

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON DISABILITIES

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May 5, 2026
Start: 10:21 a.m.
Recess: 1:50 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - 8th Floor - Hearing
Room 1

B E F O R E: Shahana K. Hanif,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Tiffany L. Cabán
Carmen N. De La Rosa
Rita C. Joseph
Sandy Nurse

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

Nisha Agarwal
Commissioner of the Mayor's Office for People
with Disabilities, MOPD

Haris Khan
SBS

Douglas Lipari
NYC Talent

Kadian Outar
DCAS

Abby Mayerhoff
NYC at Work at MOPD

Evan Yankey
Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled

Anthony Phillips
National Action Network Disability Center

Kathleen Collins
Self

Belkys Garcia
The Legal Aid Society

Gregory Meves
Bridges from School to Work

Julia Linder
Harlem Independent Living Center

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

Tonto Cubree
Self

Moriah Engelberg
A Better Balance

Michele Anne Blondmonville
Lead for Humanity

Lisa Sheinhouse
Ohel Children's Family Home and Children Services

Amy Monique Waddell
Goodwill New York, New New Jersey

Shanon Shaw
Heartshare

Clement So
Metropolitan Asian Deaf Association

Eman Rimawi Doster
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

Molly Senack
Center for Independence of the Disabled New York

Christopher Leon Johnson
Self

1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Unpause and then this
3 together. Testing, testing. This is a microphone
4 check for the New York City Council Committee on
5 Disabilities. Today's date is May 5th, 2026. We are
6 located in Hearing Room 1, and this is being recorded
by Sergeant Ben Levy.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning, welcome to
8 today's New York City Council hearing for the
9 Committee on Disabilities. Please silence all cell
10 phones, electronic devices. Moving forward, no one
11 is to approach the dais. If you have any questions,
please reach out to the Sergeant at Arms.

12 Chair Hanif, we are ready to begin.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: [GAVEL] Good morning,
14 everyone. I'm Council Member Shahana Hanif, Chair of
15 the Committee on Disabilities. Thank you for your
16 patience this morning. Apologies for being late.
I'm in my mid-30s, brown woman, wear black glasses,
and I have cur- wavy, medium-sized hair.

17 Today I am wearing a white shawl, white shirt,
18 black blazer, and I'm seated behind a dais. Welcome
19 to our oversight hearing on equal economic
20 opportunity for New Yorkers with disabilities.
21 Nearly 1 in 6 New York City residents has a

1 disability. Of those who are working age, only 41%
2 are employed compared to 81% of non-disabled New
3 Yorkers.

4 That gap is not a product of individual
5 limitations. It's the product of structural barriers
6 that we have allowed to persist. Employer
7 discrimination, inaccessible workplaces, a benefit
8 system that can punish people for working, and a
9 workforce infrastructure that was not built with
10 people with significant disabilities in mind. The
city has made commitments.

11 In 2023, the Adams Administration announced the
12 plan to advance career success for people with
13 disabilities with a goal of connecting 2,500 New
14 Yorkers with disabilities to employment by July 2026.
More than \$10 million in city funds has been
15 committed.

16 By the end of last year, nearly 1,700 individuals
17 had been connected to employment, and 2 months
18 remain. These placements are important. Every one
19 of them represents a New Yorker who cleared real
20 barriers to get to work, and the agencies and mayoral
21 offices in this room deserve credit for that. They—
the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities New

1
2 York City at Work program has earned international
3 recognition, including the Zero Project Award for
4 innovative policies in employment. And its trainers
5 have lived this.

6 At the city's Workforce One career centers, the
7 Department of Small Business Services SCION team has
8 established a baseline for inclusive delivery that
9 did not exist before. The Office of Talent and
10 Workforce Development's Center for Workplace
11 Accessibility and Inclusion launched the city's
12 first-of-its-kind digital accessibility training in
13 partnership with Microsoft equipping city employees
14 to create content that works for everyone. And last
15 month, the New York City Talent and the Mayor's
16 Office for Economic Opportunity, alongside MOPED and
17 SBS, did something this city has never done before.
18 They awarded \$7.5 million for employment programs
19 that will be co-designed by New Yorkers with
20 disabilities themselves. Not for them, with them.

21 The One Big Beautiful Bill Act signed into law
last July will reduce federal Medicaid spending by
more than \$1 trillion over 10 years. The services
that allow people with significant disabilities to
live independently— home health aides, personal care

1 services, day programs— are among the first things
2 states cut when federal revenues contract. Without
3 those services, employment is not a realistic goal.
4 The city's workforce programs are downstream of that
5 infrastructure. Their effectiveness depends on it.
6 At the same time, the Social Security Administration
7 has lost more than 7,500 employees since January of
8 last year.

9 Disability insurance appeal backlogs have grown
10 by more than 73,000 cases in a single year. Average
11 processing times for disability claims can exceed 200
12 days. For a New Yorker trying to decide whether they
13 can enter the workforce without losing their
14 benefits, that uncertainty is not a minor
15 inconvenience. It is a reason not to try.

16 Last week, the City Comptroller's Office hosted a
17 disability justice roundtable and committed to
18 publishing an annual economic snapshot on disability
19 employment in the city. And last December, the
20 Comptroller's Office reported that 725,000 New York
21 City Medicaid enrollees stand to lose coverage
through new federal work reporting and
recertification requirements, and that 230,000 more

New York City residents will lose no-cost essential plan coverage as early as July 1st of this year.

These are not abstract federal policy questions. So today we are asking straightforward questions. Is the city's current investment commensurate with the scale of need? Are the city's programs reaching New Yorkers with intellectual, developmental, and psychiatric disabilities, or primarily those who are already closest to employment ready?

As federal benefits become less reliable and harder to access, is the city equipped to help its own program participants navigate that uncertainty and stay in the workforce? And what is the Administration's plan for supporting equal economic opportunity for New Yorkers with disabilities after July 2026?

Employment is not a privilege for New Yorkers with disabilities, it is a civil rights issue. One that touches housing, healthcare, food security, and the ability to participate fully in civic life. We will not get this right by treating it as a workforce development problem alone. We have to be honest about the structural barriers that remain, the federal threats that are bearing down on us, the gap

between what is being promised and what has been delivered.

Thank you to the Administration for being here today, as well as the disability advocates, service providers, and members of the public who have traveled to testify or submitted written testimony. Your presence here is an act of self-advocacy, and we do not take it for granted.

Thank you to all the staff who made today's hearing possible, including Disabilities Committee staff, Senior Legislative Counsel Sarah Sucher, and Senior Legislative Policy Analyst Chloe Rivera.

I also wanna recognize any Council Members who are here. Anybody on the Zoom? No. Okay, all right, they're missing out on a- on a great hearing. Um, and now I will pass the mic to Committee Counsel to administer the oath to members of the Administration prior to their testimony.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Will you please raise your right hand and respond verbally with I do? Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth before these Committee Members and to respond honestly to Council Member questions? Thank you. You may begin your testimony when ready.

1
2 NISHA AGARWAL: Hello. Can you hear me? Okay,
3 good. Um, good morning, um, Chair Hanif.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: You might need to bring it a
5 little closer. I think that—

6 NISHA AGARWAL: Okay, I figured. Is this better?
7 Yeah. Okay. Um, good morning, Chair Hanif, um, and
8 Members of the Committee, um, will join hopefully
9 later, um, and to the audience as well. Um, thank
10 you for the opportunity to speak, uh, to you today.
11 Uh, my name is Nisha Agarwal, the Commissioner of the
12 Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. I have
13 short black hair and brown skin. I'm wearing a navy
14 top and slacks. Um, I have aphasia and I have my
15 handy cane somewhere around. Mhm.

16 Um, MOPD or MOPD's mission is to ensure that, uh,
17 New York City is accessible and inclusive for the
18 more than 1 million New Yorkers with disabilities who
19 live and work in this city. We do direct services,
20 um, community engagement, strategic communication,
21 and policymaking at the local, state, national, and
international level for both public and private
stakeholders.

And employment, um, employment, um, for people
with disabilities is vital. Um, first I will walk

through the, uh, setting of the scene, um, with some numbers.

In employment for New York City, just 40% of New Yorkers with disabilities of working age are employed compared to 73% of city, uh, uh, overall working age population. And for those who are in the labor force, the employment rate is, um, nearly double, 13% for people with disabilities compared to, um, 7% citywide. We also know that on average, um, people with disabilities may spend, um, approximately 20% of their income on disability-related expenses, um, causing a strain to their incomes. I agree on that.

Um, furthermore, people with disabilities grapple with a tight, um, housing market, inflation costs on food and other necessities, um, transportation barriers, health care coverage considerations, and, um, other everyday affordable, um, matters. The bottom line is people with disabilities are feeling the burden of affordability issues, um, oftentimes more exacerbated, um, rates than, uh, compared to other New Yorkers.

A core, uh, focus of our work, um, is, ah, about jobs with people with disabilities, the dignity of their work, the independence that it could provide,

1 and the, um, ability to build a life in the city that
2 we all love. For example, um, MOPD's signature job
3 initiative NYC@Work has been active for more— about a
4 decade. And it provides a continuum of individual
5 services to both job seekers and job, uh, employers.
6 For job seekers, we offer career advice, um, uh,
7 resume and in— interview, uh, preparation, uh,
8 guidance on disclosure and reasonable accommodations,
9 retention services and, um, supports for those who
10 apply to city government.

11 On the employer side, we provide recruitment, uh,
12 support, pre-screening, uh, candidate, uh, referrals,
13 and, um, personalized hiring events, among other
14 things. To date, um, our program has helped 800 New
15 Yorkers with disabilities secure employment.

16 Including a significant number of people, um, who did
17 55A programs, a pathway for, um, people with
18 disabilities to secure, um, employment with the city.

19 And since, uh, July 2023, in conjunction with our
20 sister agencies, um, we, uh, completed more than
21 3,000 people with disabilities have secured
employment. Um, nearly, uh, 150 were from, uh, New
York City at work. While MOPD has been at the
forefront of this, uh, work, we cannot do it, uh,

1 without the partnerships with our city agencies, um,
2 and our colleagues, um, uh, who are also committed to
3 this effort, and they are all seated at the dais
4 today.

5 Um, finally, I want to share a success story so
6 that we can all put this in perspective. When asked
7 what, uh, what one of our colleagues, um, liked about
8 his job, he said, "My work feels meaningful." He
9 went on to provide advice to other job seekers, uh,
10 saying, "Be patient. The right opportunity will come
11 your way." This, uh, client now works on health and,
12 uh, safety issues at DCAS.

13 He has a background in project analytics and has
14 a degree, uh, background in, uh, uh,
15 transportation-related issues. He came to one of our
16 job, um, fairs in 2024 and, uh, provided through a
17 whole year of, of, um, period after a, a soft job
18 possibility, um, translated into a tangible
19 employment. He was also able to use, um, the 55A
20 program as a pathway to, uh, employment with the
21 city. He has a learning disability and one of his
goals is to be more- is to build his confidence in
the workplace.

This is just one story of a job seeker that has been touched by working with, um, At Job, uh, program, and, um, showing the dedication of our, our staff and the powerful story of how patience, support, connection, and follow-up can impact all New Yorkers, including New Yorkers with disabilities.

HARIS KHAN: Good morning. Good morning, Chair

Hanif and any members that do join us, uh, at this

Over the past several years, SBS has worked to make our Workforce One Career Centers more accessible and effective for job seekers with disabilities. Through the state-funded New York Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network program, or SCION,

we've expanded employee trainings, hosted targeted recruitment events, and improved accessibility across our centers.

In October last year, to mark National Disability Employment Awareness Month, we hosted 3 resource fairs that connected more than 180 job seekers to community resources, benefits counseling, and job placement support. This month, we're continuing that momentum with 2 additional events, one tomorrow in Jamaica, Queens, another on May 12th in Staten Island.

Across all of our Workforce One career centers, we've placed more than 1,200 New Yorkers with disabilities into jobs since 2024, and more than 150 Workforce One Center staff members have received training and support from our disability resource coordinators, as well as disability etiquette awareness training from our colleagues at MOPD.

This ensures that when a New Yorker with disability walks through any of our doors, they're met by- they're met by staff who are prepared to serve them with competence and respect. Our DRCs also work directly with job seekers to help them navigate disability benefits, connect them to

independent living centers, and refer them to DCWP financial counselors that are co-located in our 5 borough-based hub centers.

Additionally, we've embedded MOPD's NYC at Work program within our downtown Brooklyn Workforce One Center at 9 Bond Street, deepening the range of direct service available to New Yorkers with disabilities at that location. Looking ahead, SBS is pleased to share that in partnership with MOPD, NYC Talent, NYC Opportunity, the city announced awards for an innovative co-design pilot program on April 1st, 2026.

This initiative invests \$7.5 million over the next 4 years to support providers in designing and implementing accessible workforce programs with people with disabilities at the table as collaborators in program design and not just recipients of services.

SVS is proud to contribute contract and program management support to this effort. Decisions about vendor selection, training models, and program direction are also informed by NYC Opportunity as the funder, NYC Talent as the citywide coordinating

entity on workforce development, and MOPD as the citywide subject matter expert on disability.

Together, we expect this initiative will generate meaningful learnings for this field over the next 4 years. We thank Council for the opportunity to testify today and welcome any questions.

UNIDENTIFIED: You're supporting Bill H303? And ask that- do not support this bill! Do you know people with disabilities are gonna be placed in nursing homes? Like, I was threatened to be placed into a nursing home. Ah, hmm, mhm, like, you know, I mean, mm-hm, just take one second. Sorry. What happened?

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: You can testify, and I'd love to hear this. So could- are you okay to wait to be able to testify?

UNIDENTIFIED: We've been trying to reach you, you know, regarding this, and we have reached a wall. Um, it seems like the city council is hell-bent on passing this bill, that it's going to ace tomorrow and it's probably going to be voted for on, on the 14th, uh, and no one seems to understand that this bill does not do what it, uh, is supposed to, you know.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I'd love to hear this in full, and I'd love to— love for you to stay here. So let's continue this during the testimony section.

UNIDENTIFIED: I remember being with her in the round table at MOPD given, you know, and I was glad that you were the chosen as the disability Chair, but you being on this bill, you know, while people—

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: If— I'd love to continue this, so, and I don't want to get you out of the room um, so please respect just the decorum right now so that we can have this conversation during the testimony section of this hearing. I do not want to get you out of the room.

UNIDENTIFIED: People with disabilities to your office that we get ignored, we have no choice but—

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I understand that. Thank you. Okay, so starting with the plan to advance career success for people with disabilities, I'd like to, uh, ask a few questions. What is the Mamdani Administration's assessment of the inherited plan? And what is working, what is not, and what, if anything, is going to change?

DOUGLAS LIPARI: Good morning. My name is Douglas Lipari. I'm the Executive Director of the

Office of Talent and Workforce Development, or NYC Talent for short. I'm a white male with brown hair, a beard, and wearing a blue suit and a white shirt and a reddish-pinkish tie. We are absolutely committed to making sure that there is opportunity for all New Yorkers to be connected to employment pathways and have, uh, our employers here in the city of New York have access to the talent. And that talent includes people with disabilities.

And so, um, it is core to the work of our office at NYC Talent to make sure that people with disabilities are connected to job opportunities.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Is that specifically the initiative that was launched in the previous Administration? What does that have to do with— is that NYC Talents?

DOUGLAS LIPARI: So the Center for Workplace Accessibility and Inclusion was established in 2023 as part of, uh, this plan that was established within our office, um, which is important as we are the centralized office who helps coordinate the system, has a citywide purview in terms of, um, working with all the partners, partners both internal and external.

1
2 And so the- the goal of connecting 2,500 New
3 Yorkers was set, um, then and by July 2026. And we
4 are proud that, uh, already we've met and surpassed
5 this goal, connecting more than 3,800 people with
6 disabilities to, uh, jobs as of the end of 2025.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And is there anything that
8 you wanna share in terms of the feedback around
9 what's working? It seems like what you all are doing
10 is working if you've surpassed the 2,500 number.

11 DOUGLAS LIPARI: Yeah, we're proud of the work
12 and proud of, uh, the partnership that is reflected
13 here and sitting at this table. And so we're always
14 looking to evaluate, uh, the types of programming
15 that, uh, is successful and the lessons learned, and
16 we continue to do that. We are also excited about
17 the co-design RFP process that, uh, Chief of Staff,
18 uh, Khan testified about, um, that was also announced
19 as part of that plan, and that work is just beginning
20 now. And so we expect that the outcomes from that
21 will be really important for, uh, helping connect job
seekers to disability- er, sorry, job seekers with
disabilities to jobs, and, uh, we'll have a lot of
lessons learned to bring into future programming as
well.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I'd like to recognize Council Member Cabán, who has joined us. So the plan encompasses 9 distinct programs administered across at least 5 city agencies. How is accountability structured across agencies when no single agency owns the full portfolio?

DOUGLAS LIPARI: Yeah, so part of what we do at NYC Talent is work across the entire system, and each of the programs are different, right? Each agency has different types of programs with different types of scope and different types of goals associated with it.

And so in terms of looking across the system, we work with, uh, SBS and their Workforce One career centers of how they're connecting people with disabilities, MOPD's, uh, NYC at Work program, DYCD, uh, DSS for their We Care program, and then our— at NYC Talent, we have our Partnership for Inclusive Internships. And so each of them are— are structured differently, but we work across collecting information from each of them to each of the agencies to, uh, count up towards our 3,800 job placements.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And while each of them are structured differently, is that a choice the agency develops?

NISHA AGARWAL: Yeah, um, add a little, um, as well. So, um, for- for MOPD's perspective, it's great if other agencies, um, contribute their, um, stuff on, uh, uh, employment, on housing, et cetera. It's like, we wanna work together and what- that's what we do.

So for example, um, we partnered with, um, QAI, as it's referred to, to share resources and opportunities to reduce employment, um, uh, reduce barriers to employment for people of disabilities. So for example, last year we did a co-host, uh, co-hosting event on, um, uh, community-based organizations and vendors, um, on, um, issues, uh, on, uh, employment for people with disabilities. That was done, um, in recognition of the 35th, um, anniversary of the signature of the ADA.

Um, and we highlighted, uh, an individual story shared. Um, and we had a panel, um, moderated by MOPD that, uh, focused on, um, a city employee who were- went through, uh, the PII, um, internship

process and was connected to, um, uh, permanent, um, 55A job.

So that's like PII, uh, uh, 55A, um, we were coordinating it. So we're all working together on that, um, to give an example.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So just to get some more clarity on this, uh, this currently is being assessed by New York City Talent? How, like, describe to me how the multiple offices are uh, actually working together outside of one of the resource fairs or events?

DOUGLAS LIPARI: Yeah, so we work together with, uh, all 3 of these agencies across a variety of programming specifically tied to the plan in terms of, uh, tracking towards the, the goal. Uh, like I said, the, uh, Workforce One centers have a different model of operating than the Partnership for Inclusive Internships, and so we work regularly to help support, to make sure that our, uh, Center for Workplace Accessibility and Inclusion can help serve as that central coordinating body in terms of, uh, advocating for the system, making sure that we're bringing the stakeholders together. We have a, a

strong advisory council that we work, uh, across the both internal and external partners to make sure—

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Who's— who makes that up?

DOUGLAS LIPARI: Um, I don't have an exact list of all of, um, the organizations, but there's some state entities, there are private entities like the Frick Collection, EY, uh, Microsoft, um, and that is a, uh, body that we convene to share lessons learned. Um, we're working on, in partnership with that Council, of creating a, uh, er, employer toolkit that will be for employers, nonprofits, job seekers, of how to make sure that workplaces are more accessible and have, uh, reducing barriers for people with disabilities in connecting to jobs.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And so associated with this plan, how many full-time employees are across all agencies dedicated to its implementation?

DOUGLAS LIPARI: Across all of the agencies? So I— I can speak to— sorry, the, uh, Center for Workplace Accessibility and Inclusion. We have 2 dedicated staff, though, uh, all of our work across our entire office, we make sure that our quiet team is, is feeding into the broader, uh, work of our office to make sure that we are always, uh,

prioritizing people with disabilities in the work and mindful of that. I can't speak for the staffing models at the other agencies, but I'm happy to pass the mic to let them speak to it.

ABBY MAYERHOFF: Hi, uh, I'm Abby Mayerhoff, Director of Programs for NYC at Work at MOPD. I'm a white woman with brown hair pulled back, a gray jacket, and blue shirt, uh, and I can respond for the NYC at Work program. We have 6 full-time staff that support, um, employment for New Yorkers with disabilities.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And, but that's separate from the specific plan initiative that goes— that has the concrete goals of 2,500?

ABBY MAYERHOFF: Our— our team connects job seekers with disabilities to employment, and that counts towards the 2,500 goal.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then in terms of this, the city agencies who are, uh, working alongside you, how - do they have separate staff?

ABBY MAYERHOFF: Yes.

HARIS KHAN: So we don't have staff dedicated just on this plan. We were— we operate a citywide system. It's mostly federal. It's overwhelmingly

1
2 federally funded, uh, and it's 17 physical centers
3 all over the 5 boroughs. And it's that system that
4 has served and connected over 1,200 New Yorkers with
5 disabilities and placed them into jobs. And that's
6 the number that ladders up to the 3,800 number at the
end of the last calendar year.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood.

8 HARIS KHAN: And I do wanna say, uh, Chair, on,
9 on that work itself, um, I think you brought up a
10 question of tracking and ensure- and accountability.
11 Um, we take this work incredibly seriously. I wanted
12 to also report out that in this first 6-month period
13 of FY26, which is the last kind of half of last year,
14 We connect- we served over 2,600, uh, New Yorkers
15 with disability.

16 Um, that reflects over two-thirds of the number
17 of the annual served in FY25. So we're already
18 definitely way on track to surpass the last fiscal
19 year's numbers in this fiscal year. And so we, we,
20 we care about this work. We're tracking it
21 internally. And then obviously our partners and City
Hall, uh, and Executive Director Lipari and his team,
They have a quarterly update across all of our
partner agencies to ensure City Hall on a quarterly

basis is looking at these numbers and, uh, making sure we're meeting the milestones as they approach.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: The funding commitment runs through FY29. What will happen to these programs after?

DOUGLAS LIPARI: So because of the variety of programs and variety of different city agencies, like, uh, Chief Harris Khan mentioned, uh, the Workforce One centers are federally funded. And so like, that's one funding source. Um, our, uh, DYCD partners also use leverage federal funding, but we have HRA. And so there's different funding sources and so I can't speak to each one of those. Um, but we are excited about the co-design RFP, which is just launching and that we will look to see from that, uh, initiative, which again, this, this work that we've done to date is, we are very proud of, but we're very excited about the work ahead as well, which is part of this investment, right? This work is still in progress.

And so we are always continuing to, uh, look to see, uh, as we do this work across the system, what is working and, and how we can make sure that we are, uh, maximizing the investments across the city.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then, Haris, you mentioned the data tracking that's happening. Um, are you, are you all able to share publicly about the placement rates, uh, the retention rates, wage levels at placements, and advancement over time?

HARIS KHAN: So I, I understand all of the agencies have different levels of data collection and tracking for each of their— because these are distinct programs that are all ladder up to the milestone goal. So to the extent that we have data that tracks with what you're looking for, we'd love to share that. I think we definitely have the wage level numbers that we would be able to provide. Uh, we don't track retention other than the fact that job placements are happening, and then we have an employer that voluntarily lets us know that they've made the job placement, or we do a ladder— like, later step, uh, W-4 match to confirm that a job placement has been made.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So each agency has their own record-keeping system, and it's not a standardized model in terms of like we're keeping track of the, uh, wages or where they've been placed, like what's standardized?

1
2 DOUGLAS LIPARI: Yeah, so the workforce system
3 here in the city is incredibly robust, but it's
4 incredibly large, right? There's a, you know,
5 depending on the count, over 150 different programs
6 across 30 different city agencies. And, you know,
7 the workforce programming is not a one type of thing,
8 right? And, and just like people with disabilities
9 are not a monolith, the programming is not as well.
10 And so there are some programming that city agencies
11 have that is dedicated specifically towards
12 connecting people with disabilities, but there's a
13 lot of other workforce programming that is not, er,
14 discreetly geared towards that.

15 However, people with disabilities are connected
16 through that programming. And so we do our best to
17 try to track, uh, hmm, for purposes of counting
18 towards this 3,800 number, programming that is
19 serving people with disabilities, but as well as, uh,
20 like the Workforce One centers, for example, are, uh,
21 centers that anyone can walk into. And so, uh, the
way that the data is tracked across, uh, the various
agencies does vary, um, depending on the particular
agency, but also depending on the particular type of

programming that might be and how dedicated it is for one particular population or another.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, no, I get that, uh, the workforce sector is not a monolith. Um, but I think it is, uh, it does cause me some tension that we don't have something that's more standardized to understand. Uh, when a program like this exists and there— because it needs to exist, we wanna make sure that people with disabilities are in all fields of, of work. Um, not knowing if there's real retention. I, that—

ABBY MAYERHOFF: I can speak to that. Um, so for the NYC at Work program, through the process of, um, embedding and integrating into the Workforce One Center in Brooklyn, we've spent a considerable amount of time transitioning our database tracking system to utilize SBS's WorkSource One system.

So at this time, the NYC at Work program and the Workforce One Centers are using the same same system, and we're working really closely with SBS to make sure that any data points that we've utilized and needed and had to track or wanted to understand better are also being addressed within the WorkSourceOne system.

1 And additionally, NYC at Work tracks retention,
2 and that is part of our, um, both data collection and
3 part of the service delivery, which Commissioner
4 Agarwal mentioned in her initial testimony.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And is that data that you can
6 share with us publicly?

7 ABBY MAYERHOFF: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So on, um, how much money the
9 city is investing across the 6 fiscal years, uh, is
10 \$1.7 million. What's the cost per placement thus
far?

11 ABBY MAYERHOFF: So the cost, um, for placement,
12 um, based on, um, uh, public available data, um,
13 this, uh, falls well within the range of, of, um,
14 costs per placement for workforce development, um,
15 programs in New York City. Um, and due to the nature
16 of, uh, people with disabilities and the variety of
17 systemic barriers to employment, um, many job
18 seekers, uh, uh, benefit for more comprehensive
19 ongoing treat- uh, er, so services, um, that is, um,
20 a success in incremental, uh, ways to move it
21 forward.

Um, and which will better reflect, um, in our
data as we move forward.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: The cost per placement?

ABBY MAYERHOFF: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Which is something you don't have right now. Just wanna make sure.

ABBY MAYERHOFF: No, we, well, we have, um, data, uh, we have, uh, research related to that.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then how do you know how that, uh, compares to benchmarks for comparable workforce programs?

DOUGLAS LIPARI: Yeah, so similar to, uh, what I was mentioning before, workforce programming generally will vary, uh, quite a bit in terms of cost per placement depending on the type of work. And, and particularly when there are, uh, programming that is targeted towards people with particular barriers to employment, um, there's often a lot of supportive services and wraparound supports, which may increase the cost per, uh, placement or, uh, tied to any particular program. So some programs are more costly per person because the level of service is different and the type of services needed.

And so again, um-

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Are you able to share maybe an example of what one cost could look like? And if it—

DOUGLAS LIPARI: So, so some programming— and I'll let her speak to— like, the Workforce One centers operate in a very different way in terms of the scale and scope of what, uh, um, the particular cost per placement or level of service may be, uh, for one particular individual. But our Partnership for Inclusive Internship program, for example, um, that is a, a programming where we are actually using an innovative funding model where we at Talion are funding for the, the staff of the nonprofit who is going to— who supports this work, but the wages paid are actually through through state entities.

So that's one example where, um, you know, our investment is, is a portion of the actual total investment into the programming. And so that's just one example where there's a unique model. Um, and so in terms of like X amount of dollars per individuals, it varies depending on the type of, uh, services.

HARIS KHAN: So on, and similar to what, uh, Executive Director Lipari mentioned, each of these workforce programs are incredibly different. So some

1
2 are specifically tailored for the population of New
3 Yorkers with disabilities, such as the At Work
4 program or WeCare and other programs in the system.
5 Our WorkforceOne system is open to all. It's
6 federally funded. It requires that every— any New
7 Yorker get access to it. So we have done a cost per
8 placement analysis for that system.

9 Again, it's for all New Yorkers, and so it's not
10 really, um, segmented for to target population, but
11 that number is \$1,314, is roughly what it costs us to
12 make one job placement at our, at our workforce
13 system.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Why isn't that, um,
15 disaggregated by, uh, ah, disabilities?

16 HARIS KHAN: So it's, it's an analysis of our—

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I know it's for everyone,
18 but—

19 HARIS KHAN: So our, our work, right, and the
20 federal funding stream requires that that funding
21 stream and the services are accessible to all. So
when we did the cost per placement analysis, our
mandate was citywide workforce systems, the general
adult population, how are we making these connections
and what does it cost to us. That's the lens with

1
2 which we conducted that analysis, which led to the
3 \$1,314 number. And just for reference, that means
4 for every \$6.94, um, invested into the system, we're
5 seeing a return of roughly 21% annually.

6 So the ROI is 21%. For every dollar invested
7 into the adult workforce system, the city is
8 capturing 21% on the net economic benefit of, um,
9 having more people in the workforce.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I mean, that's great, but it
11 still doesn't give a picture of, uh, the population
12 that I think we're, as a Committee, most interested
13 in. And I think that the city should have clear
14 analysis as to how much— how much investment is going
15 towards getting anyone with disabilities looking for
16 work placed.

17 ABBY MAYERHOFF: Um, I also wanted to share the
18 retention, uh, rate. So the proportion of
19 participants engaging retention support has increased
20 from 25%— 25% to 65%. So that's, uh, over the last 3
21 years, ah, ah, as the team has developed more
structure and, um, robust engagement strategies, um,
and m— more, uh, s— uh, job seekers have, um, uh,
have responded to our outreach.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And is that-- has that changed from previous fiscal years?

1
2 ABBY MAYERHOFF: Um, it's varied a little bit
3 over the last several years, but we've generally, um,
4 hovered around 6, but the, um, structure of the team
5 has changed particularly over the last 2 years. Um,
6 among the 6 staff, 3 of them are working out of the
7 workforce One in delivering those direct services.
8 The other staff are serving in other functions on the
9 team.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. And then on, uh, NYC
11 at Work, how many placements was NYC at Work
12 achieving annually prior to the city funding?

13 ABBY MAYERHOFF: So when NYC at Work was first
14 established, The program was entirely privately
15 funded, um, and that was about, uh, almost 10 years
16 ago. Um, and after the initial 3 years of our pilot,
17 um, we transitioned to being funded by the city. Um,
18 in the earlier years of the program, we had a, a
19 little bit higher placement rate than we've had over
20 the last several years. Um, and I think that that is
21 largely due to- some is the way that our staff has
transitioned and adapting to the change of working in
the Workforce One. That's something that really um,
was an opportunity for us to undergo some, some

significant changes, which are now leading, uh, yielding more results over the last few years.

We've had an uptick in employment over the last few years, um, since we've been in the Workforce One. Um, and I think that some of the- that change has also been, as, uh, the Commissioner mentioned, a result of the economy.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So prior to the city funding, when there was private funding, you're saying that placements were a little bit higher?

ABBY MAYERHOFF: A little bit higher, I would say, before the pandemic, and, and that coincided with the, the period of time when we were primarily privately funded, and then as we shifted into being funded through city tax dollars, um, we also, uh, had the pandemic, we were working fully remotely, um, and over the last almost 3 years, we've transitioned into, um, our new structure, working in the Workforce One and delivering in-person services, and over that period of time, the hires have increased again.

NISHA AGARWAL: And I would, I would add that, um, this was the first time since COVID that we do in-person, um, uh, process. And that's a very- that's been a very big deal. And like, the data, um,

1 shares that, um, between July 2023 to June 2025, we
2 have 168, uh, people with disabilities received
3 services and helped 99 individuals that got
4 employment.

5 So that's uh - and then we did workshops and a
6 range of other things, but we're increasing that as
7 we, as we, um, ah, recognize ways that we can, um,
8 ah, identify our work and ways that it can work well
9 to people with disabilities.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And for the 6 staffers who,
11 uh, support the NYC at Work, what are their titles
12 and functions, and is the Administration's view that
13 current staffing levels are sufficient to meet the
14 program demand?

15 ABBY MAYEROFF: I can respond to the first part
16 of that question. So I'm the Director of Programs,
17 um, and we have a community engagement manager who
18 largely oversees our uh, public sector employment
19 partners, uh, so works very closely with DCAS and
20 other city agencies. Uh, we have a business
21 engagement coordinator who works more with our
private sector employer partners. We have a manager
of career services, uh, who oversees a team of 2
additional career advisors. Um, and among the 3 of

NISHA AGARWAL: And, um, uh, related to, um, employment numbers, um, we are working with, um, uh, City Hall and OMB, um, on general matters, um, and that includes, um, At Work.

Yeah, so our, um, so in, uh, 2024 and 2025, it was \$543.82, um, and, um, in the next year, 2026, 2026 and 2027, it'll be, um, \$584 and some cent-some, um, change. And it's all by, um, city tax levy dollars. It's not, um private funding.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, no private funding.

Okay. Mhm. What accommodations or supports are available for participants who, because of the nature of their disability, cannot engage effectively with a

self-directed model, which is my understanding of NYC at Work.

ABBY MAYERHOFF: So yes, our program is primarily self-driven and self-directed. Um, we work really closely with, um, our partners at the state. So that's Access VR and the New York State Commission for the Blind, as well as, um, over 80+ provider and community-based organizations that provide additional support that is intended to supplement the work that our team provides. And, um, it's part of our engagement of job seekers to include those other service providers so that we're able to work in partnership to support that individual um, at this point.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could you again just clarify, uh, how you all are engaging with folks who may not be able to use the current model?

ABBY MAYERHOFF: Sure. So, um, I would say there's, there's two options. One is when an individual comes to us, if they, um, may face a challenge or difficulty with utilizing the program as it's structured now, if they're already working with another provider, we'll include that provider in, in

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2 opportunity. When they get hired, then they kind of
3 move, move out. Um, and I would say like on average
4 we're engaging with 700, 800+ individuals per year.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And what proportion of, uh,
6 these participants are accessing, uh, retention
7 support?

8 ABBY MAYERHOFF: So among the individuals who
9 have been hired at this point, I would say probably
10 around 60% have been utilizing the retention support
11 over the last year, um, which is- the Commissioner
12 mentioned has increased over the last few years.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then, uh, in a 12-month
14 period, what is the retention rate for program
15 placements?

16 ABBY MAYERHOFF: About 65%.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then you mentioned career
18 advisors.

19 ABBY MAYERHOFF: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: How many career advisors?

21 NISHA AGARWAL: So we have 2, um, individuals who
are career advisors, and then we have a manager of
career services who also serves um, as a career
advisor in addition to her managerial, um, functions.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And has that model been sufficient to ensure that all folks who are part of the program, um, have the support they need?

NISHA AGARWAL: I think that we, um, you know, wanna continue the conversation with OMB and other parties to figure out how we can continue to support our job seekers.

But, uh, we would love if we could, um, have, uh, another, uh, Workforce One, um, and expand it but we'll talk to OMB and City Hall, as Abby mentioned.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Are the career advisors at the Workforce One centers?

ABBY MAYERHOFF: Yes, uh, so they currently work out of the Workforce One center in downtown Brooklyn. So they provide services in person, um, but since we are only in one location at this time, they also continue to provide additional services either by phone or virtually.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. And, uh, do folks have to make appointments to communicate with them? What's the process?

ABBY MAYERHOFF: So, uh, generally speaking, our preference is for individuals to, um, set appointments, but, um, the Workforce One is an open

center and so if someone comes in who does not have an appointment, um, one of the career advisors will um, meet with them then.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And how quickly, uh, is a career advisor able to see someone?

ABBY MAYERHOFF: On site?

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: On site or on phone? How is that?

ABBY MAYERHOFF: So on site, um, if an— when an individual comes into the center, um, we will make our— we'll do our best to make sure that that person is seen that day, um, for at least an assessment of, um, what they're looking for and an understanding of their career goals.

Um, for an individual who reaches out to us virtually, it might take several weeks to have that screening appointment, um, due to the volume of, of, um, individuals.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And can you walk me through, uh, maybe an example of what an interaction could look like? Like, what kind of career support, uh, someone might be looking for from a career advisor and what the career advisor would share as a resource?

ABBY MAYERHOFF: Yeah, absolutely. So, um, generally, the first conversations are around what that individual's goals are and what kind of work they're looking for, what their job search process is already like, um, what their experience is in, what their education is. Um, usually the, um, first, like, comprehensive engagement is around a particular job application. So, um, whether it's a position that we've, um, made available to our, our job seekers or from a position that that person may have found on their own, the career advisor will first help assess that, that individual meets the qualifications for the position, um, and then, um, if and when they do, they'll work with that job seeker to make sure that their application materials really demonstrate the strength of their candidacy. Um, so tailoring it for the specific job, making sure the COVID letter is clear and demonstrates their interest in the company, um, all the things that everyone, you know, really works on when they're applying for jobs. Um, and then, um, after the application is submitted, the career advisors will, um, facilitate a mock interview.

1
2 Um, and generally, you know, as people continue
3 to be successful in those, they'll have multiple. We
4 have actually somebody who, um, just completed her
5 6th mock interview for the same position. So we're
6 expecting that the offer is coming soon. Um, once
7 someone is, uh, receives an offer or even throughout
8 the interview process, the career advisor, um, may
9 provide guidance on navigating that process. It may
10 also include navigating, um, a reasonable
11 accommodation request, um, so that individual makes
12 sure that they have that if it's in an interview or
13 when they're starting the job.

14 Um, in the case, particularly with city
15 government work, but really with a lot of employers,
16 there's also additional assistance with, um,
17 available for completing some of those online
18 application packages, you know, for city government,
19 there's a lot of information that you need to
20 provide. Um, and so, and many other, um, of our
21 employer partners require something similar. So, um,
you know, ensuring that individuals are able to
complete that in a timely way. Um, and then
assisting with other components of onboarding. So
again, in the case of city government, if it is a 55A

1 eligible position, that individual will need to be
2 enrolled in either Access-VR or the New York State
3 Commission for the Blind.

4 So we make sure that that is um, something that
5 person is able to set up, um, walking them through,
6 you know, kind of those first few days, making sure
7 that they get started and have, you know, a really
8 fantastic couple of days. And then, um, you know,
9 checking in and engaging intermittently through that
10 first year. And the frequency does depend a little
11 bit on the job seeker's, um, interest level. Um, and
12 sometimes if there's challenges, we may support them,
13 um, more comprehensively.

14 We w- you know, there are opportunity- there are
15 oftentimes that we'll engage with the employer at a
16 similar manner as well. Um, and that will usually,
17 you know, hopefully take them through that first
18 year. Sometimes somebody will want- will be ready
19 for a promotion and we'll, you know, support them
20 through that process. Um, in that first year as
21 well.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And are you all keeping track
of, uh, career advancements and promotions?

NISHA AGARWAL: Yes.

1
2 ABBY MAYERHOFF: Uh, and I want, want to, um,
3 invite you to join - join me and going to, um, uh,
4 Workforce One, and you can see in person how it's
5 going. And tell your constituents to, to, to go to
6 the At Work if they're looking for job placements.
Um, I just wanted to, ah, er, mention that.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Absolutely. And so how is
8 the city, um, doing outreach to make sure that New
9 Yorkers know?

10 ABBY MAYERHOFF: Um, so I can respond on behalf
11 of the NYC Work Program, but I think, um, uh, our
12 partners at DCAS and SBS can respond as well. Um, we
13 do our best to respond yes every time we're invited
14 to any community engagement event. Uh, we do a lot
15 of, um, community outreach. Um, we respond to a lot
16 of constituent calls and, and, um, just people who
reach out to our office because they're looking for
employment but don't realize that our program is
available.

17 Um, we work with all of the provider agencies and
18 community organizations to provide information
19 sessions for all of their participants as well. Um,
20 we've been working really closely, um, in particular
21 over the last 6 months or so with the New York Public

1 Library and the Brooklyn Public Library in
2 particular, um, to make sure that both their patrons
3 with disabilities are aware of our program and also
4 providing support for their career services staff to,
5 um, supplement some of the work that we're doing, um,
6 in terms of some direct service as well.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And is that specifically the
8 Workforce One centers or the At Work program?

9 ABBY MAYERHOFF: Um, so speaking for the NYC At
10 Work program, when we are promoting our program, we
11 also, um, include information about the Workforce One
12 because when somebody wants to come see us in person,
13 they'll come to the Workforce One. And as part of
14 the enrollment process, um, every individual will
15 need to come to the center once just to complete the-
16 the enrollment for, um, participation. And that's
17 part of how we're able to share-

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: They will need to come to the
19 center once, as in physically?

20 ABBY MAYERHOFF: Yes, that's part of the
21 enrollment process for Workforce One.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Why is that?

ABBY MAYERHOFF: I, I think that's, that's how
the Workforce One enrollment process works. And so,

1
2 you know, as part of embedding and integrating into
3 that center, we're, you know, trying to, um, take
4 steps to avoid confusion and duplication of intake
5 and things like that. And, and so we're trying to--
6 we've been taking steps to align with their, um,
7 enrollment process at the Workforce 1 Center.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could you speak more, more on
9 the piece about needing to be physically present?

10 HARIS KHAN: So we do provide services virtually
11 as well on the actual enrollment requirements. Um,
12 we can follow up there. The funding stream is
13 federally funded, so there's significant federal
14 requirements on how we're collecting data, what is
15 being asked, how we're storing data, and then
16 reporting. We have levels of oversight with the
17 federal government, with the state government, and
18 then we also coordinate with our city agencies that
19 oversee some of this work.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And have you heard, um, from
21 New Yorkers about experiencing hardship because they
were unable to physically be present at a center, and
how did they know they, they could go ahead and, uh,
pursue a virtual--

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2 HARIS KHAN: Yeah, so I, I'm getting— I, I, my
3 sense is our services are also— if you couldn't, if
4 you can't physically access our services, you're able
5 to receive them virtually. And that's what we did
6 during COVID when for a 2-year period of time we
7 weren't requiring New Yorkers to enter the Workforce
8 One Center physically. But we'll follow up with our
9 teams to understand what might be the, um, the
10 concern that has led to, um, this, this kind of
11 confusion on what the requirements are.

12 So we'll follow up, but my sense is all of our
13 services can be virtually accessed, uh, as well.
14 During COVID they were. I think we've gotten back to
15 a time when we are now allowing— we want New Yorkers
16 to also physically enter our centers. Our locations
17 are also located in all 5 boroughs. We have 17
18 centers. So if, uh, you're not necessarily required
19 to visit the Brooklyn Center if you're a New Yorker
20 with a disability. The Brooklyn Center is our pilot
21 program where we've got this incredible integration
between MOPD's At Work team and the SBS team. And
the lessons that we're learning here, uh, alongside
the work we're doing with SCION, the systems change,

um, initiative, we're implementing across the network.

So now all of our center staff, 151, are trained on disability etiquette. There are also trained—

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: 151 across the 17.

HARIS KHAN: Across the, across the 17 centers are trained. They were trained in 2024. They were trained again in February of this year. So there's ongoing coordination there.

We have a team, um, of 2 disability resource coordinators. So they're, uh, also having office hours at these centers to provide another— so it's not just, you know, one and done training of our center staff and then we're done for 2 years. We've got office hours with disability resource coordinators on staff that are going into these centers and reminding them of the resources that exist, teaching them about the warm handoffs that they could make for referrals to other benefit providers.

Um, and so there's a whole loop of, uh, feedback loop that's informing the work. And every year we're intending to do better. And that's something demonstrated by the fact that already we've surpassed

2/3 of the annual goal this fiscal year in the first 6 months.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then just broadly on, uh, outreach about the Workforce One centers, what is the city doing?

HARIS KHAN: So we— so because it's a 17-center network, we're in local communities all over the 5 boroughs. Our center staff themselves will go out to local communities, attend community board meetings, go to events organized by local nonprofits. Whenever invitations come in, we're intending to be there.

Um, we also have a Jobs NYC team that focuses particularly on neighborhoods with really persistent levels of unemployment. And for those neighborhoods, we're also doing localized hiring halls in those communities. And again, those are also— our disability service, uh, resource coordinators are actually— have actually trained our Jobs NYC team that's been organizing these hiring halls to ensure that when we plan out these hiring halls, we're mindful of how we're setting up the tables and chairs, what the entrance and exit and egress looks like, and ensuring it's physically accessible to New Yorkers.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And just to clarify, 17 centers, not 18.

HARIS KHAN: 17 centers, 1 floating center where we're, we're kind of in the community. We're using the public library. Sometimes we're using another facility in the neighborhood. But yes, 18 centers, 17 physical.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So aside from the, uh, what seems like neighborhood outreach and providers reaching out for information on the Workforce One centers. Um, is there anything, uh, more citywide that has been developed to express to New Yorkers that this is available?

HARIS KHAN: Yes, we've done marketing campaigns, uh, depending on— so we usually have LinkNYC ads and other marketing campaigns directed in neighborhoods that are facing persistent levels of unemployment. So when you're in downtown Manhattan around City Hall, you don't see tons of the -those ads. But when you're in neighborhoods with high need, you're seeing some of those ads on LinkNYC. You're seeing some of them on bus shelters when we have the budget for marketing, um, and when we're not under budget constraints.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And, um, what do you— what do you see as, uh, an effective way to do outreach?

HARIS KHAN: It's really been an all-of-the-above approach, um, but particularly this neighborhood-based approach of going deep into communities, not having people come to a particular location to get services, but also bring services, uh, into local communities has really worked for SBS. And the Jobs NYC works just speaks for itself, where we're organizing roughly 2 to 3 large-scale hiring events in local communities every month. Uh, we're promoting it widely. They're always packed out. We've got employers, um, roughly a dozen employers for each of these events that are doing on-site job interviews, uh, and connections.

We've also partnered with city agencies. So, um, DCAS and other agencies are also able to participate in these hiring events. Um, and we also have a mobile van that we call Jobsie, and it's our nickname for this van and we bring that van out to local communities. When we don't do a full-scale event, we'll table with that van, and it serves as a nice billboard and also has a computer inside.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So the mobile Jobsie, is that by appointment? How are we getting that to different parts of the city? Because I'm thinking about the IDNYC van, which has-

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: We have to, you know, bring
o the neighborhood.

HARIS KHAN: I'm actually very biased. I mean, I got to know Commissioner Agarwal through her incredible leadership of setting up IDNYC and the incredible benefit it is to New Yorkers, all New Yorkers, but immigrant New Yorkers. Uh, and so nothing can ever compete with her work on IDNYC and, and now the IDNYC and, uh, and their van. But our, you know, humble van also does go out into communities. Uh, we do do appointments sometimes. So we'll partner with the local organization if they want to do a full-blown event where we're marketing it ahead of time and we're ha— we have scheduled slots for appointments, then we'll do it that way.

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2 If we can't do it that way because the event is a
3 large community festival and not a structured event,
4 we'll still table and we'll have the staff available
5 to do one-on-one services, even if it's not by
appointment. So it really varies depending on-

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: How are you deciding where
7 Jobsie is?

8 HARIS KHAN: If, if, uh, we have the staff
9 capacity, we'll go anywhere in - across the 5
boroughs.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And so let's say like this
11 week or this month, what's Jobsie's calendar looking
12 like?

13 HARIS KHAN: I, I, I- there's, there's Jobsie.
14 There's also MOBI, which is our mobile outreach, uh,
15 for business services. Uh, hard for me to know
16 exactly where both of those vehicles are at, but as
17 you can imagine, we serve over 100,000 New Yorkers
18 every year on the workforce side and over 25,000 New
19 Yorkers on the business side. Um, so it's hard for
20 me to know exactly where those are, the units are and
21 also what our staff's plan is, because we don't just
limit our outreach to those vehicles.

We're also going out to tables separate from those vehicles. We're also doing other events, co-sponsoring events, organizing our own events, um, in local communities. So across all of that work, we end up serving 100,000 New Yorkers.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then for the- the floating models, um, are the staff members who are, uh, supporting, uh, that process coming from the 151 staffing?

HARIS KHAN: Yes, yes.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay. Uh, going back to the specialized hiring event, so since 2021, uh, NYC at Work conducted 15, uh, specialized events. How many of those resulted in hires that were still employed 90 days later, and how many employers who hired through the program have become repeat partners?

NISHA AGARWAL: Uh, so for the events themselves, some of them are co-hosted with partners in a way that we don't necessarily have access to the hire data, but I would say that about 10 of the 15 have resulted in hires with, um, at least 90-day retention. Um, and-

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Wait, why don't you all have the hiring data?

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2 NISHA AGARWAL: Some of the, um, so for example,
3 we co-hosted a career fair with the New York State
4 Department of Labor and Bronx Borough President's
5 Office, and they managed the— that component of the
6 event. Um, we worked with them to ensure that the
7 event was accessible and inclusive. We supported
8 promotion. We provided disability etiquette and
9 awareness training to all the employers that attended
10 the event, as well as a prep workshop for any of the
11 job seekers who were interested in, um, attending the
12 event.

13 Um, but due to the nature of that event, the, um,
14 other partners were responsible for the, um,
15 management of the attendance.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then is— does that happen
17 frequently?

18 NISHA AGARWAL: Um, no, most of our events are—
19 what, as I said, about 10 of the 15 are ones that
20 we've, um, have oversight of the, um, attendance and
21 follow-up. Um, and from those events, we've had
individuals who have, um, retained hire. Um, and
overall, in terms of our, um, ongoing partnerships
with employers, I would say about 20, um, or so
employers become repeat, um, partners. Sometimes it

is through an event, um, sometimes it's not. So for example, um, within the city, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has attended and participated in many of our citywide recruitments that we we host annually with, with DCAS, um, and after our one last July, one particular unit followed up with us and we, um, hosted an interview day for one unit for 5 jobs and we filled 3 of them. Um, and we're working with a new unit as of the last few weeks to, to potentially develop that model. And we've been in communication with some other agencies that are looking for a similar, um, kind of event. Um, and then for the public sector, we've had a couple of employers that, um, so for example, we've, um, done a couple of health care recruitments in partnership with Workforce One's Healthcare Career Center. Um, and one, that partnership with that center in particular has been, um, really, really, um, fruitful. And we had a couple of employers that, uh, were interested in those recruitments but weren't able to attend, but we've since been able to connect individuals to jobs at those employers. So that's the Children's Rescue Fund and Mount Sinai.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And just going back to the, uh, the, the piece about not collecting the, uh, participation and their information, hmm, does the main partner— do the main partners then do the follow-up work? Like, what's because it seems like we're losing a whole slate of people who participated, and will they have opportunities to check in with—

NISHA AGARWAL: So generally speaking, as I said, our events are— we're one of, or the lead, um, planner and host of those events. And in those cases, we do have oversight of engagement and, and follow-up. Um, in terms of ones where we have less engagement, we still make sure that any um, participants are aware that our program is not just a, you know, a one-time opportunity and that they can continue to participate in our program. Um, I can even go back. So I mentioned there was someone who is, uh, just completed a 6th interview for a job and she was connected to our program through the event that we did with the Bronx Borough President's Office just a few months ago.

So we do continue to engage with people who participate in those events.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then just, just in terms of, uh, attendance. Isn't that data important?

NISHA AGARWAL: Yes, um, and that's why we try to host or co- or, or be the lead host on, on those events so that we're able to track that information.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And so I'm just trying to understand, when there's an event that seems unique that you did with the, the, uh, Borough President, um, it- you're- you're all, like, not having that attendance is something you all decided? Like, how is- how and why are- are we all okay with sort of that exception?

NISHA AGARWAL: I don't- I don't think we're necessarily okay with it. In this particular example, that was an event that, um, they've hosted a couple of years, and this past year was the first time that they engaged our office in planning and the production of the event, um, and it was already in the process and, um, I think that through the, the opportunity of partnering with them on that event, um, both parties have, um, recognized the benefit of including our office earlier in the planning process. Um, and so for example, um, in February we did a disability etiquette awareness training for the

entire staff of the Bronx Borough President's Office so that they're, um, including like an overview of the office as a whole so that not only do they understand how to more effectively engage their constituents with disabilities, they also have a better understanding of the opportunities our office provides so that they can connect, um, individuals to us as appropriate.

And I will add that, um, when we do co-host and we're not leading, um, we also have— we're doing advocacy. So if we work with the Bronx def— uh, Bronx, um, Borough President, it's like, ah, advocacy moment to share our benefits and our, um, access to, um, job seekers with disabilities.

So we, uh, we don't get the direct, um, access for data and all that stuff, but the goal is to, to back, uh, backroom figure it out, and so that it— we have that constant communication in the future.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And how, uh, else are elected officials engaging with MOPD?

NISHA AGARWAL: Yeah, um, so like, as, um, Abby mentioned, we work with, um, Borough presidents, etc., but we would love to have, uh, Council Members, um, elected officials, um, contribute where their

1 constituents all seek job, uh, opportunities for— and
2 those are people with disabilities as well.

3 And so we would love to have, um, uh, uh,
4 presentation for all City Council Members. We, we,
5 we can talk about that, um, but we would really love
6 to have you involved, um, and, um, reach out to, um,
7 people with disabilities who need jobs.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Absolutely. So the— going
9 back to the, the plan, um, the 2,500 placement goal,
10 of course, represents a small— a very small fraction
11 of the hundreds of thousands of working-age New
12 Yorkers with disabilities who are unemployed or
13 underemployed. How did the admin determine that
14 2,500 was the right goal?

15 DOUGLAS LIPARI: So that was based on some data
16 that was, uh, evaluated at the time, including
17 hearing both, like, actual data and anecdotal data
18 and hearing from what our partners were, uh, hearing
19 and thinking. And so the 2,500 goal was, was set
20 based on that point in time, based on some of the
21 information that we had. We're excited that we're
exceeding the goal, though I think also that
warrants, uh, scrutiny of, um, what the future looks

1 in terms of, like, future goals potentially, or how
2 we're serving.

3 So we're always looking to continue to evaluate
4 um, uh, the programming and the data collection
5 process. And just to— some of what we're discussing,
6 right, we're— a lot of this work is still very much
7 in progress. And prior to having this plan, there
8 was no tracking of this at all. And so, um, we're
9 certainly proud of the work that has happened in
10 terms of connecting 3,800 people, but we also know
11 that there's always more work to be done, um, both on
12 the actual work but also how we're tracking and
13 reporting and collecting data. And I appreciate you
14 highlighting, Chair, the some of the, uh, areas of
15 focus, and we're happy to continue the conversation
16 on how to continue to track.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And of the 3,800 placements
16 achieved to date, uh, are you all, uh,
17 record-keeping, um, if individuals with intellectual
18 disabilities, developmental disabilities, psychiatric
19 disabilities, um, have been hired, how are you all
20 assessing, uh, just what within the disability, um,
21 spectrum, mhm, who's, who's getting hired?

DOUGLAS LIPARI: Yeah, and so again, it depends specifically on the type of programming, um, and how data is collected and, um, where—

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could you give an example?

DOUGLAS LIPARI: Yeah, so for the Partnership for Inclusive Internships, for example, um, that we run, all of those individuals are, uh, connected through the state vocational agencies. So Access VR, the Commission on the Blind.

And so we know that through that data collection process, there is a little more robust data collection, whereas I, and I don't wanna speak for, uh, Chief Haris Khan, but the Workforce One centers operate on a different model and some programming is, is based on, uh, self-identification, right? And so we're mindful of both their different programs, of how they operate and how they're collected, but also in terms of as a job seeker, uh, the experience of questions that you're being asked in order to access services.

And so it's always a balance in terms of information that we're collecting and, and being mindful of the sensitivities around, uh, digging deep on to anyone's, uh, identity, um, whether it's across

any type of disability, race, gender identity, etc., etc. And so, um, different programs operate in different ways in terms of some of the data collection points. Um, and so most of— in terms of the data we're collecting towards the 3800— is that just, uh, individuals with disabilities. But we do know through some of the programs that are more geared towards— that they do, uh, span a diverse, uh, pool of, uh, individuals of different types of, uh, disabilities from physical disabilities to, uh, mental health challenges, uh, developmental disabilities, etcetera.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So that is being recorded?

DOUGLAS LIPARI: In certain programs. It is in certain programs. It will— it is not.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, because I'm interested to just better understand, um, what kinds of disabilities are employers okay hiring? Um, and of course that sort of falls into conversations about workplace discrimination and just better understanding, um, who within the disability community is more vulnerable and, uh, unlikely to get hired.

1
2 NISHA AGARWAL: Yeah. So, um, I— my, my guess,
3 and we'll uh, research this more, it's all people
4 with disabilities have difficulty, um, getting hired.
5 So when I was 37, I didn't have a disability, and
6 then I— but I could— every job that I, uh, applied
7 for, I got, and it was because of my qualifications
8 and etc.

9 Then after I got disabilities, it was harder for
10 me to get jobs. I was, like, rejected. I'm the same
11 person, but I showed, uh, disabilities, and I was
12 rejected on several, um, job opportunities.

13 And so if I can have that challenge, I'm sure
14 that there are many other people with disabilities
15 who have that same concern. So I don't know if it's
16 like they have a speech disability or a physical
17 disability. I think it's like, uh, matters across
18 the board. And I think that's why I'm so excited
19 working on, um, uh, employment for people with
20 disabilities because we help everyone, um, and get
21 them real perfect jobs for them.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And, um, building on that,
23 uh, do you all get an opportunity to give feedback to
24 employers?

1
2 ABBY MAYERHOFF: I can respond to that on behalf
3 of the NYC at Work program. Um, it's case by case
4 and depends on the employer and the nature of the
5 relationship that we have with them. Um, part of the
6 way that we build relationships with our employer
7 partners is to be able to have some sort of feedback.
8 Generally speaking, we find that employers in the
9 interview process are less forthcoming with feedback.
10 I think that that's true outside of the workforce
11 development system as well.

12 Um, but we do try, particularly as people move
13 along the hiring process, um, to be able to develop a
14 report to get information, uh, that's feedback. Um,
15 and then also be able to provide our concerns in
16 terms of ways in which that employer may be
17 unintentionally, um, less accessible than they
18 thought they were.

19 Um, and I would say those are conversations that
20 because we build, you know, direct partnerships, um,
21 they're often receptive to addressing. Um, that's
also why we try to, as a starting point of our
relationship development, both in the public and
private sector, is doing a disability etiquette and
awareness training to make sure that one, we're kind

1 of level setting language, understanding of
2 disability, um, creating a safe space to have that
3 communication. Um, so that when there are challenges
4 on, on at any point, um, we have that kind of
5 starting point of that conversation to think about it
6 a little bit more comprehensively.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And how are you all
8 recruiting, uh, employer partners?

9 ABBY MAYERHOFF: So some of it is, uh, response
10 to outreach from employers who contact our office.
11 Sometimes they may reach out to us just for a
12 question about a particular employee that they're
13 having a challenge with, and then we try to engage
14 them more fully.

15 Um, a lot of it is word of mouth and referral.
16 Um, we also do cold calling and outreach. Um, we've
17 also been working with a lot of, like, more employer
18 networks. So for example, um, we've been working
19 with the New York Tech Alliance to be able to engage
20 more employers that work in tech.

21 Um, we've been working with some disability arts,
um, networks that, um, work with a wide range of
cultural institutions to be able to expand our work
in the arts. Um, and with the city, we have a really

1 great partner in DCAS who, um, we're able to, to
2 really, uh, comprehensively engage city agencies.

3 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And, um, have you all
4 experienced any barriers to, uh, types of employment
5 that folks with disabilities are not, uh, at all
6 present?

7 ABBY MAYERHOFF: That's a good question. Um, I
8 think that it's hard to say, like, you know, to know
9 for sure what sectors or employers do or don't have
10 people with disabilities in them. I, I generally
11 operate under the assumption that they're— that those
12 individuals are there, they just may not have
13 disclosed, or their employer may not be aware of
14 that. Um, but, you know, employment has changed a
15 lot.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: But in terms of, like, the
17 jobs that folks with disabilities are getting hired
18 into? Are there fields that you are seeing are not
19 representative?

20 ABBY MAYERHOFF: I think that there are— among
21 the job seekers that we work with, there are some
skills gaps, a— as employment has changed, um, as
they've become more heavily reliant on tech, as

certain areas have, have shifted. Um, but that's speaking specifically for our set of job seekers.

I think that, you know, our goal is to not just have one person in engineering, for example, but to make that a field that is more accessible and inclusive. And so, um, you know, ways in which we can work with our partners to address some of those, like, sector-based barriers, that's something that we, we are working together on. And, and for NYC at Work in particular, we've, um, been trying to figure out what opportunities there are to address some of those skills gaps a little bit more comprehensively. It's, it's, it's, you know, it's a, it's a challenging job market right now.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And with the, uh, the skills gaps, um, how is NYC at Work or just MOPD, um, supporting folks in ensuring that they are— they've learned to use the laptop or whatever devices are necessary for a new job?

ABBY MAYERHOFF: Yeah, so, uh, the digital divide is definitely a significant barrier. Um, NYC at Work has provided computers directly to job seekers who didn't have either a computer at all or something

that was, um, usable, particularly like around 2021, 2022.

Um, we did have a pilot program with Strive International where we worked with them to, um, run a skills training that was a little bit more entry-level computer skills and Microsoft Office skills. Um, and it's something that now in our kind of new structure within the Workforce One, we're in a position where we're able to, um, utilize the resources and trainings that Workforce One offers. Um, and then also, um, consider how we can do that a little bit more comprehensively in the future as well.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And what are those trainings that Workforce One centers-

HARIS KHAN: So at our hub centers, we offer digital literacy workshops, and we also have computer labs at all of our centers, uh, in Workforce One. So all of the 17 physical centers.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And those computers are voluntary? Are you talking about- are they a part of a digital literacy class, or-

HARIS KHAN: So there's, there's digital literacy workshops that happened at the 5 hub centers, and

1 then— but across all of our centers, even the one—
2 there's a center not too far away from here,
3 10-minute walk, uh, in on Wall Street where if you're
4 a New Yorker, uh, you want to apply for jobs, there's
5 a computer lab available for you. You could walk in,
6 no appointment needed, go through the— connect with
7 our staff, get a sense of your career counseling
8 needs, uh, get some resume help. You could even edit
9 your resume at one of our computers in that computer
lab, and that's available to all of our centers.

10 NISHA AGARWAL: But I would also add, um, work
11 that we can do more, um, is the cross relationships.
12 So with, um, seniors with disabilities, it's harder
13 for them to get, um, comfortable with a computer and
14 all that kind of stuff. So, um, I'm, uh, hoping to
15 meet with the aging, uh, Commissioner and soon and
16 collaborate on these issues because, um, it's— or
17 veterans, uh, with disabilities, like the connection
18 between agency um, that re— relate to disabilities is
important, and we're, uh, trying to move that
forward, um, now.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So at the current, uh,
20 moment, um, does MOPD offer skills-building trainings
21 or refer them out?

1
2 NISHA AGARWAL: Right now, we refer job seekers
3 either to the available, um, trainings within, uh,
4 the Workforce One Center um, or to our partners, but,
5 um, it's something that, as I said, we've, we've been
6 trying to assess, you know, our capacity and, and
7 what the opportunities are for that to be something
8 that our team can, um, respond to more
9 comprehensively.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, I think I, you know, I
11 think it would be important, um, to just better
12 understand what obstacles are folks with disabilities
13 experiencing outside of their disabilities that is
14 perhaps, uh, preventing them from securing a
15 permanent job. And for our city to better understand
16 that, um, to be able to ensure that we're, we're
17 filling those gaps.

18 Um, uh, since you brought up veterans and, uh,
19 folks, uh, older folks, um, do you all have data in
20 terms of, like, what age group of people with
21 disabilities are more likely to be able to get a job?

ABBY MAYERHOFF: Um, I believe we have that, not
here, but we'll, um, provide it afterwards, um,
because we are working with, um, the Veterans

Services and the Aging, um, so we can share that information after that.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And do, um, Aging and Veterans Services, um, keep specific data on folks with disabilities?

ABBY MAYERHOFF: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay.

ABBY MAYERHOFF: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I wanna come to some, uh, questions about the federal threats. So the City Comptroller is estimating that 725,000 New York City Medicaid enrollees will lose their coverage through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Ah, um, we're reporting requirements and recertifications and 230,000 more New Yorkers will lose essential plan coverage effective July 1st, 2026. nHas the city assessed how many current or prospective participants in NYC at Work, SCION, and P- PII are among those at risk of losing Medicaid coverage this summer?

NISHA AGARWAL: So I'll begin and then, um, turn it over to others. Um, so the work requirements, the Medicaid cuts, and the SNAP, um, uh, benefits, um, theoretically, um, people with disabilities will be exempt. However, it's not clear because this is

1
2 only- it's like there's no, um, finite, um, rule
3 until June.

4 And so we have been working with, um, other city
5 agencies to determine that. And in fact, yesterday I
6 spoke with the DSS Commissioner about, um, the
7 population that people with disabilities have and how
8 might that have an impact, um, on the cuts, federal
9 cuts, um, and, um, SNAP benefits. And we're gonna
10 research that because I think that's a smaller set
11 and we could actually make it zero if we figure out a
12 creative way to do with that. And so that's like
13 something that we've been talking about like right,
14 right now.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And, uh, what kind of
16 outreach will the city do to help program
17 participants retain coverage or document exemptions
18 before the July 1st deadline?

19 NISHA AGARWAL: Yeah, so I, I would, um, urge you
20 to talk to DSS because they're, um, they're doing a,
21 uh, uh, extensive, um, outreach and campaign, um, to
move that forward, and they want all city agencies or
offices to be involved. And so, um, that is in the
works.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Home and community-based services, the services that allow people with significant disabilities to live and work independently, are among the optional Medicaid benefits most vulnerable to state cuts when federal revenues decline. Has the city modeled how potential HCBS reductions would affect workforce participation among current NYC at Work, SCION, PII participants? And what did those projections show?

DOUGLAS LIPARI: We don't have specific data on for those particular programs, but as the Commissioner mentioned, as the, the cuts ahead, um, are potentially dramatically impacting a broad, uh, swath of New Yorkers, including with people with disabilities, it is something that the city is, is very much focused on and making sure that people are maintaining their benefits, um, have the information they need.

And so Um, we are mindful of the- the threats that are coming. Um, we know that, um, there- these are being framed as trying to be an effective workforce development tool for connecting people, but we know that that is not the case. These are- these are cruel cuts ahead. And so we are doing all we can

1 to make sure that, uh, New Yorkers are informed, and
2 that work is being led by, uh, DSS, and that New
3 Yorkers are supported to make sure that they are
4 maintaining benefits, have connection to, uh, uh, the
5 services that they need, and then continuing to
6 evaluate in terms of how we are, uh, structuring our
7 programming and, and allocating funding to make sure
8 that we are, um, best serving New Yorkers across, um,
9 a variety of different backgrounds and demographics.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So with DSS leading on the
11 information piece, how are you all contributing to
12 DSS?

13 HARIS KHAN: Well, I'll just— I, I know from, uh,
14 talent, there's a, uh, many, many, uh, different city
15 agencies that are, are working hand in hand with DSS
16 and City Hall and, and even partners across the state
17 to make sure that, um, information is being
18 collected. We're monitoring, like, some of these
19 things are still uncertain. And so, um, we're
20 plugged into that work to see from the workforce
21 development piece how we can be supportive. And I'll
let Commissioner speak to—

NISHA AGARWAL: Yeah, so I think that, um, DSS is
coordinating and asking for every agency or every

1 office, um, what their role could play. And so for
2 us, it's the, uh, disability community and what, um,
3 what people will get exempt. Great. What will not
4 get exempt or, um, other issues.

5 So that's like our, our main goal, but every
6 agency with, like, example, um, the, uh, DYCD, uh,
7 what would happen if, um, kids, uh, occurred. And so
8 the-- all these agencies are, are, um, are in on it,
9 uh, on their specific work that they've been doing.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then, um, on an
11 individual level, is MOPD creating any advocacy tools
12 or just material on the-- the looming federal cuts and
13 its impact.

14 NISHA AGARWAL: Yeah, and that's one of the
15 things that we're gonna talk to DSS. We don't want
16 to put that out to the broader public because we
17 don't want people to be scared. So once we find out,
18 like, if that will impact some disability communities
19 compared to others, then we'll, um, that-- we'll, uh,
20 assess and figure out what makes most sense, but more
21 targeted rather than broad.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And are you, um, getting
outreach from folks with disabilities on the question
about the potential federal cuts and what's coming?

1
2 NISHA AGARWAL: Yeah, I mean, like, I imagine
3 every, um, agency, they're— the people are nervous.
4 Um, I'm nervous. I mean, everybody's nervous. And
5 so that's what we want to do is to calm uh, the
6 nervousness for some, but, um, support for those who
7 may need it. And, and it, in our case, MOPD, it's a,
8 it's a complicated dance because we are not gonna
9 have all people exempt and we're not gonna have all
10 people, um, uh, um, being cut. So we have to figure
11 out how to move that forward.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And does the city have a
13 contingency plan if the state reduces HCBS funding?

14 NISHA AGARWAL: I don't know.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Um, would the city, you
16 think, be prepared to provide city-funded bridge
17 services for individuals who lose HCBS supports and
18 as a result can no longer maintain employment?

19 NISHA AGARWAL: Well, I think that the, um, the
20 Administration is, um, thinking about this
21 consistently. And, um, I, I don't have the exact,
um, thoughts that they may have, but, um, from the
Mayor onwards, we're very concerned about this and
the impact that, that will have on New York City.

Um, it's not just, um, one agency or, um, uh, it's a, it's a company. It's like a, a nationwide problem.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: No, I'm really, uh, relieved to hear that the Admin is laser-focused on, on ensuring that New Yorkers know, uh, what's coming and the supports available. I- I would definitely urge earlier rather than sooner on this information.

NISHA AGARWAL: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Um, the new work requirements under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act require certain Medicaid recipients to document 80 hours per month of qualifying activity. People with disabilities who qualify for an exemption are still going to need to document that exemption. What is the city doing to ensure that New Yorkers with disabilities know their rights, can document their exemption, and do not lose Medicaid coverage through Administrative failure rather than ineligibility?

NISHA AGARWAL: Um, I'm actually, uh, I don't know if, um, people who are exempt need to do the 80-hour, but I'll double-check that. But, um, in general, we want to, um, uh, you use our, uh, communication platform to share that out to people.

1
2 Again, keeping in mind that, um, some people who are
3 like, some people are exempt, like, they may not, uh,
4 they may not require the same level of concern as
5 people who have, um, cuts looming, um, forward. And
6 so that's what we're discussing with DSS, um, deeply.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then a Pro Publica
8 investigation published, uh, last month revealed that
9 the Trump Admin is actively finalizing a rule that
10 would deduct the value of a disabled adult's bedroom
11 from their monthly SSI payments if any family member
12 in the household receives SNAP, regardless of their
13 family's income. For a disabled adult living at home
14 with low-income parents, this could reduce SSI by up
15 to 1/3, approximately \$330 per month, or eliminated
16 entirely. Has the Administration taken a formal
17 position on this proposed rule through advocacy to
18 the New York congressional delegation or any other
19 channel?

20 NISHA AGARWAL: We have not, but, um, I would
21 love to, um, uh, pursue that, um, because I didn't
22 know it existed. And so it was really great to share
23 that. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Of course. Coming to some
25 more questions on employment, uh, discrimination.

What's the working relationship between MOPD and CCHR?

NISHA AGARWAL: Um, a good relationship. Um, and we have a new Commissioner, um, and so I had a meeting with her, uh, early on, and we're doing some, um, uh, co-convenings with her as well. And so, um, as we move forward, we, um, would partner with CCHR.

ABBY MAYERHOFF: And I, I can also add that, um, over the last several years, we've also co-hosted, um, Know Your Rights um, know your rights related to employment workshops. So, you know, it's definitely a long-term partnership.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then when a participant in a city disability employment program experiences discrimination or an accommodation denial from their employer, is there a formal referral pathway to CCHR? And if yes, how does it work in practice?

ABBY MAYERHOFF: Uh, so for NYC.org in particular, um, we will make a referral to CCHR, but we don't get directly involved in that process.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And is anyone, um, tracking whether those referrals, uh, result in relief?

ABBY MAYERHOFF: No, as I said, we don't get involved directly in that process.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And is that, uh, is that just, uh, because of the fun— like, the function of MOPD?

NISHA AGARWAL: Yeah, um, we're not an enforcing, um, uh, office, um, but, uh, CCHR has enforcing, uh, priorities, and so that's the reason we can't, um, be involved in that, that process.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: But in terms of, uh, just better understanding the kinds of discriminatory experiences that folks are, uh, facing, um, wouldn't you say that this is an important data point?

NISHA AGARWAL: Oh, definitely and we have, um, in our website, in the— in our, um, D I, the, er, um, disability training, we have, um, these types of barriers, um, that we provide to anybody who wants to, um, uh, partake on this. And, um, that includes City Council Members and your staff.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then on, um, the, uh, kinds of discrimination or accommodation denials, um, is there— has there been any joint advocacy efforts to speak out against, uh, these kinds of, uh, negative activities?

NISHA AGARWAL: Um, well, I mean, we haven't, um, been actively involved, but we're talking to CCHR

1 about, um, advocacy or other ways that we can move
2 the ball forward, especially, um, we have, um, many
3 MOPD's around the country, and that's, um, a very
4 active space that we can maybe organize people to
5 come to DC and, and do an advocacy tour.

6 I did that when I was in MOYA and we created, um,
7 Cities for Action and recreating that again would be,
8 um, fantastic.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Would you, um, know, uh, what
10 kind of complaints are being filed through CCHR?

11 NISHA AGARWAL: No. Um, but we can ask them to
12 send you information if that's helpful.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So again, MOPD is not
14 tracking complaints and, um, or reports of
15 discrimination. So if someone does share they're
16 experiencing some kind of discriminatory behavior,
17 you all refer to CCHR. I know we haven't talked at
18 all about SCION, though it was— though it's come up,
19 um, and also the mhm, the 55A program, um, on SCION,
20 SBS, uh, reported earlier this year, er, last year
21 rather, that the Workforce One system served more
than 1,900 individuals with disabilities since the
start of the previous Admin. Hmm, how is served
defined for that figure? Does it mean job placement,

program enrollment, or a single interaction with the career counselor?

HARIS KHAN: Thank you, Chair. Um, I don't have the exact number that you're looking at, so apologies for that. I wouldn't be able to directly respond to that. Happy to follow up on where you're getting the 19,000 served number from, but served would mean a consumption of service. It could even be, right, like using one of the computer labs to do your resume editing, but it could be— it could be very intensive, it could be not so intensive, but it is uh, deeper than just walking in. It's a service, um, that is used. Um, and then job placements, we have 1,200, um, jobs that were, uh, received by New Yorkers with disabilities since FY24.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: The SCION team completed accessibility walk throughs of all the Workforce One Career Centers in 2024. Are you able to share the specific deficiencies that may have been identified? What corrective actions were required, and have all identified deficiencies been remediated?

HARIS KHAN: Yeah, to the degree that, uh, was possible and feasible with the resources that we've had, we've made significant improvements across the

1 system. Um, some of them were behavioral changes by
2 Workforce One Center staff that were focused on the
3 goal of serving the adult general population. Not
4 necessarily focused on a target population.

5 And so through the work of SCION and the 3-person
6 team that we have doing this work for the 17 centers,
7 uh, that serves 100,000 New Yorkers, uh, that, that
8 team is able to not only do trainings, did the
9 accessibility checks, but followed up with wherever
10 we found behavioral changes needed on our staff's end
11 to create a better, more welcoming and accessible
12 environment. We then conducted change management
13 work at the centers. Uh, and we're now doing office
14 hours with those centers so that the staff don't feel
15 as though, you know, when you do the training, you've
16 been told, uh, change some of your practices, and
17 that's the end of the relationship, but really have
18 an ability to consult with experts that are on SPS
19 staff, centrally located. And these are folks that
20 were first initially at MOPD, so they're really
21 experts on the subject matter. Um, and receive
training from the state as well and we're working
with them to improve our system.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And you mentioned that 3 are
3 SCI on staff members?

HARIS KHAN: We have 3 currently on staff, yes.
4 We have 2, uh, disability resource coordinators, we
5 have a manager of that team, um, and then we've got,
6 um, my understanding is 16 interns that are also
7 serving as disability resource, uh, associates.
8 They're interns, uh, who are all people with
9 disability. Many of them are blind New Yorkers, and
10 they're all based also— when they're working as part
11 of their internship, we have them working at our
12 Workforce One centers. And, and it's been an
13 incredible partnership with the state's Commission,
14 uh, for the Blind and Access-VR, where they're not
15 only helping us be more thoughtful about being an
16 employer that has New Yorkers working, uh, who are
17 people with disability, but also on the flip side,
18 how can we make sure for other blind New Yorkers and
19 other New New Yorkers with disabilities when they
20 experience that center. Are there things they're
21 catching that we can then improve, uh, to make the
experience better?

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And for the internships, do you, uh, know if any of the interns have then gone on to, uh, retaining a job at the Workforce One Centers?

HARIS KHAN: I'm not aware of that number. They're all currently interns, and it's a- it's state-funded internships, uh, as I understand that we've been able to work with.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. So, SBS is not necessarily recruiting the interns.

HARIS KHAN: No, we're recruiting the interns, but the funding sources from the state, because we don't- we really don't have, uh, city funding resources available for the operations of our centers. Most of our centers are completely, almost completely reliant on federal dollars, uh, and, and this partnership where we were able to expand the work of our 3-person team was the result of some state funding available at, uh, the State Commission for the Blind and, uh, at Access-VR. We do actually know that one, at least one of these interns was- will likely be hired at one of our Workforce One Centers.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That's great news. And so 3 staff members, do you think that that staffing level

1 is adequate and has that changed from the past? Is
2 this an increase?

3 HARIS KHAN: I think the number has, uh, hovered
4 around 3 and 4. Um, we could always do more, uh,
5 but, but with the resources that we've had, we've
6 ensured and been very strategic with deploying them
7 in ways in which to not just keep them in the central
8 office at SBS, but leverage them to improve
9 accessibility across the 17 centers. Office hours
10 are a great way where we have 2 of these staff
11 members doing multiple office hours at multiple
12 centers instead of being fully located and deployed
13 at one particular center.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood and then are there
15 other kinds of internship opportunities that the--
16 that you all are, uh, making accessible to folks with
17 disabilities? Like, I think the SBS program is, is
18 really wonderful to hear about. I did not know about
19 that.

20 DOUGLAS LIPARI: So I can speak for the-- at
21 Talent, um, we have the Partnership for Inclusive
Internship that works, uh, with connecting people
with disabilities to paid internships, primarily in
the public sector. Um, like I mentioned earlier, we

1 fund the- the staff and the operational cost. It's
2 through a great nonprofit partner, AHRC, who runs the
3 program. Um, the funding for the wages are paid
4 through the state VR agencies. And since March of,
5 uh, 2024, over 109, uh, individuals with, uh,
6 disabilities have been connected to internships and
7 54 of those, uh, 54 individuals have transitioned to
8 permanent employment after completing their
9 internships.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And you said that the- it's
11 primarily public sector internships. Does that mean
12 that folks went into working in city agencies, or-

13 DOUGLAS LIPARI: So, it's primarily public sector
14 internships, um, though 16 out of the 54 job
15 placements have been with city agencies. The rest
16 have been at other, uh, non-city agencies.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And, and do you know what
18 the, uh, hourly wages are or were for those permanent
19 placements?

20 DOUGLAS LIPARI: The- for the permanent
21 placements, it, it varies, uh, quite a bit because,
um, there are, you know, er, like I mentioned, people
with disabilities have a variety of different skill
sets, experiences, and so, um, the jobs range, um,

1 from, you know, higher-wage IT, like cybersecurity
2 jobs, to, uh, data management, to human resources,
3 uh, to office and clerical work and project managers.
4 So the wages range— the salary ranges from like the
5 mid-\$40,000 to upward of, uh, over, hmm,
6 \$100,000-plus, uh, dollars.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: What happens to PII
8 participants whose access VR eligibility is denied or
9 whose access VR services are delayed? Does the city
10 have a contingency funding mechanism to serve them?

11 DOUGLAS LIPARI: So in order to be eligible for
12 this particular program, uh, individuals do need to
13 have that certification from the access VR agencies.
14 Fortunately, AHRC is a great organization that, uh,
15 operates our program, but also operates many other,
16 uh, types of programming.

17 So may be able to connect them to programming
18 that they are serving or refer them to other types of
19 programs that they may be eligible for.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: What's the city's total, uh,
21 annual contribution to PII, and what share of overall
program funding does that city contribution
represent?

1
2 DOUGLAS LIPARI: So, uh, we contribute about
3 \$250,000 a year for the programming. Um, the wages—
4 I don't have the exact numbers, um, but I think over
5 uh, I'm not sure. I'll have to get back to you on
6 what the, uh, exact costs on the wages are, though
7 the wages are obviously a significant cost, um,
8 because we wanna make sure that the— all of the
9 interns are paid.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And, uh, is the city using,
11 uh, PII to build a pop— a pipeline, excuse me, for
12 its own agencies, or is it designed to place
13 participants broadly?

14 DOUGLAS LIPARI: We obviously wanna make sure
15 that we are building the, uh, pipeline of city talent
16 and, and creating an inclusive, uh, place to work for
17 being the City of New York, being a model employer.
18 And so we always wanna make sure that we are
19 connecting city agencies to, uh, the job seekers.
20 And so it is— the internships are primarily city
21 agencies, not necessarily every job opportunity is,
but that's also because of, you know, people choose
to accept jobs or pursue jobs, um, in different
sectors for, uh, a variety of, of reasons. And so
some people wanna stay working for the city. Um, I

1
2 hope they do. I love working for the city, but
3 people are also moving on to great opportunities
4 outside of the city.

5 I'll say one thing that even just hosting an
6 intern, um, even if that intern, um, for one reason
7 or another does not end up permanently working at
8 that intern- it's a really great experience for that
9 agency just from a cultural change, right? Of
10 understanding um, sort of, you know, uh, getting rid
11 of a lot of the- the misconceptions and assumptions
12 that city agencies may have.

13 So I would say even if those interns are not
14 ultimately going to be hired or may not choose to
15 work at that city agency, I think even just, uh,
16 having an intern, um, who has a disability is a way
17 that can really change behaviors of that city agency
18 as to, like, we- that intern might have noticed that,
19 oh, our documents we are creating are not necessarily
20 accessible. And so let's just change the font size
21 or the font type, right?

18 And so things like that, I think, are, um, uh, a
19 really good opportunity to, um, make sure that
20 there's some cultural change happening within the
21 city agencies so, um, we can continue to be an

1 inclusive, uh, employer. But I will say city
2 agencies have also hired our PII interns. I know New
3 York City Public Schools has hired, uh, a few interns
4 and, um, uh, last month, 2 months ago when we had our
5 co-design, uh, announcement, um, we had Committee
6 staff there, which was an exciting announcement in
7 partnership with all of the agencies here. Um, we
8 had a representative from New York City Public
9 Schools who went through the PII program and was
10 connected to a job opportunity. And so we're, we're
11 proud of that work and making sure that the city is,
12 is being a model employer for all of the employers
13 across the city.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could you also just walk me
15 through, for my own understanding, uh, how PII is
16 operating, um, working with folks with disabilities?
17 What, what is the role from start to end that PII is
18 supporting in these internship placements?

19 DOUGLAS LIPARI: So we fund the - through AHRC is
20 the nonprofit that operates it and then they will-
21 and it's- people can find out about it through a
variety of sources, right?

AHRC is a big nonprofit that already has some
connections. We do a lot of work of advocating and

1 sharing that information to city agencies and through
2 our, uh, QI Advisory Council, um, which is- includes
3 employers, private sector employers as well, to make
4 sure that they are aware of this program that it
5 exists. And then an individual may be connected
6 through a variety of ways, but there is even a, uh,
7 an interest form on AHRC's website, and where if
8 someone is interested can express and fill out that
9 form and then potentially be connected to, uh,
10 through PI. Or like I said, if, if for whatever
11 reason, um, there's other services that might- that
12 they might not be, uh, eligible, AHRC is a great
13 organization that can help connect them to other
14 programming as well. And then they will work at the
15 intern- they're typically 4 to 6 month internships,
16 and then AHRC works, uh, closely with them to try to
17 help them, uh, secure, uh, employment as well.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it and so does PII, uh,
19 what, or what kinds of, uh, materials are city
20 agencies receiving or what's the information that you
21 all are sharing with them? So we work with city
agencies day in and day out, and so we'll always, uh,
make sure to plug our, uh, PII program. I'll have to
get back to you in terms of, like, specific

1 collateral, um, that may be available, though we do,
2 um, touching on, um, something that came up earlier,
3 the jobs.nyc.gov website is a useful tool for both
4 employers and job seekers in terms of, uh, being able
5 to, uh, connect to the suite of services offered
6 across the city and all of the city agencies.

7 So job seekers with disabilities and city
8 agencies who are, uh, or rather employers who are
9 looking for, uh, talent can go to that site and be
connected through a variety of sources.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So the Civil Service Law 55A
11 authorizes up to 200- uh, 700 designated positions as
12 of November 2025, 363 employees were participating
13 across 34 agencies. How many employees are currently
14 participating in the 55A program across how many
agencies?

15 KADIAN OUTAR: Hi, I'm Katian Outar, I'm the
16 Assistant Commissioner for the Workforce Operations
17 team at DCAS. Um, currently we have, um, 368
18 individuals participating across 36 agencies as of
the end of March.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it and what's preventing,
20 uh, the program from reaching its 700-position, uh,
21 statutory ceiling?

1 KADIAN OUTAR: I think one of the challenges that
2 the program really fluctuates over time. So as we
3 add new folks to the program, there are folks that
4 are leaving the program. So for example, we may
5 have, uh, new hires that are coming in. We have
6 approximately 30 that were hired last year, but we
7 have about 50 folks that are being-- that are removed
8 from the program, either because of promotion,
9 because they have been-- they left the agency, they
retired, or they are serving in a different title.

10 So it really fluctuates. Um, so we know that,
11 uh, additional engagement is needed to, you know,
12 really get to that number but we have to kind of like
double the goals if we want to get to the 700.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And are you all keeping track
14 of who's getting promoted or how many folks have left
15 the city job? Like, are you keeping track of those,
uh, various criteria?

16 KADIAN OUTAR: Yes, so we work with the agencies.
17 When somebody leaves the program, we get a, um, the
18 reason as to whether it was because of a retirement,
19 because they went into a different position, or they
20 took a civil service exam and received a promotion in
that way. So we do track that.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So you track that. Are you able to share that with us?

KADIAN OUTAR: Um, I can share with you. So for example, last, um, across the last 2 years, we had about 98 people that left the program for various reasons, but we can give you a, um, a greater breakdown, um, after this.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That'd be great. And then how are you all, um, uh, recruiting qualified candidates?

KADIAN OUTAR: So one of the things that work really well is the partnerships that we have with MOPD, um, and also with our partner agencies. Um, the way the program is set up— and just to clarify, this is a program that allows individuals to be hired into city government positions and competitive positions without the need to take a civil service exam.

So the hiring still happens at the agency level. Individuals— agencies still have to have, you know, OMB approval, they have to have a line, um, and individuals still have to go through the interview process and get selected. And then the agencies will, uh, submit their application for us to process.

1
2 So what we do to supplement just awareness of the
3 program is through a partnership with MOPD, we'll do,
4 um, information sessions. We do that closely with
5 their staff that are, are, um, involved in the
6 program.

7 So their job seekers that are involved in the
8 program. We also do, um, just our general outreach
9 to, uh, populations that are— whether it's
10 educational institutions, community-based
11 organizations to make sure that a lot of folks are
12 aware. So we'll have those targeted information
13 sessions, targeted outreach, but, um, the program
14 sits within the Office of Citywide Recruitment, and
15 we do about, um, 15 to 20 events per month, and
16 that's embedded in the information that we share with
17 job seekers.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Wait, what does the Office of
19 Citywide Recruitment do?

20 KADIAN OUTAR: So our main job is to go out into
21 the, um, public and really speak about the jobs that
are available within city government.

So we promote the civil service exams, the
process for taking those exams, the different types

of positions available across agencies, and kind of like what that application process is.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And is that also happening in collaboration with the Workforce One centers?

KADIAN OUTAR: Yes, we have a very robust relationship with the Workforce Ones where we either go to the sites depending on um, the interest that we have. So we'll go either in person or we'll have virtual sessions. Um, and for the last 2 years, we've been robustly working on a schedule to make sure we're engaging folks there.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I want to recognize we've been joined by Council Member Rita Joseph. Um, and how many city staff are dedicated to, uh, promoting the 55A program at DCAS and MOPD, uh, respectively? And does the Admin believe current staffing sufficient to drive a- to drive broader agency participation?

KADIAN OUTAR: So, currently, we have, uh, staff that is managing the application process from beginning to end, but because the program is embedded into the Office of Citywide Recruitment, which has about, um, 5 staff in terms of promotion, um, that's spread across. So, every time, um, a recr- uh, we

1 have what we call citywide inclusive recruiters.
2 Every time they go out into the public, they're
3 sharing information about the program.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: The citywide inclusive
5 recruiters, how many?

6 KADIAN OUTAR: So we have 3 citywide inclusive,
7 um, recruitment specialists. Um, we have a civil
8 service pathway fellow as well as a deputy director,
9 um, within the Office of Citywide Recruitment.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And the citywide inclusive
11 specialists, uh, could you share a little bit more
12 about what they do in the field?

13 KADIAN OUTAR: Yeah, so their main role is to
14 make sure that the public is aware of city jobs. Um,
15 we know a lot of the challenges that we have with
16 hiring just across the board is that folks are not
17 familiar with the civil service exams. And when they
18 think about city government, they may only think
19 about, uh, specific titles.

20 So we do civil service 101 information sessions
21 where we're really just breaking down, uh, the
beginning. Here's what city government looks like.
Here are the jobs that you can get into. Here's what
the civil service exam looks like. Here's when the

1 schedule is come- is out. Here's fee waivers.

2 Here's more information about the 55A program.

3 So we really give an overall, um, view of what it
4 means to work for the city. We also partner with our
5 community partners, educational institutions. Um, we
6 attend career fairs, we do panel conversations, we do
7 a lot of different activities to make sure that folks
8 are aware of city government and the jobs that they
9 can do there.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And so that's mostly, uh,
11 through invitations, or do they also have just like
12 outreach hours where they're in a neighborhood, in a
13 community?

14 KADIAN OUTAR: We do it all across the 5 boroughs
15 and virtually. So for example, um, we have specific
16 demographics that we're trying to reach, including
17 people with disabilities, veterans, um, those that
18 are underrepresented in city government. So we do
19 outreach to make sure that we are targeting those
20 populations. So we'd work with, um, let's say DOE,
21 or we work with a shelter to make sure that we're
engaging their populations. And then we also get
invitations to participate in different events.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I will now pass it to Council Member Joseph to ask her questions if she's ready.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Oh yeah, I'm ready. Good morning. Um, morning? Yes, afternoon. I have a couple of questions around transportation. Um, I noticed mostly around elevator outages on MTA subways remain a documented barrier to employment for New Yorkers with mobility disability. Does the city have a formal coordination? Do you work in partnership with, um, MTA to maybe do an assessment to see where they are in key locations as to where we can create barriers?

For example, in my district, I only had one elevator that was accessible. For 2 years we worked with MTA, we finally got a second one. Are you looking around the city at the ecosystem of transportation? That's one of the biggest barriers, including for New York City students. And we've heard that, um, across the city— CUNY students, um, New York City Public School students who cannot sometimes have no routes to get to their destination. So how are we working with agent— interagency to make sure that accessibility for transportation across the

board are available for New Yorkers with disabilities?

NISHA AGARWAL: So I will, um, uh, er, I'm the Commissioner of, um, ah, Disabilities, and we have a regular meeting with, ah, um, MTA, ah, people involved, and this is the first, um, ah, thing that we, um, mentioned, because even for me, um,— when I worked at the Health Department, there was no— there was one elevator, and then there was another elevator that'd be better, that was closer, and then they finally did it, and it was like a revelation. I could ha— I could go in one direction, I can go in another direction, it was great.

So we're working with them on that, and we're hoping to resolve it. To be fair, MTA, um, does, uh, prioritize this work, um, and so we're hoping they will continue to prioritize this, especially in, um, uh, areas that is, uh, really needed. So I'm— I'm gonna keep pushing.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Uh, oh yeah, we'll keep pushing as well. Um, but is there a dollar amount attached to this work? For example, I had set a goal with New York City Public School when I was the Education Chair to make sure that buildings are

1 accessible by 2030 for all New York City students
2 with a billion-dollar investment. What does that
3 look like on your end?

4 NISHA AGARWAL: Um, I don't know, but I will find
5 out, um, from MTA and for our, our, um, work as well.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. I had a
7 question about, um, cliff benefit— benefit cliffs.
8 Um, the risk of losing SSDI, SSI, Medicaid
9 eligibility upon entering the workforce is one of the
10 most frequently cited barriers to employment for
11 people with disabilities. Which city programs
specifically address the benefit cliff and how?

12 ABBY MAYERHOFF: Hi, I'm, I'm Abby Mayerhoff, the
13 Director of Programs for NYC at Work. Um, so I can
14 speak on behalf of, of our program and the resources
15 that we utilize. Um, within our staff, we have, uh,
16 someone who is a benefits counselor, and so she
17 provides individual advisement to, um, participants
18 of our program. Um, and we also work closely with
19 the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection.
20 Um, about 7 years ago, uh, MOPD and DCWP partnered
21 to, uh, pilot a financial counseling program that was
tailored specifically for individuals with
disabilities.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Mhm.

ABBY MAYERHOFF: Um, and the result of that pilot, uh, led to a training that has been implemented for all of the financial counselors. Um, and DCWP can certainly explain more about that, but we work in partnership with those counselors and with DCWP to ensure that individuals who participate in our program have access to that financial counseling as well. It's not as in-depth as benefits counseling, but it's a really great, um, first step for most individuals who we interact with on that.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And how do you do your outreach and engagement with communities with disabilities?

ABBY MAYERHOFF: In general for the NYC at Work program? Uh, we say yes to almost every invitation we receive. Uh, we go to a lot of community events, so that's hosted by CBOs, schools, colleges. Um, just last week we were at, um, uh, CUNY Leads, uh, career fair.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: I was there.

ABBY MAYERHOFF: Oh, we were there. Uh, sorry, we didn't have a chance to meet then. Um, we host information sessions for a lot of our community

1
2 partners, um, and then we respond to individual
3 outreach as well.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And, and, and, and, uh,
5 community members with disabilities and English is
6 not their first language, how do you reach them?

7 ABBY MAYERHOFF: Sorry, one moment. Um, so we
8 utilize language access, and, um, the reality is that
9 even ASL, um, are not like— there's different
10 languages in ASL. And so that's like an interesting,
11 um, next step for us to think about how can language
12 access and ASL, for example, um, uh, expand that, um,
13 reach about, uh, language access and ASL and other
14 forms of language.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Very important for our
16 communities. Um, the SNAP work requirement goes into
17 effect in March of 2026. New Yorkers with disability
18 can, uh, request exemptions, um, but most document—
19 but must document them. What is the Administration,
20 um, doing to ensure that participants in disability
21 employment program who receive SNAP understand the
exemption right and do not lose food assistance? Are
city programs being used to help our community with
disabilities? That's very important.

1
2 ABBY MAYERHOFF: Yeah, it's very important. Um,
3 so, uh, uh, we are working— meaning all the agencies
4 are working, um, and, uh, DSS is the lead on this.
5 And every agency or office like ours have, um, uh,
6 have to think about our population, in our case
7 disability communities, it's complicated because a
8 lot of them will be exempt, but some may not. And
9 so, um, we're, uh, discussing that with the DSS
10 people on, um, how can we, um, uh, use that, uh,
11 those few people that may get— not get exempt, and
12 could we make it zero.

13 Like, that would be fantastic, but like, we want
14 to discuss that with them in more detail.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Are you also working with
16 ACS for young people who are in foster care who have
17 disability?

18 ABBY MAYERHOFF: Yeah, and, um, uh, we're also—
19 the DYCD, um, also is very engaged on this topic as
20 well, and I'm, um, going to meet with her soon.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: So ACS, DSS, all of the
agencies should be working together.

ABBY MAYERHOFF: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And how are we
recruiting, um, people with disabilities and training

1 to, to enter the workforce and, and live independent
2 lives? And I know that, um, some of the programs
3 also live in the New York City public schools and
4 creating them, making them independent, learning to
5 travel and all of that other stuff, and life skills
6 are being taught. How is that partnership working to
7 enter work for the workforce?

8 ABBY MAYERHOFF: Um, meaning, uh, for high school
9 people?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: High school students,
11 internships, apprenticeships. Sometimes our
12 communities with disabilities don't get these
13 opportunities for internships, apprenticeships, how
14 does that work?

15 ABBY MAYERHOFF: Yeah, so, um, I think we can
16 share some examples of internships and stuff that
17 we've had, but personally it matters a lot. The
18 transition from high school to, um, further school
19 or, um, employment is like, uh, can be enhanced
20 because, um, that is what is happening is like this
21 cliff that people graduate from col- uh, high school
and then where they go. And so that is one of the
areas that, um, MOPD wants to get more involved on

1 that with, um, the schools and, uh, er, ah,
2 specifically the, um, special ed people.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Yeah, definitely. Um,
4 there's always a gap there. There's a, there's a
5 huge gap there with our students with disabilities
6 who I hear all the time from who the pathway into
7 college, the pathway into career is not readily
8 available to them because of disabilities. So I
9 think that's where the gap is. And I think, um,
10 talking into- with other agencies and figuring out a
11 comprehensive plan, not a piecemeal, but a
12 comprehensive plan across the board for, um, our
13 communities who are living with disabilities. Thank
14 you so much. Thank you, Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. Okay, uh, my
16 final few questions, uh, going back to the 55A
17 program: which agencies are the largest participants
18 in the 55A program, and which, uh, large city
19 agencies have little to no 55A representation?

20 KADIAN OUTAR: Thank you. Um, I see the 55A
21 program and the usage of it is spread across, um, uh,
most of our agencies. We'll see the larger agencies
do have the higher numbers because of just the
vacancies and the amount of positions that they are-

they're hiring. Um, but what we also know is that although individuals may not be serving in the 55A program, they're still being hired, um, because they could be hired into a noncompetitive title or, um, an exempt or a labor title.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: But given you all are keeping, uh, a record of the, uh, positions that are coming through the 55A program, are you, are you not keeping track of where they're spread across in the city agencies?

KADIAN OUTAR: Yes. So for the individuals that are serving in, um, the top agencies, and these are individuals that have more than 25, um, participants, as I mentioned, there'll be-

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Which agencies?

KADIAN OUTAR: Our social services agencies like, um, Department of Social Services, we have NYPD, Department of Education, um, DOHMH, Department of Finance. So the larger agencies—

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I think I'm just trying to understand exactly which agencies are bringing, uh, or hiring, um, through the 55A program and which are not?

1
2 KADIAN OUTAR: Yes. So the- the agencies that I
3 just listed are the- the top agencies that have the
4 higher numbers. Um, and then there are also some of
5 the larger agencies as well. And so as it relates
6 to, um, how there are, um, individuals that are using
7 it robustly and individuals that we're working with
8 to enhance their use of the program.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And which agencies would you
10 say that- that includes in terms of the enhancement?

11 KADIAN OUTAR: Um, so in terms of the
12 enhancements in different agencies that we've worked
13 with, um, we try to spread it across the board. Um,
14 say for example, uh, DCAS, one of the things that we
15 do within DCAS is we have, um, agency-specific hiring
16 events. And so we've seen that across the years,
17 like where we may have, um, been at maybe 6 or 7, um,
18 2, 3 years ago. Now we're at 15, 16.

19 So we're seeing those engagements and
20 partnerships with, um, MOPD to really increase the
21 partnership across the agencies and their usage of
the program.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, I'd re- I'd really be
interested in knowing, um, the specificity here, uh,
just to see how we're doing as a, as a city in terms

1 of hiring and, uh, retention, um, and understanding
2 exactly why some agencies have been more, uh,
3 proactive, or are the specific roles related to, um,
4 the kind of, uh, positions that folks with
5 disabilities have been able to apply for. So I think
6 that that is a- is a very important, um, data set.

7 Um, the July 2025 55A Diversity Career Fair
8 produced 13 conditional job offers from 15
9 participating agencies, with 5 agencies conducting
10 on-the-spot interviews. Why did 10 of the 15
11 agencies participate without conducting interviews,
12 and what follow-up occurred with those agencies after
13 the fair?

14 KADIAN OUTAR: Um, so when we have our citywide-
15 and, um, MOPD can add into that- but when we have our
16 citywide events, um, not all agencies may readily
17 have OMB approval for their vacancies, and so
18 agencies, and depending on the amount of positions
19 that they are recruiting for, um, they may choose to
20 conduct on-spot- on-the-site, um, interviews or hire.
21 For the ones that do not, um, we do follow up with
them to see, like, what's the engagement after.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: What's the OMB relationship
again?

1 KADIAN OUTAR: So, um, positions still have to be
2 OMB approved, um, so there's still that financial,
3 um, approval that's needed for anyone— that's hired
4 into the 55A program.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So you're saying that
6 agencies that haven't gotten approval are conducting
7 interview— are not conducting interviews?

8 KADIAN OUTAR: They may not do interviews on the
9 spot, but they're still doing interviews in through
their normal course of business.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it, got it. So
11 specifically an OMB-related issue?

12 KADIAN OUTAR: Um, sometimes that is the reason.
13 It's not the only reason. Some agencies, again,
14 depending on the dynamic and the positions that
15 they're looking for in their interview process. They
16 may decide to do their interviews internally, but
17 they do participate to share information about their
particular jobs. They may have different positions
that are available.

18 Um, one of the things that we also do is we try
19 to do exact matching. So the candidates that are
20 showing up may have, um, direct match to a position.
21 Some agencies may not have a lot of matches to their

positions, but they're still able to engage with different, um, with different job seekers based on other opportunities that they have. And I'll pass it over to Abby.

ABBY MAYERHOFF: Thank you. Um, I'll also add that in the course of our follow-up with job seekers and participating agencies, there were multiple agencies that did conduct additional interviews following the recruitment event itself, and the agencies ultimately just decided to go with other, um, candidates. Um, but, you know, as I think we mentioned before, the process of going through those interviews and, and moving ahead in the hiring process is - is, you know, valuable for, for those individuals as well.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Absolutely. And so, uh, for this specific, uh, career fair, do you know what follow-up occurred with the agencies, uh, afterward?

ABBY MAYERHOFF: So I can speak for NYC at Work. Um, we follow up with the agencies afterwards to get a sense in terms of, generally speaking, whether or not candidates that they met with were prepared for the event, were they a match for the positions that they have available, um, how, you know, whether they

1
2 were interested in them for either their existing
3 positions or other positions, um, and then individual
4 follow-up to try to get some feedback on specific
5 candidates who may be moving forward in the hiring
6 process, um, to help, um, with that as well. And
7 then I'll turn to DCAS for anything additional.

8 KADIAN OUTAR: Yes, and for the candidates that
9 are hired, we kind of work with them throughout the
10 55A application process to make sure that they are
11 able to be onboarded, you know, once there's, um,
12 approval for the- for the positions. Um, so we wanna
13 make sure that that process is seamless for them.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood and, uh, could you
15 just clarify MOPD's relationship again with the 55A
16 program?

17 ABBY MAYERHOFF: Sure. Uh, so we work in
18 partnership with DCAS to promote the program, both
19 with city agencies and to job seekers. Um, support
20 with the, um, application and onboarding, um, and
21 then navigating some of the additional hurdles that
may come with getting hired at the city.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Well, that's all I've got for
today. Thank you all so much. We'll take a very
quick 2-minute break.

1 I will now open the hearing for public testimony.
2 I wanna remind members of the public that this is a
3 government proceeding and that decorum should- shall
4 be observed at all times. As such, members of the
5 public shall remain silent at all times. The witness
6 table is reserved for people who wish to testify. No
7 video recording or photography is allowed from the
8 witness table.

9 Further, members of the public may not present
10 audio or video recordings as testimony, but may
11 submit transcripts of such recordings to the
12 Sergeant-at-Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.
13 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please fill
14 out an appearance card with the Sergeant-at-Arms and
15 wait to be recognized.

16 When recognized, you will have 3 minutes to speak
17 on today's oversight topic. If you have a written
18 statement or additional written testimony you wish to
19 submit for the record, please provide a copy of that
20 testimony to the Sergeant-at-Arms. You may also
21 email written testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov
within 72 hours of this hearing.

Audio and video recordings will not be accepted.
I wanna bring up the first in-person panel. Evan

Yankee, Anthony Phillips, Kathleen Collins, Belkys Garcia. Absolutely, absolutely. Yeah, no worries. Gregory Meves. Whenever you're ready.

EVAN YANKEY: Good morning, uh, my name is Evan Yankey, and I am the Advocacy Director at the Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled, an independent living center supporting people with disabilities in Brooklyn and beyond. People with disabilities face tremendous barriers to equal economic opportunity, including foremost discrimination, which is typically cited as most impactful in surveys, and transportation accessibility.

Today, though, I want to talk about one particular barrier. As you may be aware, 19 disability and labor groups have joined us to write and advocate in opposition to Intro 303, a bill penalizing people with disabilities for receiving 24-hour live-in home care.

This bill, if passed, will penalize people with disabilities and care providers for providing care that is assigned to them by managed long-term care plans. People with disabilities in consumer-directed care will be fined \$500 a day. Home care workers

1 will lose jobs as home care agencies pull out of work
2 rather than face fines. The supporters of this bill
3 claim that home care agencies will be able to easily
4 switch 24-hour live-in shifts to 12-hour split
5 shifts, but this is not true.

6 It is unbelievable to anyone who has advocated
7 for a fairer, more progressive Medicaid system, and
8 it should be unbelievable to City Council members.
9 We suspect many elected officials know better but are
wary of crossing mobilized groups who don't.

10 I'm holding up a Medicaid authorization. This is
11 the form that assigns a person with a disability
12 24-hour live-in care through no choice of their own.
13 The authorization is typically given by a managed
14 long-term care plan and determines the type of care
15 that you get. You cannot change it on your own.
16 Home care agencies cannot change it. Only an
17 individual can appeal it, but it is a long process
18 with hundreds of steps. It takes a long time to go
through this punishing process, and appeals sometimes
fail.

19 Intro 303 would start fining people for having a
20 live-in care authorization 90 days after the bill
21 passes, \$500 a day. Rather than face fines, people

1 will go without care. The home care industry will
2 start to collapse. Workers will lose jobs. The
3 supporters of this bill like to talk about how much
4 they care about workers. Many of the home care
5 workers on 24-hour shifts are family members,
6 neighbors, friends, people with disabilities
7 themselves. As thousands of people with disabilities
8 lose care, these workers will lose jobs. Family
9 members who are paid home care workers will likely
10 continue providing 24-hour care but will not be paid
11 for it. There could not be a more urgent threat to
economic opportunity than this bill.

12 We appreciate that this Committee exists for
13 people with disabilities, and we appreciate the work
14 you all have done to make this happen, especially the
15 staff here and the Council Members. We especially
16 appreciate the members of this Committee who have
truly listened to disability advocates about Intro
303.

17 We, we urge you today to speak up and help us
18 stop this threat before it hurts us all. Thank you
19 for the opportunity to speak.

20 ANTHONY PHILLIPS: Tony? Oh, good. Hold on.
21 Ah, you have my data. Look, um, first of all, let me

1 look at this. Um, look, you have there— as Steve
2 Puckett has left this world too but I have to say
3 nobody would break there okay? Ahh! No more words.
4 Never let me get into the well, first of all, if you
5 are talking about people working, they need help.
6 That's number one.

7 Number, number two, and they have home aids— um,
8 uh, hm-hm— to lift up out of them. You got more
9 things that they just— they're gonna want facilities—
10 wanna, but can't— what is this person, uh, have
11 training for? I was— we, we, we, we, we cut that out
12 because we are, I'm a minor. But, uh, I mean,
13 really, is— is there an audience for us. If for
14 y'all, you, because when you get a certain age, you
15 do what you can do. You miss home care. Everybody,
16 you have a grandmother, they got home care. Stuck
17 you forever.

18 What you gonna do? You, you gonna say, oh, we
19 not do that no more, and then everybody, you gonna be
20 stuck. Mhm, I am, um, trying to be cool. Mhm.
21 Because, ah, hmm, ah, la, but I think, I, I, no.
That's all I wanna say. You give me a whole candy
dish. The problem is, uh, me, you, lay it in your
house.

1
2 BELKYS GARCIA: Thank you, Tony. Hello, I'm
3 Belkys Garcia. I'm a Staff Attorney at the Legal Aid
4 Society. We represent low-income people, um, in New
5 York. As you've heard a lot today, um, people with
6 disabilities are disproportionately impacted by
7 poverty. Um, and as you have discussed today, and as
8 we're saying, one of the ways that, uh, people with
9 disabilities can, uh, live independently in the
10 community and, uh, obtain employment and maintain
11 employment is through home care. And some of those
12 folks require 24-hour home care. And at Legal Aid,
13 we represent both people with disabilities who
14 require 24-hour home care and those workers who
15 provide the care, the caretakers.

16 Um, and it's— it demands us to have an
17 intersectional approach to the work, and it's with
18 that lens that we strongly oppose Intro 303. Um, as
19 Evan was saying, this is a bill that, uh, proposes to
20 end 24-hour home care, but it does nothing to replace
21 that care with anything, right? That is incredibly
dangerous. And again, I'd like to reiterate what was
said, which is we've heard a lot that this bill will
just kind of magically make it that if you have, uh,
only care for 12 hours, that somebody will just get a

1 worker for the second half of the day, or it's
2 possible no care at all. That's not how the system
3 works. That's not what's gonna happen. Um, it can't
4 happen that way. You need an approval from your
5 insurance company. I think people are familiar with
6 that concept, um, and that approval has to follow
7 state law, state rules, state contracts, and a city
bill can't change that.

8 Um, what it will cause is home care agencies not
9 sending people into the shifts and, um, perhaps
10 sending them in for only the 12 hours. It will
11 certainly lead to agencies not taking on new 24-hour
cases, right?

12 So people are gonna not get work and people are
13 going to lose care. And I think we can all agree
14 that that is dangerous, but also it's a gift to the
insurance companies, right?

15 Like, they get to keep more of the medic- the
16 money that they're getting and provide less care.
17 Um, so just a couple of things I wanted to flag. The
18 bill has been amended since it was first introduced,
19 that has only made the bill worse. It has not
20 corrected anything.
21

So what we're asking now is that you, um, communicate that opposition in, in Committee and work with us on proposals that we have that- that we think actually do meet the needs of, of both of these constituencies. Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Sorry for going over time.

1
2 GREGORY MEVES: Good afternoon, Chair Hanif and
3 other Members of the Committee. Thank you for your
4 time today to hold this important hearing. My name
5 is Gregory Meves, and I'm the New York Director of
6 the Bridges from School to Work program, a national
7 nonprofit. We work with more than 85 schools around
8 the city, both in a classroom setting and through
9 one-on-one sessions to develop the work readiness of
10 young adults with disabilities and match their
11 interests and abilities to the needs of employers to
12 help them gain competitive integrated employment.

13 Since Bridges launched in New York City in 2019,
14 our team has provided job placement services to 750
15 young adults and connected 618 of them, 82%, to
16 quality jobs while supporting them with that
17 transition. All Bridges participants who seek our
18 help have one or more disabilities. Most Bridges
19 participants are diagnosed with a specific learning
20 disability, autism spectrum disorder, speech or
21 language impairment, or intellectual disability.

22 We serve young adults between 14 and 24, but most
23 come to us between 17 and 19. Uh, demographically
24 speaking, over 90% of our participants are youth of
25 color, and most are from low-income communities,

Our program's success has led to increased demand as more people become aware of our services, resulting in waiting lists for both of our programs. Support from the City Council for Bridges and other programs like ours is crucial in improving New York's ecosystem of support and will continue to provide more options for people with disabilities across the city. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I'd now like to call Julia Linder, Tonto Cubree, Moriah Engelberg, and Kathleen Collins. I'm sorry if I've mispronounced your names. Anyone can start. Thank you.

JULIA LINDER: Gotcha. Uh, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Julia Linder and I represent the Harlem Independent Living Center, which is a disability-led nonprofit founded in 1990 working to support the freedom and self-determination of people with disabilities predominantly from racially marginalized communities in Upper Manhattan, New York City, and New York State.

We all know that a conversation, any conversation about economic opportunity and the disability community must encompass much more than jobs, though employment disparities are stark, especially among Black and Hispanic New Yorkers with disabilities, as well as those with greater support needs in activities of daily living. But economic opportunity starts long before anyone gets to a workplace and is often preconditioned on one's ability to leave home,

1 attend school, work, and participate in community
2 life.

3 For some members of our community, home care is
4 exactly what makes that possible, and for that
5 reason, any serious discussion on this topic must
6 consider the implications of Intro 303. We all from
7 the disability community agree that home care workers
8 must be paid for every single hour they work and
9 should not be subjected to conditions like wage
10 theft, coercion, and retaliation. But Intro 303
11 poses dire risks for people who receive live-in care,
12 given how Medicare home care is authorized and funded
13 at the state level.

14 Intro 303's unfunded mandate will make it harder
15 for staff— will make it harder to staff high-need
16 high-need cases, harder to maintain consistent
17 coverage, and ultimately harder for people with
18 disabilities to remain in the community with access
19 to any economic opportunity.

20 I join my colleagues here today in asking members
21 of the Committee and the Council more broadly not to
advance Intro 303 and instead address wage theft,
coercion, and retaliation through separate measures
that the city is actually able to meaningfully enact

and see-through. Economic opportunity depends on stable support systems, and I urge the Council to con- to continue strengthening rather than destabilizing them. Thank you very much.

UNIDENTIFIED: Who goes first? Who goes first? My parents taught me that way.

MORIAH ENGELBERG: Hi, good afternoon. Um, thank you, Chair Hanif and Members of the Committee on Disabilities, for holding this hearing and giving us the opportunity to testify. I'm Moriah Engelberg, an organizer at A Better Balance, a national legal services and advocacy organization headquartered in New York City that advocates for paid leave and sick and safe time laws across the country so that workers and the people that they love can care for themselves without sacrificing their paycheck.

Unfortunately, in New York State, when workers experience a serious medical issue, including cancer, substance use disorder, a mental health crisis, or any other serious health issue, workers are forced to sacrifice their health for a paycheck. Under New York's paid medical leave program, known as Temporary Disability Insurance, or TDI, workers are forced to try to live off of \$170 a week in compensation

1 without the guarantee of health insurance, job
2 protection, or the ability to take that leave
3 intermittently. This program hasn't been touched
4 since 1989, and it shows. There isn't a single
5 person in New York City who can live off of \$170 a
6 week in 2026.

7 This outdated program has real implications for
8 workers across the state. A Better Balance has a
9 free and confidential legal helpline. We receive
10 many calls from workers in New York who are shocked
11 to discover that New York's paid medical leave
12 program offers a maximum of \$170 a week without job
13 protection, the ability to take that leave
14 intermittently, or health insurance continuation.

15 Just last week, Lynn, a customer service manager
16 in New York City, called our helpline after she
17 received a cancer diagnosis. Her doctor advised
18 remote work accommodations because she's
19 immunocompromised and experiencing other symptoms
20 while undergoing chemotherapy. Her employer denied
21 her request to work remotely, but offered that she
could work a part-time schedule to attend to her
medical needs. However, this arrangement, aside from
not fully addressing her medical needs, would require

her to take off multiple days per week without pay. Because New York's temporary disability insurance benefits cannot be used intermittently, she would be unable to use temporary disability insurance to recoup any of her lost income.

Alternatively, she could request a continuous period of medical leave from her job, so as to safeguard her health while she is undergoing treatment and receive temporary disability insurance benefits during that time. But the benefit amount at \$170 a week is so low that it would make more financial sense for her to accept the part-time work schedule her employer offered than to apply for TDI, even at risk of further compromising her health. In addition, Lynn is extremely worried about keeping her job and health insurance, neither of which TDI guarantees.

Lynn told us, I wish I had more protection and a higher stipend through temporary disability insurance. I'm in a position where I have to fight through symptoms to get to work and put myself more at risk in terms of infection. If temporary disability insurance law protected my insurance and my job, I would be able to take the leave I need.

1 And we urge the City Council to support the 1 in 5
2 New Yorkers in the state who live with a disability
3 and call for the state to pass S172 and A9571. Thank
4 you.

5 KATHLEEN COLLINS: Okay, okay, thank you. I
6 don't know if it's morning or afternoon right now,
7 but, uh, whatever. Good morning or good afternoon,
8 ah, Chair Hanif and the invisible members of the, uh,
9 Committee here, which I see there— I don't see them
10 here, so I guess they're invisible, just like we in
11 the disability community are invisible to them. Um,
12 I'm a Native New Yorker. I grew up in New York. I'm
13 a congenital quadruple amputee, as you can see, and,
14 um, I'm one of the few exceptions that did work for
15 30 years for— I worked for the Port Authority of New
16 York and New Jersey as an attorney.

17 Um, I went to a CLE course once where I found out
18 that I'm in the 1% of the population —of the disabled
19 population that has beyond a, ah, you know, a college
20 degree, that has a master's in that, which I was
21 really shocked by those calculations. Um, New
Yorkers with dis— disabilities are incredibly
diverse, yet we continue to face systematic barriers
to economic opportunity, especially in housing,

1 employment, education, transportation, and access to
2 city services.

3 I urge the City Council to focus— here I'm
4 talking about 5 key things, but I'll send a letter
5 with a lot, many more. Uh, first, we need to expand
6 accessible affordable housing and prioritize people
7 with disabilities in housing lotteries, and to make
8 that housing lottery more accessible, because I know
9 many people who can, um, with, uh, cognitive
10 disabilities have different difficulty navigating
that, uh, website you have.

11 Second, we need to include disability-owned
12 business enterprises in the minority and women-owned
13 business enterprise program to open real economic
14 opportunities. Uh, third, we need to provide more
15 funding to the MTA for the same-day on-demand
16 paratransit so people can work and live
17 independently. I'm one of the few members on that-
18 that has that, and it has opened my life completely.
19 I can go places, be here, leave here when I want to,
20 not when I set a free time with Access A Ride over 24
21 hours ago. It's- it's fantastic, and we really— and
it's cheaper than what we have, so I don't understand
why we can't push for that.

Uh, fourth, and that helps also people with employment. Uh, fourth, support more funding for New York State for home care, which is more cost-effective than institutional care and allows people to remain safely at home.

Further, this Committee should support state-level legislation that would provide better wages and benefits for home care workers by New York State and allow more New Yorkers with disabilities to be eligible for home care, which they have reduced that eligibility. So now you end up in a nursing home before you can have home care, which is a- is a terrible thing for, for, uh, taxpayers.

Uh, first, make all city buildings, programs, and websites fully accessible. Decades after federal disability laws, many are still not accessible. And finally, increase funding for the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. They do so much with so little money, and they really need so much more money. Thank you.

TONTO CUBREE: Thank you. Um, I'm just here for transportation. Um, I'm part of the Fair Fare program. I'm part of the Community Access program too and, uh, with a disability- there's a lot of

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Like, the F-train on East Broadway, this-- the one Manhattan Square, it was 72-story buildings. I know they could afford to help us, uh, for the transportation and everything like that but it's the only problem is that's a lot of loopholes that we have to go through just to build trains, uh, elevators and everything like that for you guys and everything like that, because I'm just here for everybody else. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. Now I'd like to call Michele Anne Blondmonville, Lisa Sheinhouse, Amy Monique Waddell, Shanon Shaw.

SHANON SHAW: Good afternoon, Committee Chair Hanif, um, and any members who might be on Zoom. My name is Shanon Shaw and I am representing HeartShare. So HeartShare, um, this topic is critical to our work.

In 2025, we launched a strategic plan that centers economic empowerment as a core priority for New Yorkers with disability. HeartShare serves over 2,700 people with disabilities, intellectual and developmental disabilities, alongside children and families navigating the child welfare system. And you are aware of one of our programs that we once held in, um, the Wyckoff community. And these families are of course navigating poverty and instability, and across all of our programs, the goal is to support New Yorkers most underestimated. And I believe everyone in this room, if you have, you have a disability or you're connected with someone, you understand the underestimation.

And we wanna contribute, we wanna, like, we serve people, we see people every day who want to work.

1 They want to contribute, build skills, and earn
2 income. The barrier is not motivation. It is a
3 system that does not consistently connect people to
4 real employment pathways. For individuals with
5 developmental disabilities, the numbers are stark.
6 Only a fraction are employed in competitive jobs,
7 despite strong interest in working.

8 In our own programs, while a small percentage of
9 participants are currently employed, the
10 overwhelming—overwhelming majority want to work. We
11 see similar patterns with young— young people age out
12 of foster care. And I know, um, Committee Member
13 Rita Joseph did, um, talk about the intersection of
14 people in foster care and also people with
15 disabilities. And even when they are motivated and
16 capable, gaps in education, supports, and access
17 limit their ability to enter and stay in the
18 workforce.

19 At HeartShare, we are closing that gap. We've
20 built a workforce development approach that starts
21 early and meets people where they are. In our early
child— pro— childhood programs, we are introducing
skill building through hands-on learning. Baking— we
have a bakery. Jewelry making with a company called

1
2 Ash Co., started by a nonverbal, um, girl in our
3 program whose name is Ashley and they have a whole
4 org chart where there is a development of, um,
5 technology. There's a VP of technology, there's a VP
6 of products. I wish everyone could come out. I
7 would have brought you, but I think it- they might
8 cost more than \$5.

9 Um, and they have screen printing and other
10 creative activities that build confidence, routine,
11 and foundational skills. For adults, our supported
12 employment program provides individualized job
13 placements and coaching. Participants are matched to
14 roles based on their strengths and interests, with
15 ongoing support to ensure they can succeed and stay
16 employed.

17 We've seen firsthand how employment transforms
18 lives, increasing independence, confidence, and a
19 sense of belonging. But these successes are still
20 limited by broader system changes. There's a
21 disconnect between training and actual job placement.
Too many individuals complete programs but are not
connected to employers who are ready to hire and
support. We do wanna offer, um, some
recommendations.

Investment in supported employment and job coaching that continues after placement, expand partnerships with employers and incentivize inclusive hiring. Address benefit cliffs so individuals are not penalized for working. And thank you for raising that earlier. Improve transportation access for individuals traveling to work or wherever else they wanna go. Strengthen coordination across workforce, disability, and social service systems.

New York City is a city that when given the opportunity shows up for people. They— there's a saying that New Yorkers are— they're not nice people, but they're kind people. And I believe investment in our people will allow so many employers and others the opportunity to actually be kind.

And with that, I thank you for your time.

MONIQUE WADDELL: Good afternoon. Um, I'm Amy Monique Waddell. I am here on behalf of Goodwill New York, New New Jersey. Um, Goodwill's core mission is removing barriers to employment to ensure that no talent is sidelined. Through our programs for people with intellectual disabilities and serious mental illness, we deliver services that connect New Yorkers to work.

1
2 Last year alone, we placed hundreds of New
3 Yorkers with disabilities into jobs and supported the
4 retention of hundreds more. None of this is charity.
5 We identify strong talent and match skilled workers
6 to the open positions employers are trying to fill.
7 It's good for people with disabilities, it's good for
8 employers competing for talent, and it's good for New
9 York City's economy.

10 That commitment was recently recognized with a
11 significant co-design grant funding that ensures
12 people we serve are at the table as our programs are
13 developed, not just on the receiving end of them.
14 That work has never mattered more. Federal Medicaid
15 changes and tightening eligibility rules threaten the
16 very programs that make economic opportunity possible
17 for our friends and neighbors with disabilities. We
18 are working harder than ever to ensure the
19 sustainability of these critical programs and to
20 support the workforce that opens the doors to
21 opportunity, and we need the Council's partnership to
do so.

19 I'm here today to ask the Council to support two
20 specific investments. First, our Harlem PROS
21 program, which provides recovery-oriented mental

1 health services to adults with serious mental
2 illnesses in Upper Manhattan. The model works, but
3 current reimbursement does not cover the cost of
4 delivering services, which threatens the program's
5 sustainability.

6 We've requested \$150,000 through the Mental
7 Health Services for Vulnerable Populations initiative
8 to expand— expand into art therapy opportunities,
9 cognitive remediation, and youth-focused programming
10 that keeps young adults engaged in care and on the
11 path to employment.

12 Second, our direct support professional training
13 and placement program, which launched last year.
14 We're seeking and we're asking, um, we've requested,
15 rather, \$250,000 through the job training and
16 placement initiative to recruit, train, and place
17 candidates into stable human services careers as
18 DSPs.

19 We know that New York City currently has DSP
20 roles that sit vacant, and they are desperately
21 needed to be filled. With a full year of retention
support after hire, that's what we plan to do. Both
asks address the same equation: a workforce ready to

work, employers ready to hire, and a city that needs both. Thank you.

LISA SHEINHOUSE: Good afternoon, Chair Hanif and members of the Disabilities Committee. My name is Lisa Sheinhouse, Director of Community Services at Ohel Children's Home and Family Services. Thank you for holding this critical oversight hearing. Ohel Children's Home and Family Services began in 1969 as a small foster care agency, now a full-service, best-in-class social service organization. Our mission is to transform the lives of individuals and families by providing compassionate, supportive social services that foster resilience, promote well-being, reduce stigma, and create inclusive communities where all are welcome. Every year, our programs and services reach tens of thousands of youth, adults, older adults, families, and communities around the world and include but are not limited to trauma, bereavement, and crisis response services, residential, day programming, outpatient mental health services, substance abuse programs, and much more.

Two specific programs I'm very proud of support individuals with intellectual disabilities and, uh,

in obtaining and maintaining meaningful employment.

The first is a pre-vocational training program where we teach a variety of skills to obtain a job. Soft skills including making eye contact and communicating and acting appropriately in the workplace.

Hard skills include typing, stocking shelves, packing groceries, things like that. We cater to individuals based on their interests and goals. The second is a supported employment program where we guide and oversee individuals who already have a job and earn at least minimum wage so they can keep that job and be successful. You talked a lot about retention. This is one great way to keep job retention.

Today we are proud to have over hundreds of people— several hundred people in our Pre-VOC training and over 100 people in jobs. In my years at OHA, we have worked to make dreams come true through these programs.

One quick story: we worked with a woman who desperately wanted to star on Broadway.

Unfortunately, she couldn't sing or dance. Those were her words, not ours but we identified a way for her to be part of the community of Broadway. That's

Through— also, one of the things we're very proud, and we thank the City Council for their support, is we have a City Council grant where we train peer mentors in the mental health system. A peer is a person with lived experience who has experienced similar challenges and is currently in

1 recovery. We support the peers in their training and
2 their annual CEU credits to maintain that
3 certification, and we help them find jobs, whether
4 it's at our organizations and, uh, er, other
5 organizations where their lived experience is so
6 important.

7 One of the things that we've noticed recently is
8 that there are many people in New York City that are
9 dual diagnosed with developmental disabilities such
10 as autism and, um, having a mental health issue as
11 well, and we're seeing that they're struggling to
12 receive their services as they don't really fit in
13 the bucket of OMH or OPWZ, and they really haven't
14 been able to be served well. Thank you for the
15 opportunity to testify, and I appreciate your
16 commitment to the disabilities community.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I had a question for— I guess
18 all, all three of you would be able to respond to
19 this, um, but Shanon, you raised it in, in your, uh,
20 testimony around the kind of anecdotal statistics
21 about which people within the disability community
are more likely to get hired. Are you all able to
share more about the obstacles of what is preventing,
um, folks with psychiatric needs, uh, maybe to not

1
2 get the same opportunities as others? Or what are—
3 what's your experience working um, with the
4 employment placement specifically.

5 SHANON SHAW: So at HeartShare, we— before the
6 pandemic, we actually had our individuals go out. So
7 we have these day habilitation programs that are
8 community-based. And so an example is we have 2 day
9 hubs right by Gateway Mall, and we usually have a,
10 um, a partnership with the Gateway Mall, um, Stop and
11 Shop there. We'd have our individuals packing bags,
12 you know, pushing trolleys. Sorry, what do they call
13 in America? Shopping carts. Yeah, I'm Jamaican, we
14 call it trolleys where I'm from. Um, and I think
15 it's— we try so hard to not be insular, um, but I
16 think it's partnerships and we realize we can't just
17 have our individuals— we can train them as much as we
18 want in the office, I mean, in the, in the spaces.
19 And we have an immersion room where we're actually
20 helping the individuals understand how to respond to
21 stimuli outside. But I think there needs to be a
wide— um, it could be some sort of, like, public
education, um, that's telling New Yorkers, here's a
person who might respond differently to you in this
moment. Here's how you can— and I think New Yorkers

1 will be so open to this. I just don't know if
2 there's any widespread public information campaign on
3 how to interact with people with disabilities, and
4 that makes it even harder for them to be included and
5 accepted in work environments. I believe that's been
6 our largest challenge.

7 LISA SHEINHOUSE: If I could add to that, because
8 we've definitely seen all those things, um, the first
9 thing is the entitlement cliff. It's definitely a
10 real issue. I think we can all agree to that, that
11 people wanna work, but they're afraid they're going
12 to lose their Medicaid or their Social Security, and
13 we work really hard to counsel them, but there's only
14 a certain amount of hours. And there are people who
15 wanna work full-time, but they're afraid they'll lose
16 their health insurance, and, and that's really hard
17 for them.

18 The other thing, I think, for people— you
19 specifically asked about people with psychiatric
20 challenges— we're finding that people don't wanna
21 hire them because of their stigma, and if they
self-disclose— and that's one of the huge things we
have, when to self-disclose about what they might
need, what accommodations they might need— once they

1 self-disclose, they may lose that job, and people—
2 sometimes they don't even get past the interview if
3 they share it on the interview process.

4 So they're able to work. Some of them, as I
5 mentioned, have master's degrees. Some of them have,
6 you know, like, we have a person going through
7 medical school right now, and yet he's not able to
8 match for residency because of his anxiety disorder,
9 PTSD, and depression. People don't want him working,
10 but he has the ability to do that. And I think that
11 stigma's still out there for people with psychiatric
12 challenges.

13 MICHELE ANNE BLONDMONVILLE: The one thing that
14 I'll add, um, in sharing with both is that the stigma
15 is so large and it's very difficult to overcome
16 because you can't force people to understand what
17 they don't know. So I do believe one, first and
18 foremost, is always the education piece. Everyone
19 across New York, those who own businesses, those who
20 are willing to hire, those who would like to hire,
21 those who need to hire, need to better understand
what mental health looks like. It is very diverse.
It does not look the same on every person.

Me coming into this program as a program director a year and 2 months ago, members trained me and you're talking about 15-year members. We've been open since 1994. It is real. They understand better than we do and we do side-by-side work in Clubhouse were required. They know what they're doing, whether it's administratively, whether they are physically in a kitchen cooking, whether they're cleaning, whether they do reception. They, uh, you come and visit, they're buzzing you in, they're signing you in, they're answering the phone, they're transferring the

1 calls. We're more than capable, but New York City
2 needs— they need to know what this really looks like.
3 And I think the last thing for me is transportation,
4 is really making it easier for people to get around
5 and get where they want to go.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And just building on that,
7 what, uh, sectors are you seeing, uh, folks getting
8 hired and retained?

9 SHANON SHAW: Mostly for me with transitional and
10 the supported employment retail. The retail industry
11 is big and we need to diversify because more of our
12 members want to do more than just retail, um, but
13 it's hard to sell it's hard to get them in that door,
14 but retail is real popular in clubhouses.

15 LISA SHEINHOUSE: I, I would also add, we see a
16 lot of food service. I think it's a lot of shift
17 work where we're seeing people being hired because, I
18 wanna say, people with disabilities, they have the—
19 they're the most loyal employees. Mhm. They wanna
20 show up. They're so happy to have their job. And
21 because they want part-time work due to their, you
know, the, the, the said cliff that we talked about
before, those type of places where it's shift work,

are the— and part is really where the part-time work is easiest for them.

SHANON SHAW: Yeah, same.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And, uh, in your experience, uh, have members been, um, recruited by city agencies, or are, are any mem— any of your members working with a city agency?

SHANON SHAW: No, none of ours, but totally wanna get in.

MICHELE ANNE BLONDMONVILLE: Same.

LISA SHEINHOUSE: Yeah, same.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And, and you all knew about the— the 55A program and —

LISA SHEINHOUSE: So actually, if I may, I hope I speak on behalf of all of us when I say a lot of the things that were discussed today have not been brought to the provider organizations. And I don't think I was aware of almost anything that was talked about in those 2 hours. So it was an amazing learning experience for me. So thank you. But I don't think there's a lot of outreach to the boots on the ground that we're the ones providing those services, and we're not getting that information.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And outside of just the employment piece, are you in touch with, uh, MOPD? Okay.

MICHELE ANNE BLONDMONVILLE: I think, yeah, um, I was in touch with the former Commissioner and I just reintroduced myself to Elena, who is the new chief of staff, so we're gonna build a relationship there as well.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Wonderful. Well, thank you so much.

PANEL: Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, we will now move to remote testimony. Please wait for your name to be called to testify and select unmute when prompted. Clement So. Iman— oh, one at a time, okay.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

CLEMENT SO: Okay, um, hi, my name is Clement So of the Metropolitan Asian Deaf Association. I'd like to— hold, hold on, just some technical issues with the interpreter. Hold on.

Okay, sorry about that. Um, so, er, this is Clement So of the Metropolitan Asian Deaf Association. I'm the Executive Director and the Co-Chair of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Association.

1 We'd like to communicate support for our disability
2 community as well. So right now I have written text
3 that I will submit in writing and testimony that I'll
4 submit, but I wanted to talk specifically about L L
5 30, access to, uh, legal, and in connect- in regards
6 with access to, access to disability rights, I wanted
7 to speak about LL 30, that the covered language, the
8 top 10 lines that are included- we froze- that
9 include, um, Chinese, foreign, Russian as well,
10 different languages that are included, but ASL is not
11 included.

12 So deaf New Yorkers have a hard time having
13 access to ASL in government agencies across the city.
14 That's one of the biggest threats to their economic
15 security and resources. The New York State already
16 passed language access to include ASL. That's
17 already passed at the state level. And now, um, I
18 think it's time to amend LL30 to include ASL, um,
19 before the problem gets worse and worse and worse.

20 So I already spread the word throughout the deaf
21 community, and everyone realizes that this is an
important piece, that ASL content isn't there, ASL
information isn't there in the government agency on
the websites. There's just a few very brief content

1 that's in ASL. We need more content in ASL for- to
2 support various resources. And the- and also, for
3 example, the Board of Elections has no ASL content on
4 their website.

5 So it's really frustrating with- in providing
6 voter education to people that the New York- the New
7 York deaf community has a very low voter
8 participation just merely because the language isn't
9 there. And lower voter participation means worser
economic standards for deaf people.

10 And to wrap all this up, I had spoken with MOPD
11 Commissioner and, uh, the Office for Immigration
Affairs to see if it's possible to amend-

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired. Thank
13 you.

14 CAIRPERSON HANIF: You can finish up.

15 CLEMENT SO: Um, and so sorry about that, the
16 interpreter got interrupted. Um, I just have-
17 interpreter's asking to repeat the last part because
18 of the interruption. Um, I spoke with the
19 Commissioner, uh, from MOPD and the Commissioner for
Immigration Affairs and about- on the same issues but
20 I wanted to thank you for listening, um, to my
21

testimony, and I look forward to hearing more. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. Next, we'll go to Eman Rimawi Doster.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

EMAN RIMAWI DOSTER: Hi, thank you so much and good afternoon. I was planning on being there in person, but the spring flu apparently got me. Uh, my name is Eman Rimawi Doster, and I am a Senior Community Organizer for the Disability Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, or NYLPI. Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony.

Applying for and interviewing for a job is exciting, full of opportunities and possibilities. Unfortunately, that excitement is sometimes bittersweet for someone with a disability living in New York City. Disabled New Yorkers aren't just thinking about the job itself. We are also thinking about how we can get there.

NYLPI's Disability Justice Program works to reduce barriers for people with disabilities around our city, including by advocating for improved access to all modes of mass transit, along with more

accessible streets, sidewalks, and entry of places of business.

According to a study from, uh, that the Center for the Independence of the Disabled New York, or CIDNY, did, the second most complained about topic for disabled New Yorkers is transportation. And one cannot get to a job and keep a job if they are, uh, if they have unreliable transportation.

Lack of reliable transportation is the second most cited reason after discrimination for New Yorkers' abysmal unemployment and underemployment statistics.

I've used Access-A-Ride since 2010 when my lupus caused severe neuropathy, which caused me to become paralyzed from the neck down. After 14 months of intense physical therapy, some of which I had to do on my own because I wasn't getting better fast enough for my insurance company or nursing home, I was able to walk again, but with limited mobility with my legs. I had to use leg braces. I now use a walker and prosthetics full-time after a miscarriage. I sometimes use my wheelchair as well.

16 years later, as an above and below knee amputee, I have even more mobility struggles and a

1 busier life. And on one hand, the Access-A-Ride
2 program and service, which I pay for, and has greatly
3 improved, um, it still has issues. There are so many
4 issues with this, sometimes you can't even, you can't
5 even tell how many. Issues that make having a busy
6 life and fluctuating schedule harder to manage.
7 Booking trips a day or two in advance often doesn't
8 work for me and others, or others who use
9 paratransit.

10 Having only 40 rides a month with the MTA pilot
11 on-demand program makes it difficult, but I manage
12 between traditional and on-demand. I make it work,
13 but not without significant challenges.

14 The trains and buses aren't even fully accessible
15 as the MTA claims. For example, even aside from the
16 fact that only 30% of the subway stations are
17 currently stair-free accessible, there remains other
18 significant accessibility barriers including
19 excessive and dangerous gaps that the platforms and
20 trains and system-wide have.

21 Further, while buses are accessible, too many
drivers are inadequately trained on how to secure
passengers using wheelchairs. Despite those-

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Mhm. You can keep going.

EMAN RIMAWI DOSTER: Okay, thank you. Despite those persistent accessibility challenges on fixed route transportation, even with 100% accessible train stations, there will always be a need for Access-A-Ride. Therefore, it's incumbent on the city and the MTA to ensure that Access-A-Ride functions optimally for the customers it serves.

Luckily, I've worked someplace for 9 years that understands how difficult it is to get around the city with a physical disability. But not everyone with a disability has that luck. If we're going to talk about economic growth for disabled New Yorkers, not only should we be doing it intentionally and intersectionally, but we should be considering the discrimination in inaccessible work environments, and we should consider the importance of accessible transportation as a driver of employment for disabled people and disabled New Yorkers. And it's been incredibly difficult with my lupus as an above and below knee amputee, as someone who has chronic fatigue and chronic pain to keep up with this. But I

do it because it's important. And thank you so much for the opportunity to testify, and I'll submit my testimony. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. Molly Senack.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

MOLLY SENACK: Hi, good afternoon. My name is Molly Senack. I am the Education and Employment Community Organizer for the Center for Independence of the Disabled New York. We've already heard a lot today about the various statistics regarding unemployment for people with disabilities in New York City. However, I would also like to highlight something that came up during the last in-person panel, which is the fact that employees with a disability are almost twice as likely to only work part-time as opposed to people without disabilities.

They're also less likely to work in higher-paid managerial or professional positions than people without disabilities. And the American Community Survey reported that even when people with disabilities do work full-time, their median salary is more than \$9,000 lower than the median salary of people without disabilities.

1 People with disabilities seeking gainful
2 employment face gaps in hiring, advancement, and wage
3 parity. Last month, my organization hosted a
4 two-part event exploring these gaps and the barriers
5 faced by the disability community in New York City.
6 And a huge thank you to Council Member Hanif, uh, for
7 attending that and giving her remarks.

8 Um, a full report on the takeaways from this
9 discussion is going to be released in the next couple
10 of weeks, but some of the main barriers that members
11 of the community expressed experiencing with
12 unemployment were structural issues with employment
13 programs, such as NYC At Work, 55A, etc., including
14 overly complex application processes, inconsistent
15 follow-through from case managers, long wait times
16 for responses, and overall lack of results.

17 There was also a lot of reporting about the lack
18 of counseling on navigating the benefits cliff and
19 continued stigmatization of having a disability in
20 the workforce, with community members citing a lack
21 of flexible roles, jobs being withheld when
accommodations were requested and the continued
existence of a subminimum wage.

However, this event really highlighted the importance of having an office whose primary purpose is to address these multitude- this multitude of interconnected barriers specifically impacting the disability community's access to gainful employment.

In 2024, the New York City Council released a report that reflected the compounding effects of intersectional racial and gender bias of, um, on wage parity. However, disability was left out. People with disabilities are more likely to be female, and they are staggeringly more likely to be people of color.

Um, I know that my time is running out, so I will just say the rest of my testimony is submitted in writing. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. We'll now go to Christopher Johnson.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Uh, yeah, hello, my name is Christopher Leon Johnson. I'm, uh, I want to speak on this right now, and I, I support this, uh, Committee, um, topic at hand, uh, when it comes to economic opportunities for people with disabilities. But the city has to really work on how they really treat people who are disabled and the problem is that, um, the city doesn't get a lot of money from the, uh, for the, the, the Office for Disabilities in the Mayor's Office. Um, the thing is that, um, the city has to really, really uplift the disabled community and make it not to where that it's taboo.

Um, the problem is that certain employers, uh, the reason they don't want people with, um, that disabled because it's hard to fire them, you know, I mean, even if they do wrong, it's hard to fire a person that's disabled because unless there's a replacement for that disabled person, they can get

sued, especially people that are mentally disabled.

Um, um, there are people that are— there are good people who have mental illnesses, and the problem is that there are people that are like— there's bad people that have mental illness. But the thing is that a person is certified mentally ill, It's really hard to fire a person that's really mentally ill.

Um, the city has to really come together and put their foot down and really treat people who do a bad job in the workforce who are disabled the same way they see a person that they call able-bodied, um, on the workforce.

Um, I'll say this right now that, uh, going forward to '26, I know that you're the Chair of the, um, Disabled Disabilities Committee Mrs. Hanif, um, but you need to really advocate, um, more to the Mayor's Office to allocate money to this Office of Disabilities.

Um, that the thing that come first. And the thing is that, um, they need to open more, um, opportunities when it comes to job trainings with people who are disabled. Um, they need to be more job training programs for people that are mentally disabled. Um, this needs to come in conjunction with

the Office of Mental Health and this in New York City Mayor's Office, including the State Office of Mental Health.

Um, so, look, it's a lot that has to be done. Um, this is a long, long, travel fight with this. And, but I, I'll say this right now that, uh, going forward, um, next time you have a hearing, there should be the mental health, uh, Mental Health Committee there too um, when it comes to this topic, at hand. People that are mentally ill, um, a certain place, they're called disabled people. And at the same time, when it comes to economic opportunities, um, there has to be, uh, transparency when it comes to, um, this, this, uh, issue right here.

Um, but like I said, it's all about allocating money. We have a budget. We're still in pre-budget cycle. I know the exact budget is still stalled, oh, but-

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired. Thank you.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: That's all I have to say. Thank you so much. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I had a question for Molly if she's still there.

1 MOLLY SENACK: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Molly, I wanted to know if,
3 uh, you've had members of your organization, uh, be
4 successful in retaining a job placement in a city
5 agency.

6 MOLLY SENACK: So that is actually something that
7 I am looking into as an advocate. Full disclosure, I
8 do not work on the employment services side, so there
9 would be other people within my organization who
10 might have better access to that information.

11 However, something that we're currently looking at is
12 the overall success of 55 A, B, and C programs.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Mhm.

14 MOLLY SENACK: Um, because at the state level,
15 you cannot sue the state for, uh, for violating your
16 rights under the ADA. So we are currently actually
17 looking for people who received work through a 55 B
18 or C program, um, and then faced difficulty in
19 maintaining that position and had no legal recourse.
20 So far, we have not come in contact with anyone in
21 terms of how successfully people have managed to
succeed at city agencies.

Um, are you asking— wait, I'm, I'm full— I don't
have data on this necessarily, but are you

specifically asking for people who received their position through the 55A program or for people who did not necessarily receive their position through the 55A program?

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Um, both are fine.

MOLLY SENACK: Okay. So I, again, like, I cannot say whether we have worked with anybody. I can get in touch with somebody at my organization who would know that.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Mhm.

MOLLY SENACK: But I can say that because 55A doesn't allow, um, for essentially promotions unless you then take the civil service exam, you are still kind of, um, stuck in whatever position you get. Um, and then for people without, um, who, who got their city position, uh, without the 55A program, I have interacted with some people specifically who within their city position were having trouble because their accommodations were being denied, um, specifically with regards to remote work.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you for sharing that. And, um, do you know if your members are going to the Workforce One centers?

1
2 MOLLY SENACK: Um, as far as I know, for like,
3 because we offer employment services, when people are
4 coming to us for employment services, we are the ones
5 who are connecting them. But we do, obviously, we do
6 quite a bit of work with the Mayor's Office for
People with Disabilities.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Alright, thank you. Thank
8 you. Christopher Greeth.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, he's not here.
Michelle Ann Blondmonville.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Alright, so thank you to
13 everyone who has testified. If there's anyone
14 present in the room or in the Zoom that hasn't had
the opportunity to testify, please raise your hand.

15 Seeing no one else, I would like to note that
16 written testimony, which will be reviewed in full by
Committee Staff, may be submitted to the record up to
17 72 hours after the close of this hearing by emailing
18 it to testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you all for
19 tuning in to today's hearing. Uh, take care. [GAVEL]

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date July 11, 2026