunity
25 to support themselves in careers with growth

1 potential. Investing in workforce development
2 programs generates a strong return on investment for
3 all of New York City by creating conditions for
4 entire families to thrive. Organizations like
5 Project Renewal need continued support from the City
6 Council as well as agency funding from HRA and DHS in
7 order to sustain and grow these programs. For
8 example, our Next Step Internship program serves many
9 individuals who are HRA benefit recipients
10 themselves. Our social services sector based
11 training program like Next Step provides on-the-job
12 training for New Yorkers interested in working in
13 shelters or housing programs, many of whom have
14 personally experienced homelessness. This lived
15 experience in combination with our training helps
16 them thrive in difficult-to-fill, yet essential,
17 social service roles. After completing intensive
18 vocational and life skills classes and a six-week
19 internship, 89 percent of our graduates are placed in
20 jobs earning on average \$23.74 per hour. Our
21 Culinary Arts Training program provides New Yorkers
22 with a world-class culinary education and pathway to
23 a fulfilling career. Graduates go on to secure in-
24 demand roles in corporate kitchens, local
25

1
2 restaurants, and for City Beat Kitchens which is
3 Project Renewal's social enterprise catering company
4 that prepares food for New Yorkers in need.

5 Including programs like this in the Jobs NYC portal
6 will go a long way towards expanding the reach
7 towards our culinary training programs. Our Career
8 Advancement program provides--

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Your time
10 has expired. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: sorry about that.
12 You can submit your written testimony to
13 testimony@council.nyc.gov, but it has to be done
14 within the next 72 hours.

15 LANETTE CHEVER: thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. We will
17 now call our in-person panel, Daniel Hiraldo and
18 Katie Massie [sp?]. You may begin. Just make sure
19 that the red button is on.

20 DANIEL HIRALDO: Red.

21 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: There you go.

22 DANIEL HIRALDO: There it is. Thank you,
23 Chair Ayala, members of the General Committee that
24 were present before and esteemed Council Members,
25 allowing me to testify today. My name is Daniel

1 Hiraldo. I am one of the Job Developers and Retention
2 Specialist at GMHC's Workforce Development Program.

3 I am here today to update you on GMHC's ongoing
4 commitment to people living with HIV and AIDS who are
5 ready, willing and able to return to work despite the
6 loss of our \$400,000 per year, Realizing Independence
7 through Support and Employment program, for RISE

8 contract with the HRA, HASA, due to the fiscal year
9 25 New York City budget cuts. On behalf of our

10 clients, I want to thank you for your continued
11 advocacy for workforce development amidst this loss

12 in funding. I know firsthand how important it is. I

13 was also hired by GMHC through Workforce. Founded in
14 1982 as gay men's health crises, GMHC, the world's

15 first HIV and AIDS service organization, GMHC

16 provides comprehensive services to over 5,500 New

17 Yorkers living with and affected by HIV and AIDS

18 every year. In 2023, more than 78 percent of our

19 clients lived under the federal poverty level. This

20 is among the reasons why our workforce development

21 program which supports clients living with HIV and

22 AIDS who are ready, willing and able to return to

23 work is so important. Training and linking clients

24 to safe and stable jobs puts them on a path to
25

1 financial independence, which we just heard about,
2 and leads to better health outcomes like medication
3 adherence and improved mental health. Since 2014,
4 GMHC's RISE program had helped over 670 HASA clients
5 find employment by providing culturally-competent and
6 individualized assistance including resume building,
7 vocational training, internships, employment and
8 benefits counseling, and job placement and retention
9 assistance for unemployed and underemployed workers
10 at all stages of career readiness. Our SUNY Advanced
11 Technology Training and Information Networking or
12 ATTAIN, the computer lab enabled HASA clients to
13 receive the practical skills training and
14 certifications needed to succeed in the digital
15 world, including computer skills, developing
16 literacy--

17
18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: [interposing] Is it--
19 Are you-- you have to wrap it.

20 DANIEL HIRALDO: Thank you. Thank you so
21 much.

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: You can submit the
23 whole thing and we'll read it, but-- say the last
24 line maybe?

1
2 DANIEL HIRALDO: Right. So, in closing,
3 I hope the New York City Council will continue to
4 stand with GMHC and HASA clients we serve by
5 advocating for the full restoration of the RISE
6 program in the next New York City budget. Vulnerable
7 New Yorkers living with HIV and AIDS deserve to be
8 provided with the training and tools they need to
9 find employment and reach economic independence.
10 Thank you again for the opportunity.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. Thank you
12 so much for coming. You may begin.

13 KATIE MASIE: Good afternoon, Chair
14 Ayala. Thank you to the Committee Members for the
15 opportunity to testify. My name is Katie Masie and
16 I'm the Director of the Income Building program at
17 Win, the City's largest provider of shelter and
18 supportive housing to families with children. Last
19 night, just under 7,000 people called Win home,
20 including just over 3,600 children. Win's Income
21 Building program provides clients with a safe space
22 to heal and transition from unemployment to
23 employment. We also provide career coaching for
24 improving job quality. As of yesterday, 77 percent
25 of our clients had an active Cash Assistance case,

1 meaning they are eligible for HRA's Career Services.
2
3 However, actual job placements through HRA's Career
4 Services remain low. HRA's engagement with clients,
5 connections to opportunities, and communication with
6 shelter providers through the job referral processes
7 has become increasingly challenging to navigate,
8 especially since the pandemic. At present, clients
9 are called from restricted phone numbers. If they
10 miss this call, their case, and by extension access
11 to assistance, can be delayed. Given the high
12 percentage of our clients with a history of domestic
13 violence, expecting clients to answer unknown phone
14 numbers is unrealistic and challenging. When our
15 clients go to HRA centers to open their cases and ask
16 about Career Services, they are frequently told
17 instead to apply via Access HRA. Relying heavily on
18 online processes is deeply impersonal and discourages
19 engagement, especially for non-Amer-- non-English
20 Speakers, excuse me. When referred to potential
21 opportunities, clients also receive notices via mail,
22 when mail is unreliable for clients in shelter who
23 frequently move around until they are deemed shelter-
24 eligible. While Text to Work has worked well for our
25 clients and staff, we are concerned that HRA's

1 communication inefficiencies can hurt our clients, as
2 benefit sanctions have recently been reinstated. We
3 are eager to continue working with HRA Career
4 Services to help improve communication and engagement
5 with our clients. Thank you for the opportunity
6 today.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. I want to
9 acknowledge that Council Member Riley joined us a
10 little while ago, and I also want to acknowledge
11 students from City College Journalism Class in
12 Council Member Abreu's district. Welcome, you guys.
13 And I will now call on our last panel, Towaki
14 Komatsu.

15 TOWAKI KOMATSU: Ms. Ayala, I'm Towaki
16 Komatsu. I've testified to you repeatedly. Scott
17 French was here after I ready you an email that he
18 sent on March 11th that was about the fact that he
19 and other city of New York personnel illegally kept
20 me out of a public meeting on October 25th, 2017 that
21 would have helped me get a job. So, today's hearing
22 is about HRA's Career Services. So with regards to
23 the agenda for today's hearing, I'm going to be
24 filing papers in litigation against the city tomorrow
25 to create job openings by having you, Mr. French,

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other HRA personnel fired. One of the things that the Committee Counsel stated today or I think you stated is that people can't record video recordings, as they testify. That's a flagrant violation of First Amendment and 14th Amendment rights. Also, it's required to be quorum for today's hearing. There's just you that I'm looking at. So the fact that there's quorum invalidates today's hearing. That's the end of my testimony.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. Thank you all for joining us. And with that, this hearing is adjourned.

[gavel]

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COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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 September 17, 2024