

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

1

2 CITY COUNCIL  
3 CITY OF NEW YORK

4 ----- X

5 TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

6 Of the

7 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

8 ----- X

9 May 23, 2019

10 Start: 10:13 a.m.

11 Recess: 5:55 p.m.

12

13 HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

14 B E F O R E: DANIEL DROMM  
15 Chairperson

16

17 COUNCIL MEMBERS:

18 Keith Powers

19 Helen Rosenthal

20 Mark Gjonaj

21 Vanessa L. Gibson

22 Francisco Moya

23 Barry Grodenchik

24 Rory I. Lancman

25 Jimmy Van Bramer

Adrienne E. Adams

Laurie A. Cumbo

Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.

Farah Louis

Steven Matteo

26

27

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

29

Jacques Jiha, Commissioner

2 Department of Finance

3 Scott Stringer, Comptroller  
4 New York City

5 Ronnie Lowenstein, Director  
6 Independent Budget Office, IBO

7 George Sweeting, Deputy Director  
8 Independent budget Office, IBO

9 Maria Palacampo (sp?), President  
10 DC 37 Local 1757

11 Reynaldo Barber, President  
12 Local 1492

13 Vincent Towles, Treasurer  
14 Local 1505

15 Roxanne Delgal (sp?)  
16 Friends of Pelham Parkway

17 Constance Lesold (sp?), Founder  
18 Committee of 100 to Free Brooklyn  
19 Botanic Gardens

20 Lois Kellerman, New York Resident

21 Lucy Sexton  
22 New Yorkers for Culture and Arts

23 Emily Walker, Director of Outreach and  
24 Programs  
25 New Yorkers for Parks

Gwendolyn Tindall (sp?), Parent and New  
York Resident

Alexandria Estrella, New York Resident

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

3

2 Furiella Ybarra (sp?), Translator

3 Kayla Jones  
4 Jump Start

5 Brigitte Mousay (sp?)  
6 Jump Start

7 Bernardo Feliz Rodriguez, New York  
8 Resident

9 Leisel Burns  
10 Stronger Together Across Traditions

11 Ralph Yazo, New York City Resident

12 Daniel Clay, President  
13 Gardeners of New York City

14 Joe Pulio, President  
15 Local 983

16 Robert Kraemer  
17 NYC Energy Business Representative

18 Carolyn Capezzi, Owner & Education  
19 Director  
20 Smart Start Early Childhood Center

21 Amy Pamero  
22 Tiny Tots Playhouse

23 Alice Bufkin (sp?), Director of Policy  
24 for Child and Adolescent Health  
25 Citizen's Committee for Children

Leah Van Hulsima (sp?), Director  
Early Care and Education Institute

Gregory Brender

2 United Neighborhood Houses

3 Salma Malik, Founder & Director  
4 Climb To Autism Services

5 Lisa Caswell, Senior Policy Analyst  
6 Daycare Council of New York

7 Yolanda McBride, Director of Public  
8 Policy  
Children's Aid

9 Randi Levine, Policy Director  
10 Advocates for Children of New York

11 Maggie Moreoff, Coordinator  
12 Arise Coalition

13 Maureen Fonseca  
14 SCSF

15 Michael Greco, Vice President  
16 Local 2507

17 Oren Barzilay, President  
18 FDNY EMS Union Local 2507

19 Vincent Varialle (sp?), President  
20 Uniformed EMS Officers Union

21 Melissa Sclars, Senior Government  
22 Relations  
23 SAGE

24 Caitlin Andrews  
25 Live On New York

Becca Reed  
New York Coalition for Adult Literacy  
NYCCAL

2 Amy Torres, Director of Policy  
3 Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC)

4 Carlyn Cowen, Chief of Policy and Public  
5 Affair Officer  
6 Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC)

7 Po Ling Ng, Senior Service Division  
8 Open Door  
9 Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC)

10 Gia Mui  
11 Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC)

12 Alex Kong (sp?), New York Resident

13 Juan Pinzon, Director of Health Services  
14 Community Service Society

15 Seonguen Chen, Senior Manager of Health  
16 Policy  
17 Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC)

18 Annette Gaudino, Policy Director  
19 Treatment Action Group

20 Kate O'Brien, New York Resident

21 Anthony Feliciano, Executive Director  
22 Commission on Public Health System

23 Roxanna Garcia, ICU Nurse  
24 Woodhull Hospital

25 Ray Briggs  
NYSNA

Robin Vitalle, Vice President of Health  
Strategies  
American Heart Association

2 Mon Yuck Yu, Executive Vice President  
3 Academy of Medical and Public Health  
4 Services

4 Scott Daly, Director  
5 New York Junior Tennis League (NYJTL)

6 Carol Gross, Retired Early Education  
7 Teacher

8 Eunhye Grace Kim, Assistant Director  
9 Korean Community Services (KCS)

10 Tasfia Rahman, Policy Coordinator  
11 Coalition for Asian-American Children  
12 and Family

13 Zara Ali, Communication Manager  
14 Arab0American Family Support Center

15 Sylvia Sikder, Program Manager  
16 India Home

17 Tazmin Uddin, Youth Coordinator  
18 Turning Point for Women and Families

19 Emma Rayhack (sp?), Student  
20 Project Reach

21 Asha Avery, Student  
22 Project Reach

23 Luvka Starcova (sp?), Intern  
24 Project Reach

25 Quandell Freeman (sp?), Intern  
Project Reach

Don Cowl  
Project Reach

2

Jessica Yaeger, Vice President of Policy  
and Planning  
Women In Need (WIN)

4

5

Mercedes Jennings  
Partnership for the Homeless

6

7

Catherine Trapani, Executive Director  
Homeless Services United

8

9

Marcus Diego  
Fair Futures Model for Foster Youth

10

11

Annie Wong  
New York Junior League

12

13

Sarah Chiles, Executive Director  
Red Lake Horowitz Foundation

14

15

Uzman Ahmed, Senior Policy Analyst  
FPWA

16

17

Michelle Jackson, Deputy Executive  
Director  
Human Services Council

18

19

Maria Lizardo, Executive Director  
Nimick (sp?)

20

21

Nora Moran, Director of Policy and  
Advocacy  
United Neighborhood Houses

22

23

Laura Mascuch, Executive Director  
Supportive Housing Network of New York

24

25

Faith Beyham, Advocacy and Policy  
Advisor  
UJA Federation of New York

2

3

Laura Shapiro, Director  
Family Defense Practice  
Bronx Defenders

5

Emma Ketteringham, Managing Director  
Family Defense Practice  
Bronx Defenders

6

7

8

Cristobal Gutierrez, Staff Attorney  
Make the Road New York

9

10

Shane Correia, Associate Director  
Center for Court Innovation

11

12

Julia Davis  
Children's Defense Fund

13

14

Alex Zeitz-Moskin  
New York City Alliance Against Sexual  
Assault

15

16

Michaela Baubrow (sp?), Senior Program  
Coordinator  
New York City Alliance Against Sexual  
Assault

17

18

19

Saswati Sarkar, Director of Finance and  
Program Administration  
New York City Alliance Against Sexual  
Assault

20

21

22

Diane Drozeck (sp?), New York City  
Resident

23

24

Rachel Sabella, Director  
No Kid Hungry New York

25

Celia Green, Co-Chair  
Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council



2

Jerome Nathaniel, Senior Program Manager  
City Harvest

4

Mikola De Roo, Vice President of Public  
Affairs  
Food Bank for New York City

6

7

Liz Accles, Executive Director  
Community Food Advocates

8

9

Garrett Shore, Policy and Communication  
Jobs First NYC

10

11

Evelyn Ortiz, Deputy Director  
New York Association of Training and  
Employment Professionals

12

13

Jessie Layman, Director of Policy and  
Advocacy  
New York City Employment and Training  
Coalition

14

15

16

Caroline Iosso, Director of Community  
and Government Affairs  
Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow  
(OBT)

17

18

19

Joel Cufferman  
New York Environmental Law and Justice  
Project and Emergency Taskforce for  
Prohibition of Roundup.

20

21

22

Alejandra Aduce Si Fuentes (sp?),  
Executive Director  
Dance NYC

23

24

25

Fran Garber  
Regina Opera Company

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

10

2 Emana Berry, Development Associate  
3 The Field

4 John Krinsky, Professor of Political  
5 Science  
6 City College

7 Julia Durante Martinez, Community Land  
8 Trust Coordinator  
9 New Economy Project

10 Tito Senja (sp?), Supervising Attorney  
11 Community Development Project  
12 Urban Justice Center

13 Aida Lynn (sp?), student  
14 Chinese-American Planning Council  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

11

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Mic check. One. Two.  
3 One. Two. One. Two. Today's date is May 23,  
4 2019. Today's hearing is the executive budget  
5 hearing on finance and it is being recorded by Dane  
6 Holk (sp?).

7 [gavel]

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Good  
9 morning and welcome to the City Council's 13th and  
10 final day of the hearings on the Mayor's executive  
11 budget for fiscal 2020. My name is Daniel Dromm and  
12 I Chair the Finance Committee. I have been joined on  
13 the [inaudible 00:00:18] by Council member Barry  
14 Grodenchik and others, I'm sure, will be coming very  
15 soon. Before we begin, I'd like to take a moment to  
16 give a well-deserved public thank you to the entire  
17 finance division of the City Council. They have  
18 worked incredibly hard over the last several weeks--

19 [applause]

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

21 [applause]

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: to ensure that the  
23 executive budget hearings have been informative,  
24 thoughtful, and comprehensive. Starting with the  
25 director, Latonya McKinney, to all of the deputy

2 directors, assistant director, counsels, unit heads,  
3 finance analysts, economists, and support staff,  
4 thank you very, very much. I'd also like to thank  
5 all the Sergeant-at-arms that keep us safe every day,  
6 as well as the members of the New York City media who  
7 make us look good on television. And, finally, thank  
8 you to my entire staff both here at City Hall and  
9 back in my district office in Jackson Heights in  
10 Queens. Today, we will hear from the Department of  
11 Finance, the Comptroller, and the Independent Budget  
12 Office and, of course, the public. If there is  
13 anyone from the public here now, please be advised  
14 that the public portion of the hearing today will  
15 begin at approximately 12 PM. If you would like to  
16 testify, please fill out a witness slip with the  
17 Sergeant-at-arms and be sure to indicate the topic of  
18 your testimony on that slip. We understand that  
19 seniors, students, or people with disabilities may  
20 need to leave by a certain time and we will try to  
21 accommodate that need by putting you on one of the  
22 earlier witness panels. If you need such an  
23 accommodation, please write it on your witness slip  
24 or speak with one of the Sergeant-at-arms. Now,  
25 let's kick it off with the Department of finance is

2 executive budget totals 314.2 million dollars. The  
3 department's budget has seen relatively few changes  
4 since the preliminary budget with approximately 3.9  
5 million in new needs over fiscal 19 and fiscal 2020  
6 offset by 4.2 million dollars savings in fiscal 2020.  
7 I am pleased that one of these new needs is 407,000  
8 dollars to staff and supply the new property tax aid  
9 unit, which will administer the income-based payment  
10 plans that were authorized by recently passed  
11 legislation. I look forward to learning more how the  
12 process of rolling out these new agreements is going  
13 and working with the department to get eligible  
14 seniors and other low income property owners who need  
15 help signed up for this program. Before we hear your  
16 testimony, Commissioner Jiha, I'd like to thank you  
17 personally for meeting with me last week to discuss  
18 the work that you're doing at DOF and the programs  
19 and initiatives you're hoping to implement. Your  
20 commitment to fairness, efficiency, transparency, and  
21 customer service is clearly evident in the work that  
22 you are doing. I look forward to maintaining our  
23 open dialog between ourselves and our staffs so that  
24 we can continue to work together collaboratively for  
25 as long as we are in our respective roles. Thank you

2 very much. And before we begin, I'd like to remind  
3 my colleagues that the first round of questions for  
4 the agency will be limited to three minutes per  
5 Council member and, if Council members have  
6 additional questions, we will have a second round of  
7 questions at two minutes per Council member. We will  
8 now hear from the Department of Finance, Jacques  
9 Jiha, the Commissioner, after he is sworn in by  
10 Council.

11 LEGAL COUNSEL: Good morning. Do you  
12 affirm that the testimony you will give today will be  
13 accurate to the best of your information and belief?

14 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Yes.

15 LEGAL COUNSEL: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you,  
17 Commissioner. Whenever you are ready.

18 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Good morning.  
19 Thank you, Chair Dromm, and the members of the  
20 Finance Committee for the opportunity to testify  
21 today. My name is Jacques Jiha and I'm the  
22 Commissioner of the New York City Department of  
23 Finance. I'm joined today by First Deputy  
24 Commissioner Michael Hyman and Deputy Commissioner  
25 Jeffrey Shear. I would begin by providing you with

2 an update on the city's financial position. Through  
3 April, the city's revenue totaled 55.8 billion  
4 dollars which represents a 3.1 percent increase over  
5 last year. The improvement in the city's financial  
6 position since the March preliminary budget hearing  
7 is due to a rebound in personal income tax  
8 collections. The economy remains strong with  
9 interest rates moderate and unemployment at a half  
10 century low. Nonetheless, we have been concerned  
11 about the future as there's a small risk that the  
12 national economy will skid into a recession in late  
13 2020. As a result, we'll continue to advise caution  
14 when approaching the fiscal year 20 adopted budget.  
15 When we met in March, I told you that our agency has  
16 been relying more and more on [inaudible 00:05:23]  
17 and artificial intelligence to mitigate risk, reduce  
18 inefficiencies, wean down costs, and make better  
19 decisions. As I said then, our customers are also  
20 customers of private companies that are providing  
21 state-of-the-art products and services. Companies  
22 like Google and Apple set our customer's expectations  
23 and, to meet this high standard, we have to  
24 continuously improve the way we do business. And in  
25 the last five years, we have leveled up a suite of

2 strategy initiatives designed to modernize the  
3 agency, improve our processes, and ensure a better  
4 experience for our customers. Some of our most  
5 successful initiatives include the award winning  
6 parking ticket pay or dispute mobile app and updates  
7 business tax computer system, the use of advanced  
8 technology for more accurate property evaluations,  
9 the incorporation of artificial intelligence into the  
10 selection of audit candidates, and a cross agency  
11 data sharing initiative that has created a  
12 collaborative culture among more than 20  
13 participating city agencies while providing concrete  
14 results such as the use of DOB data for more accurate  
15 property assessments. Now, I will provide an update  
16 on several important initiatives that we believe will  
17 change and improve our business practices. In March,  
18 the Department of Finance was only days into the  
19 launch of our new online property tax system. Those  
20 of you familiar with the green screens of the old web  
21 page will, no doubt, appreciate the new modern,  
22 customer-friendly experience that we are able to  
23 offer with the new system. It is now much easier for  
24 customers to perform transactions and access  
25 information such as property tax bills and notice of



2 property value. And because the site is mobile  
3 responsive, property owners can now view their bills  
4 and pay their taxes from the palm of their hand. As  
5 with any new computer system there have been, and  
6 will continue to be, growing pains, but we have spent  
7 the last two months improving the system in response  
8 to customer inquiries. Key improvements include a  
9 new account balance page which allows customers to  
10 predict their future discount and interest in order  
11 to plan their property tax payments. A [inaudible  
12 00:08:08] feature which displays all notice of  
13 property value since January 2010 and all property  
14 tax bills since June 2009. And the several  
15 improvements that make it easier for customers to  
16 access the Department of Finance data under New York  
17 City open data portal. More data will be added in  
18 the coming months. As I have testified in the past,  
19 a key part of the new system is the new smart file  
20 online application process. Through smart file,  
21 property owners can apply for money-saving tax breaks  
22 such as [inaudible 00:08:48] and the veterans and  
23 clergy exemptions. Already, more than 250 New  
24 Yorkers have applied for benefits via the smart file  
25 system. We are pleased with the early response to

2 smart file and we hope to see similar results later  
3 this year with the launch of a new tenant access  
4 portal for participants in the rent freeze program.  
5 Modeled on our successful landlord access portal, the  
6 tenant access portal will provide beneficiaries with  
7 their one stop shop for forms, applicant information,  
8 and resources for the rent freeze program. Tenants  
9 will be able to see the status of their benefits and  
10 download custom reports electronically. With smart  
11 file already in place, the launch of the rent freeze  
12 tenant access portal means that property owners and  
13 renters will be able to access more information about  
14 their benefits online at their own convenience rather  
15 than having to write or call us. Another important  
16 initiative that was launch to the public this spring  
17 is a property tax and interest deferral program, also  
18 known as PT Aid. This program offers manageable and  
19 affordable payment plans to low and moderate income  
20 property owners who are having trouble paying the  
21 property taxes. There are three PT Aid payment  
22 plans. One for senior, one for home owners  
23 experiencing extenuating circumstances, and one for  
24 those who simply need to stretch a years-worth of  
25 taxes over multiple years. Property owners with PT

2 Aid agreement will be excluded from the 2019 tax lien  
3 [inaudible 00:10:38]. For that reason, we included  
4 an informational PT Aid insert within mailing of the  
5 90 lien sale notice and we plan to do the same for  
6 the 60, 30, and 10 day notices. We have also  
7 advertised the program on social media and in the  
8 press. And we expect that many New Yorkers will  
9 apply as we get closer to the lien sale, which will  
10 be held in July. We created PT Aid in response to  
11 the high default rate in our standard payment  
12 agreements. We are also exploring another  
13 improvement that may help customers avoid falling  
14 behind on their taxes in the first place. Most  
15 people pay their mortgages each month and many would  
16 find it difficult, if not impossible, to make that  
17 payment on a quarterly basis, yet our customers do  
18 not have the option of-- to pay the property taxes  
19 each month, rather than each quarter. We plan to  
20 introduce a monthly payment option that would make  
21 property tax payments more manageable for our  
22 customers. Our hope, as I said, if we can help  
23 homeowners keep up with their property tax payments,  
24 they will never find themselves in need of a payment  
25 plan. Fortunately, we continue to see fewer

2 properties at risk of being included in the lien sale  
3 than in previous years. Earlier in the decade, the  
4 Department of Finance included an average of more  
5 than 26,000 properties in the [inaudible 00:12:14]  
6 each year, a number that has been reduced to about  
7 22,000 properties this year as a result of clearer  
8 and more frequent communication with customers. It  
9 is important to note that the majority of these  
10 properties will not end up in a lien sale. Last  
11 year, approximately 3700 liens were sold,  
12 considerable less than the 5300 that were sold in  
13 2014. We have been particularly focused over the  
14 past several years on making sure that not-for-profit  
15 organizations remain out of the lien sale. The  
16 Department of Finance has convened a task force to  
17 help keep not for profits informed of their  
18 obligation to renew their tax exemptions annually.  
19 It takes a concerted and collaborative effort to  
20 communicate effectively with customers and today I'm  
21 asking the Council's assistance and partnership to  
22 inform New Yorkers of a very important New York state  
23 law. As you know, the Governor recently signed  
24 legislation that would expand the speed camera  
25 program in school zones. It is important that

2 drivers be informed of the new rules. Most  
3 significantly, the hours of speed camera operation  
4 are expanding. Beginning on July 11th when the law  
5 takes effect, the cameras will be operating from 6  
6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Friday, 12 months a  
7 year. In addition, the speed camera zone will be  
8 expanded to within a quarter mile of any school and  
9 the number of school zone will increase from 140 to  
10 750. The new law will result in significant changes  
11 for drivers and will plant to work with Council, the  
12 Department of Transportation, advocates and the media  
13 to help get the word out. We look forward to  
14 partnering with you in this effort. Another key  
15 Department of Finance communication initiative from  
16 the authority of this administration has been a broad  
17 effort to improve some of our important mailings.  
18 Last year, we revised the annual notice of property  
19 value in response to customer requests that we  
20 include an estimate of the property taxes for the  
21 coming year. By present the NOPV information in the  
22 larger [inaudible 00:14:46] and by incorporating  
23 design elements that customers are accustomed to  
24 seeing in bills and statements from private  
25 companies, we are able to reduce 311 calls about the

2 NOPV by almost 10 percent. Meanwhile, general 311  
3 NOPV inquiries from customers who do not have a  
4 specific question about information contained in the  
5 notice were reduce by 23 percent, and indication that  
6 customers understood the notice well enough to ask  
7 information and specific questions. We saw similar  
8 results with our design [inaudible 00:15:25] mailing.  
9 The response rate to the mailing, that is the number  
10 of recipients that return a completed application  
11 increased from 25 percent in 2016 to 75 percent in  
12 2018. While calls to 311 regarding [inaudible  
13 00:15:42] decreased by more than 70 percent.  
14 Subsequent communications brought the final  
15 [inaudible 00:15:49] to 94 percent. While we are  
16 pleased with these results, we under-- also  
17 understand that no matter how much we simplify our  
18 communications, customers will always need to talk to  
19 us one on one. Property and business taxation are  
20 complex subjects and there are certain questions  
21 which require the help of an expert. That is why, on  
22 July 1st, we will launch a new Department of Finance  
23 call center to provide customers with access to  
24 experts on business taxation, property tax exemptions  
25 and benefits, the rent freeze program, and refund and

2 misapplied payments. The call center will be able to  
3 direct calls from 311 to knowledgeable agency staff  
4 to provide faster and more personalized service to  
5 customers who have questions about their taxes and  
6 benefits. In short, the call center will make it  
7 easier for New Yorkers to access the information and  
8 help that they need. Our goal is that whether they  
9 call, write, or visit the Department of Finance, all  
10 customers have their questions answered and their  
11 needs addressed in a timely, friendly manner. The  
12 initiatives I have described today are part of an  
13 agency-wide commitment to the customer which we take  
14 very seriously. And are proud to share with the  
15 Council. We thank you for your continued support and  
16 partnership and I will happy to answer any questions  
17 that you have.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
19 much, Commissioner. Let me start off by asking some  
20 questions on tax collection. There's been some  
21 discussion about the strength of fiscal 2019 tax  
22 revenues, particularly the personal income tax. DOF  
23 directly collects most of our taxes with the  
24 exception of the personal income and sales taxes  
25 which are collected by the state and then remitted to

2 the city. How much has been collected for each of  
3 the taxes for the month of May as of Friday, May  
4 21st? Specifically, I'd like to know about the  
5 property tax, the commercial rent tax, the mortgage  
6 recording tax, the real property transfer tax, the  
7 general corporation tax, the unincorporated business  
8 tax, and all the other taxes combined.

9 COMMISSIONER JIHA: As of-- I mean,  
10 month to date, I don't have that information because  
11 we have not closed the month, yet. But I believe,  
12 for the last-- to the end of April, we collected in  
13 total about 37.1 billion dollars for all of these  
14 taxes.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. And going  
16 forward until we adopt the budget, will you give us  
17 some updates on what's happening then what the  
18 collections look like?

19 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Once we close the  
20 month, we will provide an update to the Council  
21 staff. Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. And will  
23 have that information broken down by tax?

24 COMMISSIONER JIHA: We will have that  
25 information broken down my taxes. Yes.



2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you.

3 Currently DOF has vacancy rate stands at nearly 10  
4 percent and it is not expected to decrease in fiscal  
5 2020 display a small drop in budgeted headcount.

6 What impact has this persistent vacancy had on DOF's  
7 ability to manage its varied portfolio?

8 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Let me say that we  
9 expect to, basically, backfill many of the positions  
10 in higher a lot of staff that we need sometime this  
11 year. One of the reasons why we lag behind in terms  
12 of hiring is because we are moving our employees from  
13 Brooklyn into-- most of our employees. About 900  
14 employees from Brooklyn into Manhattan. So, as a  
15 resort, we decided to postpone their hiring of many  
16 of these employees because it didn't make sense to  
17 hire all these folks and then move them from Brooklyn  
18 to Manhattan. So, we are in the process right now of  
19 speeding up the hiring process. So we expect to have  
20 the staff in place-- full staff in place sometime  
21 this fiscal year.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, is that all new  
23 hires that are coming on board? Is it those 900 that  
24 you are talking about or is there more?

2 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Some of them. Some  
3 of them in the area of audit. We have a lot of-- we  
4 are hiring a lot of auditors. And we also are hiring  
5 in the area of [inaudible 00:20:13] of the department  
6 and also for assessors.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How many people  
8 have left?

9 COMMISSIONER JIHA: It's a moving  
10 target. Do you have [inaudible 00:20:25]? We can  
11 provide you that information.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

13 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Specific  
14 information.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All right. Thank  
16 you.

17 COMMISSIONER JIHA: It keeps changing  
18 from month to month, as you can imagine.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: In the November  
20 plan, DOF saved 3.9 million from 53 vacancy accruals,  
21 but made no reduction of head count. In the  
22 executive budget, DOF save 4.2 million from reducing  
23 63 positions starting in fiscal 2020. With respect  
24 to the vacancy accrual, why did you take them as  
25

2 accrual in the November plan instead of reducing the  
3 head count?

4 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Again, as I said,  
5 we're in the process of hiring. You know? So our  
6 goal is to bring our staff to the level that we  
7 currently-- you know, that is authorized. So,  
8 again, it was a ti-- it's a timing issue from our  
9 perspective, but as we move into the fiscal year, our  
10 goal is to, basically, hire all of the employees that  
11 we have done is authorize that we have in our budget.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Will we see a  
13 further reduction by adoption?

14 COMMISSIONER JIHA: No. No. Actually,  
15 will see an increase in two more of the headcount  
16 that we'll bring in because, as I said, you know,  
17 we're moving our employees and we successfully moved  
18 all our staff at the end of May. So right now we're  
19 latching up our employment hiring.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. So, for the  
21 63 positions that we are talking about, can you  
22 please break it down for us by program area, as well  
23 as the titles and salaries of the positions?

24

25

2 COMMISSIONER JIHA: We will provide  
3 that information because right now it's like a  
4 placeholder for 63 employees in general.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

6 COMMISSIONER JIHA: And it's not broken  
7 down by-- but as we do the allocation, we will  
8 provide that information.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you.  
10 Earlier this year, the Council passed legislation  
11 after working for months with the administration to  
12 establish the new PT Aid payment agreement. My staff  
13 were dismayed to hear that earlier this month a  
14 constituent of mine went to the DOF tour for  
15 assistance with and one of the new payment plans only  
16 to be told by several DOF, including a supervisor,  
17 but they were on where the new law or the payment  
18 plan. When did DOF began training staff on the new  
19 plans and is training still ongoing?

20 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Yes. We have  
21 ongoing training with our employees, but the-- and I  
22 was-- and I'm sorry that that happened because, you  
23 know, I believe we took care of back constituent. We  
24 took charge of that constituent and took care of the  
25 problem. But, currently, we have been training the

2 staff to make sure that they are fully aware of the  
3 program. Again, as you can imagine, we have a lot of  
4 employees in all the business centers and then we  
5 have to make sure every single one of them is fully  
6 aware of the program, but we are in the process of  
7 doing that right now.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. And what  
9 about 311 operatives?

10 COMMISSIONER JIHA: 311 operators are  
11 also aware. We are providing all the scripts that  
12 they need. Then, as I said earlier and as part of a  
13 call center, we would be able to handle, okay, Amy  
14 call that is referred to us through 311.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, the law had an  
16 explicit outreach requirement. Are you moving along  
17 to meet that requirement?

18 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Yes. We've been  
19 doing a lot of outreach. We, I believe, for the tax,  
20 in general, we've done close to 25 outreach campaign  
21 and then we have five more programs actually. If you  
22 or any member of the Council wants to have a program  
23 in your district, please let us know. We would be  
24 more than happy to come to your district and to

2 demonstrate to basically educate people about the  
3 program that we have now.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you  
5 for that. The fiscal 2020 plan includes funding  
6 increase of 407,000 dollars for the property tax aide  
7 unit to assist with property tax aide in fiscal 2020.  
8 How many homeowners does DOF expect to assist within  
9 the first year?

10 COMMISSIONER JIHA: So far, I believe  
11 we are about 33 applications and we have approved, so  
12 far, six. But, again, as we get closer to the lien  
13 sale, we expect a spike, okay, in the application  
14 because, you know, as I said, many people are not  
15 aware of the programs and we are doing our best to  
16 reach as many people as possible to make them-- make  
17 sure they enroll in the program because we created  
18 the program because we believe there was a need for  
19 it. There is a need for it. So, our goal is to do  
20 it outreach, as aggressive as we can be, so that we  
21 could try to enroll as many as possible into the  
22 program.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is there dedicated  
24 staff at DOF to assist with the program?

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

31

2 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Yes. Yes. We  
3 currently have, I believe, four employees in the PT  
4 Aid program.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Four.

6 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. When DOF  
8 informs homeowners of a rears (sic), does the  
9 communication include information about PT Aid?

10 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Yes. As part of  
11 the lien's notice, we included an insert.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All right.

13 COMMISSIONER JIHA: With each one of  
14 the mailing.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And that's the  
16 mailings that you mentioned--

17 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Exactly.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: in your testimony?  
19 Okay. So, when we passed local law 45 of 2019, DOF  
20 communicated an estimated cost of 45,000 dollars for  
21 title searches. Is that included in the new needs?

22 COMMISSIONER JIHA: I believe so. We  
23 were already on board. We hired a company. We hired  
24 a title search company to help us with the title

25

2 search effort we need to do. The title search we  
3 need to do in order to approve these applications.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. And then, in  
5 your testimony-- I'm on a different topic now.

6 Dimensions of the speed cameras. How much new  
7 revenue do you expect to get from the speed cameras?

8 COMMISSIONER JIHA: We're still  
9 working. We are still working on, you know, what  
10 kind of deployment we are going to have. But, again,  
11 it depends on how aggressive we are with the  
12 deployment effort.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. And have you  
14 heard from DOT on a roll out? A timetable?

15 COMMISSIONER JIHA: We've been working  
16 with DOT and City Hall in terms of, you know,  
17 rollout. But, again, you know, it's-- Sooner we  
18 would come-- sooner than later we will come up with  
19 a plan to roll out the program in a way that makes  
20 sense for everyone.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Are those cameras  
22 on during the summer?

23 COMMISSIONER JIHA: I believe they will  
24 be 12 months. You know?



2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: 12 months of the  
3 year.

4 COMMISSIONER JIHA: 12 months a year.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All right. Taxi  
6 broker investigation. On Monday, the mayor announced  
7 a joint investigation by the TLC, DOF, and DCA into  
8 predatory practices by brokers in the taxi industry.  
9 What is DOF's role in the process and what is the  
10 timeline for the investigation and release of any  
11 recommendations?

12 COMMISSIONER JIHA: The mayor has asked  
13 us to look in conjunction with TLC and DCA to look  
14 into the matter. As you can imagine, it would not be  
15 wise for us to telegraph our next steps. So, in an  
16 appropriate time when the investigation is completed,  
17 you know, we will announce the outcome of the  
18 investigation.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: What do you think  
20 would be a successful outcome?

21 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Again, we just  
22 started. You know, the mayor just made the  
23 announcement. You know, we are in the process of  
24 reviewing all our options, so I cannot tell you at  
25 this point in time success would mean.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. DOF's units  
3 of appropriation to not match its program areas,  
4 which makes for a reduced transparency and limited  
5 ability for oversight. Would DOF be willing to  
6 engage in a conversation with Council to add several  
7 new units of appropriation to match its programmatic  
8 layout?

9 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Again, this is not  
10 something that we basically have a sale. It's  
11 basically OMB and the Council, you know, [inaudible  
12 00:28:01] of negotiation. I mean, we are always open  
13 for more sunlight, so therefore I don't have any--  
14 conceptually, I don't have any issue. I don't know  
15 where OMB and the Council are in terms of  
16 negotiation. I know you've been talking to OMB about  
17 this issue for a while, so I don't know exactly what  
18 the discussions are, but we-- I don't have-- we  
19 don't have any issue, per se, with the expect of  
20 providing more transparency.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Well, seems  
22 like things are going fairly well with OMB, so  
23 hopefully we'll get some new units of appropriation,  
24 as well.

25 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Good.

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

35

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Good. Parking  
3 violations bureau revenue. In the fiscal 2020  
4 executive plan, DOF estimates that it will collect  
5 4.1 million in additional revenue from delinquent  
6 parking violation bureau debt. Is DOF planning on  
7 doing anything new or different to achieve this goal?

8 COMMISSIONER JIHA: I think we are  
9 currently-- we are hiring a third collector. Am I  
10 correct?

11 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

12 COMMISSIONER JIHA: We are hiring a  
13 third collector.

14 UNIDENTIFIED: Collection agency.

15 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Collection agency.  
16 Outside collection agency. Again, it's part of our  
17 own aggressive effort to collect, in general, what is  
18 parking business taxes or ECB debt. This is part of  
19 the effort that we're doing to raise our collection.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. And what  
21 roll will my sheriff friend here play in this effort  
22 and will it involved more bootings?

23 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Yes. The sheriff  
24 has been extremely aggressive in terms of doing their  
25 best to help the Department of Finance enforce, not

2 only parkings, but also ECB. The [inaudible  
3 00:29:40] business debt. The taxes. So they would  
4 be to go to the effort.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Are there targeted  
6 areas where you're doing the bootings or how does  
7 that work?

8 COMMISSIONER JIHA: We don't target any  
9 specific area. We just go by the numbers. We look  
10 for people who, you know, who do not follow our rules  
11 and don't make payments when they get violations and  
12 these are the folks we target. We don't target  
13 specific areas of the city.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I think at the last  
15 hearing we had, you said that anybody who's over 350  
16 dollars--

17 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Anybody who's over  
18 350 dollars. Right now, what we do is we try to be  
19 as customer-friendly as we can for people that we  
20 have email addresses. As we get close to the 350  
21 dollars, which is as it becomes close to the legible  
22 number, which is 350, we send them emails telling  
23 them, by the way, be careful. Your car may be booted  
24 if you, you know, don't pay your fines because you  
25 are very close to the 350 line. So what we're trying

2 to always find ways to get heads up, warnings so that  
3 people are not surprised.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you.

5 Monthly billing. We're excited to learn that DOF  
6 hopes to offer opt-in monthly billing for property  
7 taxes. When do you anticipate being able to roll  
8 this out and will all property classes be eligible to  
9 opt-in to monthly billings?

10 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Our goal is to do  
11 it sometime in January, but it's going to be,  
12 basically, limited the class I properties and condos  
13 and-- class one and condos. Mostly with properties  
14 whose asset values are less than 250,000 dollars.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Because the monthly  
16 bill taxes will actually be due earlier than they  
17 would be otherwise, would this, initially, create a  
18 financial barrier for taxpayers to take advantage of  
19 the monthly billings?

20 COMMISSIONER JIHA: No. The taxes will  
21 be the same as it is currently for the quarter. It's  
22 just we are giving them the option of spreading, you  
23 know, a quarterly payment over three months instead  
24 of paying all one lump sum.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, given that the  
3 taxes will be prepaid, now, if at all, would the  
4 early discount rate apply to taxpayers who opt into  
5 monthly billings?

6 COMMISSIONER JIHA: The early discount  
7 is if you pay annually and semi-annually, I believe.

8 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

9 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Yes.

10 UNIDENTIFIED: It would not apply.

11 COMMISSIONER JIHA: It would not apply  
12 to the others.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: It would not.

14 COMMISSIONER JIHA: It's a very small  
15 window. Yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Are there any legal  
17 or operational hurdles that you must overcome in  
18 order to implement the monthly billings?

19 COMMISSIONER JIHA: At this point, no.  
20 We don't see anything unless we were to change, I  
21 believe, the payment date, which we don't intend to  
22 do.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. The  
24 executive budget contains a new need of 1.6 million  
25 in fiscal 2020 and 169,500 dollars in the out years

2 for case management system for the assigned counsel  
3 plan. What will this funding be used for?

4 COMMISSIONER JIHA: I believe it's to  
5 acquire case management system because we have some  
6 security issues we are trying some-- you know, some  
7 gaps in terms of security we are trying to fill.  
8 It's, basically, our address-- our own security  
9 issues that's--

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can you describe--

11 COMMISSIONER JIHA: it's a case  
12 management system.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can you describe  
14 that gap? What is the name? What's not happening?

15 COMMISSIONER JIHA: I would rather not  
16 go into detail. Again, as I said, it's part of cyber  
17 security that we are trying to address some of the  
18 issues that we have. So it's part of that funding to  
19 address that issue.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How did DOF come to  
21 be the agency that administers the voucher system for  
22 attorneys in criminal courts?

23 COMMISSIONER JIHA: I believe it was  
24 assigned to us by the mayor back then. 2000

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

40

2 something. I don't have the-- I don't know the  
3 issue. I was gone.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Uh-huh.

5 COMMISSIONER JIHA: So, it's--

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Before your time.

7 COMMISSIONER JIHA: I was before my--  
8 way before my time.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How much headcount  
10 is devoted to this effort at DOF?

11 COMMISSIONER JIHA: About 14 employees.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. DOF's  
13 fiscal 2020 executive plan includes a new lead of  
14 924,000 dollars in fiscal 19 and 814,000 dollars in  
15 fiscal 20 and the out years for cyber security  
16 infrastructure to protect DOF databases. Can you  
17 expand on the scope of work entailed in this capital  
18 project and, specifically, with this new expense  
19 funding will pay for?

20 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Again, it's part of  
21 our effort to boost our security. It's, basically, a  
22 [inaudible 00:34:19]. It's to acquire firewalls and  
23 switches.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Has work commenced  
25 on this cyber security project?



1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

41

2 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Yeah. I think so.

3 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And when do you  
4 think it will be completed?

5 COMMISSIONER JIHA: In December.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Does the new  
7 property tax system has built-in cyber security  
8 protections?

9 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: It does. Okay.  
11 I'm going to stop here. Council member Grodenchik--  
12 Sorry. We have been joined by Council member Adams  
13 and minority leader Steve Matteo and Council member  
14 Cohen and Council member Grodenchik has questions  
15 followed by Council member Adams.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Oops. Thank  
17 you, Mr. Chair. You kind of asked what I wanted to  
18 ask, but I do want to follow up a bit on the speed  
19 cameras and does the Department of finance decide--  
20 who gets to decide where those cameras go? There's a  
21 lot coming in, so--

22 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Department of  
23 Transportation. We only collect.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: You only  
25 collect.

2 COMMISSIONER JIHA: We collect.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: You're the  
4 grim reaper.

5 COMMISSIONER JIHA: We collect and also  
6 we adjudicate those fines. The tickets.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay. So it's  
8 up to DOT, then? Is that what you are--

9 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Yeah.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: saying? Okay.  
11 Do you have-- the Chair asked you about revenue  
12 estimates. Do you have a ballpark figure of what,  
13 you know-- I would think, given that we are going to  
14 be more than-- 140 to 750 is a lot more. That's  
15 almost 5 times the number of what we had. Do you  
16 expect revenue to go up four times? Three times?

17 COMMISSIONER JIHA: I can't tell you at  
18 this point in time. You know--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Have you put  
20 anything in the budget for-- is it in the budget  
21 somewhere--

22 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Whatever you have  
23 in the budget is what we, you know, all believe it  
24 would be. You know? So-- At this point in time--

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

43

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: So was there  
3 a--

4 COMMISSIONER JIHA: At this point--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Was there a--

6 COMMISSIONER JIHA: in time, I don't  
7 have actual data.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Was there a  
9 difference, Commissioner, and revenue you are  
10 anticipating for FY 19 as opposed to FY 20? I assume  
11 it has to go up. It's just almost a mathematical  
12 impossibility that it not going to go up.

13 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Well, you could  
14 assume-- You could make-- Yeah. Your assumption is  
15 correct. You know, as I said, there is an  
16 improvement in collections.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: All right. I  
18 would appreciate it, if you could, get back to the  
19 committee and let us know once you have a bit more  
20 grasp on those numbers, because they are important  
21 and I will follow up with DOT on locations.

22 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Sure.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you, Mr.  
24 Chairman.

25

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

44

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Council  
3 member Adams.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you, Mr.  
5 Chair. Good morning, Commissioner. Thank you for  
6 being here--

7 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Good morning.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: this morning. I  
9 represent District 28, South Jamaica, Richmond Hill,  
10 Rochdale Village, and South ozone Park and my  
11 question pretty much pertains to information that is  
12 received by the public when it comes to tax  
13 exemptions and abatements. We know that there are  
14 quite a few out there, but what we are finding and I  
15 are off is when it comes to constituent services, is  
16 that the information is not really know to our  
17 constituents the way that the information should be  
18 shared. So, does the Department of Finance plan to  
19 increase community outreach?

20 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Yes. Actually, we  
21 would be more than happy to work with your office to  
22 do outreach in your own community. So, our goal is,  
23 again, as I said, we know Brent has, you know,  
24 continuously increased in New York City and our job  
25 is to try and provide relief to renters. To tenants.

2 So, again, we would be more than happy to work with  
3 you to make sure that people in your districts are  
4 fully aware of many of the benefits that the city  
5 provides so that could provide relief to tenants or  
6 for homeowners in your district. So, again, let us--  
7 after the hearing, I will talk to you and you could  
8 give me some information as to who to reach out to in  
9 your office and we would be more than happy to come  
10 to your district.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: That's great. We  
12 definitely will be connecting to do that. I actually  
13 have an event this evening on tax lien--

14 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Okay.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: and I would much  
16 rather talk to--

17 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Do you have anyone  
18 from our office in your district tonight or--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: I believe so.

20 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Okay.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: I will let you know  
22 after the hearing.

23 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Okay. All right.

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: So, it's a lot of  
3 good information definitely need to share out there  
4 for middle-class homeowners that--

5 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Sure.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: information. Thank  
7 you.

8 COMMISSIONER JIHA: All right. No  
9 problem.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Council member  
11 Chaim Deutsch has joined us and he has a question.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you.  
13 Thank you. Thank you, Commissioner. So, I just want  
14 to mention that, first of all, I had to property tax  
15 outreach events with your office and your staff is  
16 wonderful. We had two great events, so I really want  
17 to thank you and your staff for all the work that you  
18 do each and every year. And the only thing I wanted  
19 to mention is that when people get their bills in the  
20 mail for the property taxes, it only mentions what  
21 the exemptions they currently receive and I have a  
22 bill in the City Council and I'd like to see if we  
23 could work on this that, when people get their bills  
24 in the mail, it should also tell them what they might  
25 be eligible for. So, because at the first property

2 tax event that we had, workshop that we had, we were  
3 able to save more than 50 people on their property  
4 taxes on other things like if someone is a clergy, if  
5 someone is a veteran. But if we could prevent that  
6 if it's on their bill. This way they know, okay. I  
7 got the star enhanced, but now, you know, I could  
8 apply for a veteran's exemption. So, this way they  
9 have the heads up and it could also prevent a lot of  
10 unneeded, you know, agony later on for people.

11 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Again, we would be  
12 more than happy to work with you in your office to  
13 see what can we do to provide transparency. But,  
14 again, with respect to the exact amount, we could  
15 always try to provide an estimate, but, because you  
16 know the value of property changes, as property in  
17 the exemptions often are based on the value of the  
18 properties. So as property value changes, the  
19 exemptions also changes. So, we can only provide an  
20 estimate.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Yeah. Okay.  
22 So just the information--

23 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Yeah.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: of what  
25 categories they could be eligible for the exemption.

2 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Eligible for.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Yeah. So, on  
4 the--

5 COMMISSIONER JIHA: [interposing] We--  
6 We--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: notes, it  
8 should have--

9 COMMISSIONER JIHA: I'm pretty-- we do  
10 a pretty good job at trying to-- because one of the  
11 things that we do very well is if we-- when we  
12 receive an application and if we see that taxpayers  
13 are qualified, are eligible for some other benefits,  
14 we will reach out to them automatically to tell them  
15 they are and then-- or some-- very often we will  
16 even fill out the forms for them, okay, and I send  
17 them back to them just to sign. I know our outreach  
18 people try to, as much as possible, try to provide  
19 and comprehensive view of all the exemption programs  
20 that we have, so that people who are qualified for  
21 the different programs I've mentioned for all of  
22 them.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Yeah. Okay.  
24 So if I got my bill and I'm a vet-- Let's say I'm a



2 veteran, so I only apply for star enhanced and then I  
3 get my bill and I see I could apply for veterans--

4 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Uh-hm.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: so this way I  
6 could-- you know, without getting the outreach from  
7 your office, I could do that on my own and so that  
8 would make it a little easier for everyone.

9 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Sure.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Okay. Thank  
11 you so much.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Just my last  
13 question. And just something I had mentioned briefly  
14 before. So a resident who would pay property tax on  
15 July 1 would be opting to pay in May, June, and July.  
16 Is that correct?

17 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Yes.

18 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Is that  
20 asking because I'm just a little bit concerned that  
21 this may be a little bit of a hurdle for low income  
22 folks to do initially. Do you have any concerns  
23 about that?

24 COMMISSIONER JIHA: I have-- We will  
25 take a look at it to see what kind of concerns that

2 you have. Talk to your staff, but based on what we  
3 see is they would spread it out, you know, before the  
4 due date.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Uh-hm.

6 COMMISSIONER JIHA: In other words,  
7 they would receive the SOA, the statement of account,  
8 early enough so they could spread the payments over a  
9 three-month period rather than-- again, trying to  
10 see the concerns that you have, but if there is  
11 something, we will take a look into that issue to  
12 see--

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm just thinking  
14 if they-- as they were expecting to pay in July,  
15 they may not be ready to do it and may and, you  
16 know--

17 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Yeah

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: sometimes people  
19 don't plan or don't have the money.

20 COMMISSIONER JIHA: No. No. I  
21 understand. But, you know, we will take a look, you  
22 know, to see.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

24 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Yeah.

25 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All right.

2 COMMISSIONER JIHA: But, again, our  
3 goal is to make it easier-- that's the direction  
4 we're heading. To make it easier for people to pay.  
5 So, if in the process of implementing it we see some  
6 challenges that would make it difficult for them, we  
7 will try to alleviate some of these concerns.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. I appreciate  
9 it, Commissioner. Thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER JIHA: No problem.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: We've been joined  
12 by Council member Andy Cohen. And I don't think we  
13 have any other questions, so we think very much for  
14 coming in. We look forward to continuing to work  
15 with you and we will reconvene in about five minutes  
16 with the Comptroller.

17 COMMISSIONER JIHA: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

19 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Quiet, please.

20 [gavel]

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. We will now  
22 resume the City Council's hearing on the Mayor's  
23 executive budget for fiscal 2020. I have been joined  
24 by my colleagues, Council member Andy Cohen, Council  
25 member Barry Grodenchik, Council member Adrienne

2 Adams, and others will probably join us shortly. We  
3 just heard from the Department of Finance and now we  
4 will hear from Comptroller Scott Stringer and, in the  
5 interest of time, I will forgo an opening statement  
6 and we'll hear from the Comptroller after he's sworn  
7 in my counsel.

8           LEGAL COUNSEL:     Do you affirm that your  
9 testimony will be truthful to the best of your  
10 knowledge, information, belief?

11           COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Yes.

12           LEGAL COUNSEL:     Thank you.

13           COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Good afternoon,  
14 Chair Dromm and members of the finance committee. I  
15 want to thank you for the opportunity today to  
16 discuss the city's fiscal health and also talk about  
17 the 2020 executive budget. Joining me use our Deputy  
18 Comptroller for budget, Preston Niblack. I also have  
19 members of the Comptroller's staff and our First  
20 Deputy Comptroller, Alaina Gilligo. Each year, we  
21 have an opportunity to consider how best to serve  
22 working families and promote policies to empower our  
23 communities. A budget is not just about numbers on a  
24 spreadsheet or a mere dollars and cents. It's an  
25 expression of our values and a statement about what's

2 important to us as a city because, behind every line  
3 item is a human face. A family struggling to keep  
4 their home, a working parent struggling under the  
5 crushing costs of child care. Children growing up in  
6 communities without adequate spaces to play. I hope  
7 that my testimony today will help ensure that our  
8 budget manages our finances for the long term, list  
9 set up our city's most vulnerable, and moves us  
10 forward towards a more affordable and livable city.  
11 We cannot and we will not stand for anything less.  
12 The national economy is now experienced a decade-long  
13 expansion, the longest and strongest in recent  
14 history. Since the end of the great recession, New  
15 York City is added close to 90,000 jobs a year. A  
16 booming economy and growing tax revenues have enabled  
17 us to invest in critical initiatives such as pre-K  
18 for all and right to counsel. When I last appeared  
19 before you in March, there was considerable anxiety  
20 about the national economy. Markets then tumbled in  
21 the wake of a Federal Reserve rate hike in December  
22 and the threat of the trade war with China was high.  
23 The outlook was guarded. Since then, the Federal  
24 Reserve has taken a more dovish stance on monetary  
25 policy which markets and employers have obviously

2 welcomed. But president trumps reckless actions  
3 have, once again, spiked concerns about the trade war  
4 with China that will only serve to hurt businesses  
5 and workers here at home. The impact of the  
6 president's latest whims must be an important  
7 reminder that unpredictable damaging policy shifts  
8 and Washington can quickly undermine confidence and  
9 growth in our economy. One way or another, the rate  
10 of economic growth is bound to slow and job growth  
11 will decelerate. We project that, within the next  
12 four years, job growth in the city will decline to  
13 under 30,000 new jobs per year. Fiscally responsible  
14 management of the city's budget requires taking the  
15 long view, not just balancing the Sears budget, but  
16 ensuring we take action today to protect our ability  
17 to provide the critical services that New Yorkers  
18 rely on tomorrow. I remain concerned that we are  
19 simply not doing enough in this regard. In one of  
20 Aesop's fables, the grasshoppers all summers singing  
21 instead of storing up food. When the winter comes,  
22 he is not stored food to rely on and he starves. If  
23 we fail to take prudent steps to shore up our  
24 economic reserves now, when an economic winter comes,  
25 our most vulnerable New Yorkers will pay the price

2 for our singing. And with this in mind, on begin  
3 with a review of the city's fiscal 2020 executive  
4 budget and its financial plan. Over the period of  
5 the city's financial plan through FY 2023, the  
6 administration projects spending to growth at an  
7 average annual rate of 2.5 percent. In contrast,  
8 revenues are projected to grow at an average rate of  
9 1.7 percent each year resulting in budget gaps of 3.5  
10 billion in FY 2021, 2.9 billion in FY 2022, and 3.2  
11 billion in FY 2023. My office expects tax revenues  
12 to rise five 3.6 percent per year, higher than the  
13 3.2 percent rate in the Office of Management and  
14 Budget projects. We expect tax revenues to be 670  
15 million dollars higher this year than that is  
16 projected in the executive budget rising through the  
17 remaining years of the plan to reach nearly 1.8  
18 billion more by 2023. The biggest contributor is the  
19 property tax due to both higher anticipated growth in  
20 the near term and a lower level of reserves than what  
21 the administration is forecasting. We've also  
22 identified several significant risks on the spending  
23 side of the budget, including overtime and Charter  
24 school tuition and the financial plan still does not  
25 include funding for the fair fares programs. Taken

2 together, our revenue and expense projections result  
3 in smaller gaps in the last three years of the plan  
4 compared to the administration's forecast.

5 Nevertheless, our budget remains more vulnerable than  
6 it could or should be. As I've said every year, the  
7 city should have a budget cushion. The accumulation  
8 of prior-year resources that can be used to balance  
9 the budget, if needed, we recommend between 12 and 18  
10 percent of spending. But since FY 2017, despite  
11 continued strong growth in revenues, progress in  
12 increasing the cushion has stalled at 11 percent. We  
13 must set and reach targets to increase our savings to  
14 ensure we reach the optimal range of our financial  
15 cushion, something we should have been doing for the  
16 past five years. In the FY 2020 budget, we should at  
17 least reach the bottom of the optimal range. To do  
18 that, we would need 2.1 billion more and reserves by  
19 the time the FY 2020 budget is adopted and we should  
20 plan to increase our target by one percentage point  
21 each year, reaching 15 percent by FY 2023. This plan  
22 is both completely realistic and urgently needed. To  
23 achieve these targets, we need to generate more  
24 reoccurring agencies savings. The mayor decided--  
25 has now decided to call a peg, but then failed to



2 deliver a meaningful one. The 420 million in savings  
3 this year and the 496 million next year sounds  
4 impressive, but relies heavily on the hiring freeze  
5 and not enough on real agency efficiencies. And the  
6 savings failed to pay for new spending. The  
7 executive budget peg program still amounts to less  
8 than one percent of agencies spending. Now, I  
9 recognize that it can be difficult to ask agencies to  
10 do a thorough scrub of their budget at a time when  
11 the city coffers are seemingly full, but I think we  
12 can and must demand more. Not only must city  
13 agencies contribute more to savings, they must be  
14 held accountable for the public money they spend.  
15 Last year, I introduce the Comptroller's watch list  
16 to highlight agencies with high spending growth and  
17 lackluster results. This year, the agencies on the  
18 list include two from last year: the Department of  
19 Correction and spending on homeless services. And  
20 one new agency: the Department of Buildings. Despite  
21 significant efforts in increased spending, the number  
22 of New Yorkers sleep in homeless shelters continue to  
23 rise. We are now on pace to spend more than 3.2  
24 billion dollars next year across all agencies on  
25 homelessness. But it is unacceptable to continue

2 spending that much and yet not make a meaningful  
3 intent in the homeless population. As I said last  
4 November when I released our proposal for a new  
5 approach to meet the crisis of housing affordability,  
6 we cannot continue to have two separate policy  
7 tracks, one for homelessness and one for housing.  
8 They are one and they are the same crisis and the  
9 solution is to focus on providing affordable housing,  
10 choose affordable housing, for those with the lowest  
11 income and the highest rent burden. This is a moral  
12 crisis. What we are doing today simply isn't  
13 working. It's time to recognize that reality and  
14 meet the problem head-on with the new approach. Our  
15 jails now spend more than 300,000 per year to house  
16 one person on Rikers Island. As we have reported for  
17 five years now, the jail population has been steadily  
18 falling, yet the costs of growing and despite a  
19 concerted effort, the culture of violence has not  
20 abated. Again, we cannot simply spend more and more  
21 money year after year and not see meaningful results.  
22 Since 2014, the Department of Buildings has increased  
23 its budget by over 60 percent and it's staffing by 50  
24 percent and, yet, accidents, injuries, and fatalities  
25 are rising at an even faster rate. The number of

2 construction related accidents more than tripled  
3 between 2014 and 2018 and shows no signs of abating  
4 this year. Injuries, and tragically, fatalities have  
5 gone up at a similar rate. I know that the council  
6 is well aware of the problem in past essential  
7 legislation in 2017 to address the issue. We need to  
8 ensure that new spending and requirements will make a  
9 meaningful difference. Another area that has drawn  
10 our attention is Thrive NYC. My office has been  
11 asking questions about all aspects of Thrive and we  
12 made an extensive request for data, but our initial  
13 review of the information they provided to us still  
14 leaves lingering concerns and questions. It remains  
15 fundamentally unclear exactly what it means to be  
16 part Thrive, how much the city is spending on Thrive  
17 programs, and how well Thrive is doing. Yesterday, I  
18 sent a letter to City Hall outlining our concerns and  
19 questions and urging much more transparency regarding  
20 Thrive. I know that we all come in the effort to  
21 address mental health needs of all New Yorkers  
22 without regard to financial or other circumstances  
23 and I commend the city for this effort. And I hope  
24 that the Council's work will continue to improve  
25 Thrive and its outcomes for vulnerable New Yorkers.

2 The public deserves the assurance that its money is  
3 being spent effectively and on ensuring that we can  
4 provide truly critical services to those who need  
5 them. As Roe V. Wade comes under head-on assault in  
6 states like Alabama and Georgia, we in New York must  
7 protect safe and affordable access to abortion  
8 without shame, pressure, or punishment. And we must  
9 defend abortion access not only for New Yorkers, but  
10 for women who live in states where legislatures are  
11 ripping away rights and trying in constitutional law  
12 since 1973. And that's why iron Jew to ensure that  
13 abortion is accessible to all women without regard to  
14 the ability to pay. I urge you to support the fund  
15 abortion New York City coalition proposal for an  
16 additional 250,000 this year for the New York  
17 abortion access fund. It is a small price to pay to  
18 protect a fundamental right. I hope my message today  
19 is clear because it is increasingly urgent. The  
20 economic growth we have relied on in recent years is  
21 slowing down. The mayor's agencies savings are a  
22 start, but we need to do a lot more. We need to  
23 prepare our cities so that, regardless of what may  
24 come our way, we can protect and uplift all of our  
25 communities for our presence, for future, and for

2 every working family, let's deliver a budget that  
3 takes a long video and shows what New York is all  
4 about. Once again, I thank you for giving me this  
5 opportunity to testify in, Mr. Chairman, I'd be happy  
6 to take any questions you may have.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
8 much, Mr. Comptroller. I want to start off by saying  
9 we have been joined by Council member Deutsche and  
10 Majority Leader Lori Cumbo and let me start off by  
11 talking about early childcare proposal for children  
12 under three. You recently unveiled and expose all to  
13 expand access to affordable care for the city's  
14 youngest population, including cans from birth  
15 through age 3. To pay for this, you are proposing a  
16 new payroll tax on companies with payrolls greater  
17 than 2.5 million. You assert that this would raise  
18 some 600 million dollars and, interestingly, would  
19 cover payments for a proposed city bond that would be  
20 needed to support the construction and renovation of  
21 childcare facilities. So, why did you propose that  
22 the payroll tax applied to companies with payrolls  
23 greater than 2.5 million? How did you arrive at that  
24 threshold?

2                   COMPROLLER STRINGER: Well, first of all,  
3 thank you for asking the question. Childcare  
4 proposal of the magnitude that we envision would  
5 greatly impact the children of our city. We see in  
6 the positive impact of pre-K and 3K and I praise the  
7 mayor for that vision. But we have to do a whole lot  
8 more. We have to start thinking about the children 0  
9 to 3. 80 percent of brain development for these kids  
10 start at that age. It's pretty incredible. So, we  
11 introduce why it is, perhaps, the largest initiative  
12 on childcare in the United States. We envision  
13 84,000 kids in the program. We envision expanding  
14 childcare options throughout the five boroughs. We  
15 released a report that showed that childcare deserts  
16 and so many of our communities that, even if you can  
17 afford 21,000 dollars a year, you can even get a  
18 slot. It's harder to get a childcare slot than get  
19 your kid into a big college. So, we've got to level  
20 the playing field and here is how we are going to do  
21 it financially. We are going to ask for a minuscule  
22 increase in the payroll tax for the five percent of  
23 businesses that have payrolls of 2.5 million or more.  
24 It's a small down payment of what we are planning.  
25 Here's what we get for that tax increase. We get a

2 615 million dollar build out. We not only help the  
3 children, but we also projected that 20,000 parents  
4 would be able to reenter the workforce, mostly women.  
5 Now, that will help many of the companies who we are  
6 asking for just a little help. As part of this  
7 proposal, we exclude 95 percent of businesses. We  
8 exclude all small businesses. The payroll tax  
9 increases employment and increases parent  
10 participation in the workforce and that's our way of  
11 paying for it. Now, let me also remind people that,  
12 when you have a proposal like this, I would not want  
13 to release it without identifying the funding stream.  
14 But there is many ways that we can engage in terms of  
15 capital funding, state funding, federal funding in  
16 the time that we are going to implement New York City  
17 under three or NYC under three. So, we wanted to  
18 give you a roadmap to make it real, but I'm certainly  
19 open to the Council and the mayor and the state to  
20 work with us to find different revenue streams.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can you evaluate  
22 the current system as it exists? The state of  
23 childcare in the city. Then you mentioned deserts,  
24 as well, and where those deserts are.

2                   COMPROLLER STRINGER: Yes. We have--  
3 you have the list of-- I don't know. So we see,  
4 whether it's in Bay Ridge or Sunnyside, we have so  
5 few subsidized childcare slots is a truly citywide  
6 crisis. And in doing our report, we wanted to take  
7 into account the fact that we should be building out  
8 a childcare network. And no way to do that as part  
9 of our plan is to appropriate capital dollars. 100  
10 million dollars for five years, especially in the  
11 beginning of this plan to build capacity in  
12 neighborhoods that we have declared childcare  
13 deserts. So, that's one way of addressing the issue.  
14 The other way of thinking about this is, again, what  
15 would it mean to the city by returning 20,000 parents  
16 to the workforce? We would realize 540 million  
17 dollars to income for people and that would give the  
18 city millions and millions of dollars in taxes. To  
19 me also as a multiplier. The last thing I want to  
20 mention in terms of why this works, when you invest a  
21 dollar in childcare, you get eight dollars back in  
22 savings for the city. That's real money. So, here  
23 we have a program that would have 84,000 children.  
24 Start them out 0 to 3. Give them the extra learning  
25 they need to compete in the new economy, send 20,000



2 parents back to work. They would earn 540 million  
3 dollars, pay millions of dollars in taxes, and  
4 businesses would benefit because the more people in  
5 the workforce, the larger the employment pool. And  
6 communities would also benefit would finally build  
7 the childcare infrastructure in neighborhoods that  
8 never had it. And I think that's critical. And,  
9 look, who can afford really 21,000 dollars a year  
10 for childcare? It's breaking families that a lot of  
11 people have to pack up and leave the city. See the  
12 Majority Leader with a silent clot. But many new  
13 parents are focusing on this.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you.  
15 Let's talk a little bit about city contracts. Late  
16 registration of city contracts has been a long-  
17 standing issue that plagues nonprofits and their  
18 capacities to provide vital services to New Yorkers.  
19 Nonprofits are often forced to go months without  
20 being paid or able to access funds from the city  
21 contracts because of delays in registration. Your  
22 office has been reporting on these delays and the  
23 city's contracting system as it pertains to human  
24 services contracts and the issue to report addressing  
25 this issue. According to this report, about 75

2 percent of all nondiscretionary contracts for fiscal  
3 18 arrived in the Comptroller's office late for  
4 registration after their start date had already  
5 passed. For human services contracts, 81 percent of  
6 contracts arrived late for registration. So, to your  
7 knowledge, what causes the delays in the registration  
8 in which agencies have the most issues?

9           COMPTROLLER STRINGER: So, many agencies  
10 have these issues and a couple of thoughts. This is  
11 becoming more and more of a crisis, Mr. Chair. And  
12 I'm really glad that you are bringing it up again.  
13 He talked about this last year and I think it was  
14 very helpful to highlight the issue. The agencies  
15 are not delivering the contracts to our office in a  
16 timely measure, but it's not just being late and  
17 causing paperwork delays. Many of these agencies are  
18 not realizing their contracts, so they are actually  
19 going out and borrowing money. The heads of these  
20 agencies, rather than think about how to expand  
21 childcare services or helping the elderly, are now  
22 full time trying to just stay ahead of the city's  
23 incompetence when it relates to contracts. There is  
24 no excuse to put our social service network in  
25 general-- in jeopardy. Human services is a vital

2 part of what our city government provides and we  
3 don't do it ourselves. We contract with agencies,  
4 not-for-profit agencies. But then we say that them  
5 we're going to make your life miserable. We are  
6 going to disrespect you. We are not going to help  
7 you move the contract along. So we have two  
8 opportunities. One, I urge the city Council to work  
9 with us and not asking, but telling these agencies  
10 that they are on a time clock. I'm trying to get  
11 that through the charter revision commission right  
12 now. I haven't had much success. I think maybe we  
13 can get it done. But, if we don't, we need  
14 legislative initiative in the Council to simply  
15 mandate timelines. The Comptroller's office has a  
16 timeline. It's 30 days. Contract comes to me and,  
17 by the way, 30,000 contracts come to my office every  
18 single year. I get 30 days on the clock to determine  
19 whether to sign that contract, approve that contract,  
20 send it back, worry if there is maybe, perhaps, fraud  
21 or other issues, and we take that job very seriously.  
22 The agencies have to be on the same clock. The  
23 mayor's office of contracts has to be on the same  
24 clock because, as you know from your constituents,  
25 we've seen contracts come to our office years late

2 and that has caused a whole financial crisis within  
3 the nonprofit community. I urge you to work with us  
4 to find the solution, perhaps, bringing people  
5 together, passing needed legislation. I am hearing  
6 from members of the Council all the time about not  
7 for profits that are simply struggling. I do town  
8 hall meetings and community meetings and the first  
9 thing I was-- I was out this week and communities  
10 and half the conversation was about not for profits  
11 talking about the crisis and the contracting  
12 procurement process.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You mentions of  
14 that, on occasion, you have to refuse a contract. On  
15 what basis do you refuse contracts?

16 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Fraud. It's not a  
17 good thing.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Always fraud?

19 You--

20 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Well, fraud,  
21 incomplete paperwork that I find necessary to review.  
22 We scrutinize those contracts and do our due  
23 diligence.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is there a way for  
25 a CBO to appeal your decision?

2                   COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Well, the city can  
3 deem a contract registered. Enough, but charter  
4 never envisioned the Comptroller stopping contracts  
5 out right. I think the interpretation of the charter  
6 was the Comptroller's office should scrutinize, make  
7 sure the contract was in order, send it back for more  
8 concrete information, certainly refer it if there is  
9 a finding of fraud. But at the end of the day, were  
10 not supposed to impede the work of government. And  
11 so, we balance that when we see a contract. You  
12 know, for example, one item that we have sent back  
13 where the whole ferry contracts. Right? And part of  
14 the reason I sent those contracts back was I wanted  
15 more information on the deal of the contract because  
16 we want to understand it better. And I'm for the  
17 ferry system, but you have to question the contract  
18 aware of the fairy owner gets the concessions, gets  
19 the revenue, and then we buy them their boats. So,  
20 that's not fraud, but that's concerned about what  
21 impact that would have on the finance of the city.  
22 So we have to manage that within the confines of not  
23 slowing government down, but making sure we do our  
24 due diligence.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: We've been asking a  
3 lot of questions about the ferry contracts--

4 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: during the series  
6 of hearings here.

7 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Let me just to a  
9 little-- some questions about your headcount in your  
10 office. Since the fiscal 2019 adopted budget, the  
11 Comptroller's office has added seven new positions in  
12 the Bureau of audit for fiscal 2019 and the executive  
13 budget adds three new positions for court  
14 representatives for fiscal 2020 and beyond. Can you  
15 discuss why there is a need for these court  
16 representatives?

17 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Yes. So, the  
18 head-- well, let me just say a thing. So the head  
19 count increase in on it was seven positions to create  
20 a much-needed new cyber security audit division. As  
21 you know, we are increasingly-- we are increasingly  
22 reliant on community-based client interface and on  
23 the use of cloud computing and in order for us to do  
24 our auditing, we are really going to have to create a  
25 new system and a new way our auditors function. As

2 it relates to the three new court representatives and  
3 the Bureau of lawn adjustment, this was also  
4 recommended by the law department as an ongoing  
5 effort to ensure that we are conducting an  
6 independent review of the law department's  
7 recommendations to get the best outcomes of the city.  
8 But you know, Mr. Chair, the finance committee and  
9 the city Council has gone from 20 slots to 50 slots.  
10 So, you've increased your budget by 67 percent and I  
11 think you are recognizing the complexity of doing  
12 budget analysis. And so, like you, we try to keep  
13 our hires to a minimum and I look forward to  
14 continuing that conversation.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, I can't  
16 family grateful for any additional staff that we have  
17 here.

18 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Of course.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: They've been  
20 wonderful this year.

21 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: No. No.  
22 Absolutely.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Let's talk a little  
24 bit about the business corporation tax. Collections  
25 from the business corporation tax seemed to be on

2 track to rebound this fiscal year. In fact, year-to-  
3 date collections as of April 19 are about 17 percent  
4 more than the same period last year. As a result,  
5 OMB is forecasting a 12.6 percent increase in  
6 collection for fiscal 19. This would be the first  
7 growth in the business corporation tax collections  
8 since the 2015 business tax reform. Your office sees  
9 them even stronger growth in the business corporation  
10 tax than OMB in fiscal 2020. To what do you  
11 attribute the pickup in this tax?

12           COMPTROLLER STRINGER: I mean, we think  
13 that it's part of-- Well, because of my 2017 tax law  
14 that lowered corporate tax rates. So now it's an  
15 advantage to switch to a partnership or corporation  
16 for tax filing purposes. Like Blackrock is a  
17 partnership that recently incorporated to take  
18 advantage of this change in the federal tax law. We  
19 think there is going to be more switching of filing  
20 status, but I can't tell you today that's going to  
21 impact our tax revenues yet. And we are going to  
22 have to work together to monitor that, but I don't  
23 have data that would support an opinion one way or  
24 another.



2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, essentially,  
3 what you are saying is that there could be a decrease  
4 in the unincorporated business tax and name increase  
5 in the corporate business tax.

6 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And that's due to  
8 the Trump tax changes in 17?

9 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Interesting.  
11 Let's talk a little bit now about the pension actuary  
12 error. The executive budget reflects increased  
13 contributions to one of the city's pension funds  
14 totaling 115 million annually in fiscal 2019 through  
15 22. This cost is associated for the approximately  
16 2900 active members that were previously excluded  
17 from the pension system census data due to a coding  
18 error. Can you comment, excuse me, on what happened  
19 here and what you think about it and who exactly are  
20 these workers into you know how long the city is  
21 failed to contribute for them?

22 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Well, let me say  
23 that this is a malfunction and a mistake by NYCERS,  
24 so we, obviously, were very concerned and the only  
25 good news in this was that the NYCERS auditors

2 actually caught this. So this system of checks and  
3 balances worked, but having said that, there is no  
4 excuse for this pension fund to have missed the  
5 Senate, obviously, cost the city and that's not  
6 right. I don't have all of the information for you  
7 in NYCERS because it's not a Comptroller issue. It's  
8 a NYCERS issue. And we are certainly monitoring it  
9 as we monitor all the pension funds. Auditors, you  
10 should know, did not find problems at other systems.  
11 I am told that NYCERS has now done a thorough scrub  
12 working with the actuary of their data. I think all  
13 the five systems are migrating to better, more  
14 reliable data systems, but it's important to realize  
15 that we have to get to a data system that is really,  
16 you know, fool-proof. But to answer your question  
17 about the workers, approximately 2900 NYCERS  
18 participants who transferred into NYCERS from other  
19 retirement systems were mistakenly coded as having  
20 transferred out of NYCERS. So this is a pretty, you  
21 know-- a pretty-- this is a bad error. And I'm not  
22 making my different and we certainly worked with  
23 NYCERS.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And you said that  
25 they're scrubbed by the other systems and--

2 COMPROLLER STRINGER: I am told that the  
3 other-- the other systems have been scrubbed for the  
4 same issues and we know identical problems there.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. So you're  
6 feeling confident that--

7 COMPROLLER STRINGER: I am. And if I  
8 hear differently, I will come to you and alert you  
9 before we meet again next year.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you,  
11 Comptroller. Let's just talk a little bit about  
12 risks. In a February 7th press conference, Mayor  
13 DeBlasio stated there was an unusual level of  
14 uncertainty facing the fiscal 2020 budget. In  
15 particular, he cited three challenges which were in  
16 the economy and the risk of recession, the state  
17 budget, and federal policy. While the state budget  
18 process is done and we have a better sense of the  
19 impact on the city, challenges the federal policy and  
20 the economy continue to be uncertain. What is your  
21 view of these remaining challenges and the city's  
22 budget and to you first see any of these challenges  
23 having an impact on the 2020 executive budget?

24 COMPROLLER STRINGER: The point I have  
25 made over the last couple years coming to testify is

2 that there are some risks out there. Trumps  
3 Washington is full of risk every day. We see that in  
4 so many different ways. This is not administration  
5 in Washington cares a whole lot about what happens to  
6 people in New York City, so that's a risk. We have  
7 to be careful that we continue to put away money for  
8 a rainy day. And for embedded terrorist attack.  
9 Contracted another's Sandy. We really-- We see our  
10 vulnerabilities after something happens. I think  
11 because our economy has given us some more revenue  
12 than we have seen another administrations, I would  
13 just urge that don't stop at the 215 million you are  
14 proposing to put away. See if you can too much more.  
15 It is important that we really prepare for anything  
16 that comes our way and we seem to be stuck at that 11  
17 percent. I know you're not going to go to the 18  
18 percent, nor should you. We have to gradually put  
19 away money for a rainy day. And I respect and  
20 appreciate that the Council has to contend with many  
21 different priorities in the decisions you make our  
22 decisions I support. I would just urge you now in  
23 these times when it is easy to do it, to put the  
24 money away. I think that's a victory for everybody  
25 and for the people in the city.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So we're at 11  
3 percent? I thought we were lower than that at this  
4 point.

5 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: We're about 11.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: About 11?

7 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Maybe a smidgen--  
8 Let's call it-- for rounding, I would say 11.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. All right.

10 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: And I'll stand by  
11 that.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Good. And  
13 you'd like us to be like 13 to--

14 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Look, the optimal  
15 is 18, but that--

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right.

17 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: would cost billions  
18 of dollars. We're not going to get there overnight  
19 and there's obviously a lot of pressing needs in the  
20 city, but I do think we could incrementally do better  
21 in the time that we are in office. And I would like  
22 to see it, you know, the point where we can weather  
23 any storm that comes our way. You know, it gets  
24 vulnerable for our city when we then have to go to  
25 Washington for help or the state to help. If we know

2 that we have full reserves and we can deal with  
3 whatever happens, then I think we are all better for  
4 it.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. So you're  
6 looking at a triple A rating.

7 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Well, we've had  
8 some success in the bond market. We are seeing  
9 Moody's with a better rating, so, you know, we have--  
10 you know, there's a lot of good news here. I come  
11 here and tell you all the things to watch out for,  
12 but we should also-- all of us take credit in, you  
13 know, the Moody's upgrade and I think that's helpful,  
14 too.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you.  
16 We do have some questions from my colleagues. We've  
17 been joined by Council member Gjonaj and Council  
18 member Deutsch has questions followed by Council  
19 member Cohen.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you,  
21 Chair. Good morning, Comptroller. So, with a 92.5  
22 billion dollars budget which, I think, since we came  
23 into the Council is like 20 billion dollars more than  
24 when we first came in. We have-- the mayor is  
25 called for a higher frequency than all the agencies.

2 So, how does the Comptroller monitor the hire phrase,  
3 for example, to see how it affects workers, and the  
4 NYPD to have overtime freeze and, for example, my  
5 committee to have veterans--

6 COMPROLLER STRINGER: Well, they don't  
7 have--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: There is a  
9 hire freeze.

10 COMPROLLER STRINGER: The NYPD doesn't  
11 have a hiring freeze.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: No. They  
13 have a--

14 COMPROLLER STRINGER: If you're in Iowa.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: They have an  
16 overtime freeze and my committee, as being Chair of  
17 the veterans, there's a hire freeze and this is all  
18 the agencies across the board. So how do you monitor  
19 that if the mayor is doing the right thing and how do  
20 you weigh in on this?

21 COMPROLLER STRINGER: Well, a couple  
22 ways. We won't audit because we have to see impact,  
23 right? So we are just seeing the hiring freeze now.  
24 We will probably be your Council hearings when you  
25 start asking those tough questions before you adopt

2 the budget and we will be in the room looking at ways  
3 to do our own due diligence. Make no mistake we are  
4 going to be right there with you. One of the ways  
5 lead to it is we put together a watch list. We  
6 identify three agencies that we are concerned about  
7 performance and we will continue to monitor the  
8 hiring freeze part of our performance evaluations.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Yeah.

10 Because now we are ready-- where at the end of the  
11 budget process where we need to close a with--

12 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: [interposing]

13 Look. I think before you adopt the budget, these are  
14 the questions you are going to have to ask. You are  
15 the ones who bring in the agencies. You are the ones  
16 who ask the tough questions and I could use some help  
17 with that. It makes it easier to hear what you are  
18 saying so then we can do our audits and our own  
19 independent investigations, but I will work side by  
20 side with you.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you.

22 And another no, and my veterans hearing just about  
23 three, four months ago where I had department of  
24 health where I called out Thrive NYC on their 215



2 million dollar annual budget and that's when things  
3 blow up where people are looking at it and--

4 COMPROLLER STRINGER: [interposing] I'm  
5 sorry. Say-- repeat that.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: That's when  
7 things blow up with thrive NYC when I didn't see  
8 anything in my district. I see very minimum that--  
9 on the 250 million dollar budget that goes towards  
10 veterans especially where you have 20 veterans that  
11 commit suicide each and every day here in the United  
12 States--

13 COMPROLLER STRINGER: Uh-hm.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: of America.  
15 So, I called them out on the 215 million how it is  
16 spent and also I think that, if an agency that has a  
17 budget of 1 billion over four years, then I think  
18 that all 8.6 million New Yorkers should know about  
19 that there is mental health services. Not just a  
20 small amount. So, how did thrives budget not be  
21 detected by the Comptroller's office and how are you  
22 going to continue monitoring that they properly do  
23 what they need to do and also spends their money,  
24 their funding, wisely. Because we also asked for  
25 cuts on Thrive NYC and the administration came back

2 as they are not willing to take the full cut that we  
3 asked them to reduce because they haven't spent.

4           COMPTROLLER STRINGER: So, this is a  
5 couple things. Part of the due diligence that you do  
6 is to ask these questions when you see you ballooning  
7 costs. We do the same. One of the ways that they  
8 have been able to escape review is they have not  
9 answered-- there are no Thrive budget codes. Right?  
10 So, when we see checkbook are other ways of  
11 evaluating this, it's because we see the code. We,  
12 as you know, sent a letter this morning talking about  
13 developing a transparency tool. We should have  
14 budget codes relating to Thrive his programs are  
15 coming through thrives. It's-- And that's something  
16 that we need to look at. And, as you know, our  
17 office has been the most aggressive and challenging  
18 the serious issues impacting thrive. We have looked  
19 at his today where we released a letter showing that  
20 we are very concerned about the programs that do not  
21 measure for success. We are very concerned about a  
22 budget that is not transparent, again, I urge you to  
23 take the information we sent to Thrive NYC the day  
24 and, perhaps, help us by asking some of these  
25 questions. In one of the reasons why I like coming

2 here today is because it gives us an opportunity to  
3 commit to work together. And I, again, could use  
4 some help because you have the ability to hold  
5 hearings and challenge. Under the charter I can do  
6 an audit, but no one is going to come and testify  
7 before me. I testify before you. And agencies  
8 testify before you. So, don't stop. Keep asking  
9 those questions. And let's also remember, and I  
10 praise the mayor and the First Lady. Thrive in  
11 mental health services is very important. It's  
12 necessary. And I commend them for making that a  
13 priority of the city. But Thrive has to be  
14 consistent. You see too many programs in thrive and  
15 then taken out of thrive. We see 177 million dollars  
16 that was used for mental health services in the  
17 prison system under Thrive, but then it gets pulled  
18 out. It still they are operating somewhere else. I  
19 think that is we could create a more transparent  
20 protocol for thrive looking at budget codes, looking  
21 at more testimony, I think the public would embrace  
22 thrive once we identify what it actually is.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Yeah. So,  
24 the concept is good and people need mental health,  
25 but money is not everything, but you need to know how

2 to spend that money. And that's why I'm asking the  
3 Comptroller. And, finally, I just want to ask the  
4 Comptroller one other thing. That, we need to  
5 measure the success of thrive from now on going, if  
6 you could also take a look at the lack of services  
7 for other services. So, for example, sexual  
8 offenders. So, if someone is a sexual offender and  
9 the need to go for help, at their parents could cause  
10 three or 400 dollars an hour where, if a person  
11 cannot afford it, then they are out in the street  
12 again and they will continue doing what they are  
13 doing. And that's one reason why I asked for a ban  
14 on sexual predators for whoever [inaudible 01:39:04]  
15 in the transit system and I asked thrive at the last  
16 hearing that I questioned them if they have services  
17 for sexual offenders and they told me, no. We don't  
18 deal with that community. And I think that they  
19 should deal with that community because this is  
20 something important and it's not spoken about. So I  
21 just like to ask Comptroller if you could take a look  
22 when you measure their success just to make sure they  
23 expand their programs and other ways to protect the  
24 women that live here in the city.

2                   COMPTRROLLER STRINGER: So, not to shirk  
3 responsibility in any way, I think that is what you  
4 should be doing. You should be saving with the  
5 thrive folks and you should be talking about the  
6 programs you want to see in your communities and to  
7 ask those tough questions. Anna, I will work with  
8 you and stand with you because I also have ideas, but  
9 I think the best way we can work together is for you  
10 to help create a transparent Thrive's budget, get  
11 them to put the codes in that would allow me to take  
12 a look at Thrive's spending. We want to have very  
13 much a consistent Thrive, identify what Thrive is.  
14 Maybe Thrive can't do all the things that you want,  
15 but we should, at least, arrive at a place where we  
16 can nine 1005 Thrive programs, those programs don't  
17 fall under Thrive and we still want to have, then we  
18 should also look in other buckets, whether it's  
19 funding for some people who are sometimes left out  
20 who need help, as well. And I will work with you on,  
21 Council member.

22                   COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH:           Thank you  
23 very much.

24                   CHAIRPERSON DROMM:           Thank you. Okay.  
25 Going to go to Council member Cohen, followed by

2 Gjonaj and we have also been joined by member Jimmy  
3 Van Bramer.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Still I-- Good  
5 morning, Comptroller. Thank you for your testimony.

6 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Can I just say  
7 thank you to the Council. This is the most council  
8 members that have listened to my testimony in six  
9 years. Can I just say thank you very much? Thank  
10 you. Thank you. Let's give them a round of--- Can  
11 we just-- This is great.

12 [applause]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I don't think we  
14 are allowed to.

15 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: From the City  
16 Comptroller, I am impressed and this is never going  
17 to happen again. Okay.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I want to ask a  
19 little bit and also about the rainy day fund. Like--  
20 Is 11 percent like if we have light showers? I mean,  
21 I'm trying to get a scope because that money does  
22 have to come from somewhere.

23 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Yeah.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: And I think we--  
25 You know, it's insurance, essentially and we should

2 insure against realistic risks. Where do you think  
3 we are at 11 percent? Where do you think, you know--  
4 in terms of what do we get for our money if we put it  
5 away?

6           COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Look, I think that  
7 we've long identified the optimal called standard of  
8 18 percent. We had that under the Bloomberg years.  
9 That doesn't mean that we have to be at 18. That's  
10 optimal. All I really said is the more we put away  
11 every year-- You know, we started it, what? Eight  
12 percent? You know, some years ago. We've been  
13 fighting now. So we were at eight and were now at  
14 11. If we get to 12 or 13 I do think it gives us  
15 more options in the event something happens. And  
16 you're absolutely right. The balance is if you put  
17 away money, right, you know, it-- if you put away  
18 money, well, you could end up not funding something  
19 you really want to. Those are important decisions  
20 you've got to me, but I come here telling you to make  
21 sure that we have enough to deal with some crisis.  
22 You know, it's the-- You know-- you know, Aesop's  
23 fable, you know about that grasshopper, man. You  
24 know, if you don't eat, it's trouble.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: No. But, we do  
3 have stores. I mean, like you said, it's the 11  
4 percent.

5 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Uh-hm.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I want to sort of  
7 get-- if you have a better sense of the risk in terms  
8 of, you know, what we should really--

9 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: [interposing] The--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: realistically--

11 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: [interposing] The--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: ensuring against--

13 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: [interposing] The  
14 risk--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: a downturn.

16 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: The risk is, you  
17 know, who we tend to deplete our savings pretty fast  
18 after the terrorist attack or hurricane. So, it's  
19 hard for me to tell you what's coming our way. I do  
20 know, having walked the streets after 9/11 and walked  
21 the streets after Sandy that, you know, building it  
22 back and making sure that the city has necessary  
23 reserves is just incredibly important. And,, the big  
24 risk factor is, one, we've had a recovery that is  
25 gone on longer than anyone ever thought, so you start



2 to forget, you know, 2008 and, you know, other times.  
3 We haven't had a calamity, thank God. But it tend to  
4 get, you know, little less focused on it. I'm just  
5 here to tell you that, as you may care important  
6 funding decisions, a few cream a little off the top  
7 and put it away, maybe some new Council, some new  
8 controller, some new mayor 10 or 20 years from now  
9 will remember this time and saying, you know, they  
10 didn't spend it all. We've just gotta (sic)-- you  
11 know, and I'll work with you to give you our  
12 economists and some of their views, but this is not  
13 my, you know, optimal range. We really try to look  
14 at the economy. We look at some of the risks  
15 involved and then we look at past experiences and,  
16 fortunately, I know all of you around the room.  
17 We've all been there and very tough times.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: You know, actually,  
19 yesterday I asked MOCJ about his fear was sort of a  
20 peace dividend in terms of, you know, the reduction  
21 in population at Rikers is the cost of operating in  
22 they were not clear at all, actually and I'm actually  
23 surprised to hear you throw around the figure of  
24 300,000 because I believe when I came into office and  
25

2 I-- the population was much higher in Rikers, but I  
3 thought the number was in the 115,000 dollar range.

4 COMPROLLER STRINGER: So, we calculate  
5 all the costs for that detainee. You over time, the  
6 cost of running the facility, and we get to that  
7 number. We have seen an incredible uptake in the  
8 amount of money that we arts pending their even  
9 though it's counterintuitive. You would think money  
10 would be saved. You are absolutely right. And then,  
11 you would see as the population comes down we would  
12 see a real savings. We've actually seen more costs,  
13 more over time, lesson maintenance, more violence.  
14 Violence on inmates, violence on correction officers.  
15 The place has not been-- you know, the place has not  
16 been fortified and I would be happy to work with you  
17 to share more of our budget information as it relates  
18 to Rikers. We have done a number of analyses on the  
19 Rikers budget and what's happening there and I would  
20 love to share with you. I can send you stuff  
21 tomorrow.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Mr. Chair, and one  
23 more, if you don't mind.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Quick.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: This is anecdotal,  
3 but it seems to me that I've heard about a  
4 significant number of legal settlements against the  
5 city that seem to me to vie credulity and I'm  
6 wondering if there has been a rise in or what the  
7 status of civil settlements against the city.

8 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: I have some good  
9 news.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Okay.

11 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Total settlement so  
12 started to come down and then it's in part because  
13 the Comptroller's office has led an aggressive effort  
14 through Claim Stat to manage risk and we've  
15 partnered, for the first time in history, with  
16 agencies from the Police Department to sanitation to  
17 DCAS. All of these agencies should really be  
18 commended for looking at ways to bring down the  
19 claims and the fact that they are working with the  
20 Comptroller's office is, I think, a real testament to  
21 the commissioners who see this is a problem. The  
22 amount paid out in settlements and judgments in FY  
23 2018 decreased by 19 percent compared to FY 2017 and  
24 so that is a big number for us. We are starting to  
25 see some daylight. And also when you exclude legacy

2 tort claims that were filed before 2009, payouts  
3 declined from 640 million in FY 2017 to 543 million  
4 in FY 2018. So, Council member, there is, you know,  
5 we are really trying and we've had some success.  
6 Now, prelitigation settlements, as many of you know,  
7 we conduct risk management and legal analysis to  
8 determine whether to settle a claim prelitigation.  
9 Then we are also playing a major role in trying to  
10 into the through a lens of what that-- you know,  
11 what's in the best interest of the city?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: That's great news.  
13 Thank you, Chair.

14 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Council  
16 member Cohen. Now we have Council member Gjonaj.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you, Chair.  
18 It's so good to see you--

19 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Council member, how  
20 are you?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Excellent. I'm not  
22 sure what title you are referred to now. Comptroller  
23 controller, but I referred to you as uncle, so I am  
24 okay with that title.

2 COMPROLLER STRINGER: Wow. And please  
3 know I'm always in Comptrol and if you work for the  
4 Daily News, I'm in control.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Got it. Thank you  
6 for that clarity.

7 COMPROLLER STRINGER: Thank you.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: We've been hearing,  
9 again, roughly 10,800 dollars per capita per every  
10 man, woman, and child. We have the highest budget in  
11 the nation. And with those kind of numbers and 92.5  
12 billion dollars, New Yorkers shouldn't want for  
13 anything. We should have it all. I am concerned  
14 about a recession that we should-- we're never going  
15 to be prepared for at the rates we are putting away.  
16 I believe in seven years of feast, prepare for seven  
17 years of famine. We don't adhere to the biblical  
18 terms or the history that has often blindsided us. I  
19 commend you on the work you are doing in the  
20 partnership that we have in the checks and balances  
21 in the important role that we both serve as a body.  
22 Alongside--

23 COMPROLLER STRINGER: Thank you.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: It's a bit of a  
25 shell game in trying to figure out where the pots of

2 money are in this budget Deco unaccounted for. In  
3 particular, the head count. The proposed, the  
4 actuals, which created a slush fund for the mayor to  
5 use his own discretion where we squeeze every penny  
6 and we threaten to cut every program and we hit every  
7 emotion out there of all those special interest  
8 groups that are facing comments to miraculously  
9 somewhere during the fiscal year, we find hundreds of  
10 millions of dollars available for pet projects and  
11 programming that the mayor's discretion. It's quite  
12 disturbing. I want you to elaborate a little bit on  
13 that, if you will. Roughly we call them budget  
14 shenanigans is what they are referred to. But are we  
15 prepared for recession? Are we prepared for a  
16 natural disaster? The government inefficiencies that  
17 you have brought up time and time again clearing  
18 Rikers, why would that-- and we understand that  
19 overhead costs are fixed costs remain constant so  
20 there can be an increase in per inmate costs, but  
21 why is the budget increasing the number of inmates is  
22 decreasing? And I'm gonna just--

23 COMPROLLER STRINGER: Yeah.

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I don't want time--  
3 I want to ask as many questions and hopefully give  
4 you enough time to answer them all.

5 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: I'm going to forget  
6 them all, though.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I see a gentleman  
8 writing. He's remind you. The other budgetary  
9 hearings, I've often brought up the government waste  
10 and I've asked commissioners directly. Is it  
11 criminal when we are spending tax payer dollars on  
12 capital projects and, just to name two, libraries at  
13 2750 dollars per square foot? Condos in New York  
14 City are selling for less. Comfort stations of 900  
15 dollars a square foot for some of the most basic  
16 structures that can be built. Why aren't we getting  
17 ahead of this? We don't have an income problem. We  
18 have an expense problem and we can do so much more  
19 and, if we don't have to do more, at least we can  
20 have that money remain in the pockets of our  
21 taxpayers. I also called on you to evaluate all of  
22 the city-owned property that we have and we know that  
23 there are audits being done on vacancies that we have  
24 within our own buildings.

2                   COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Well, I've done  
3 that.

4                   COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Why are we leasing  
5 additional properties and office space?

6                   COMPTROLLER STRINGER: So, only because  
7 there's so many questions, let me just start out with  
8 the ones I remember. So, part of what I would say  
9 is, you know, you and I served in the assembly and  
10 that was a unique set of budget challenges in terms  
11 of how to were made in Albany. You know, the city  
12 has its own budget stands. It's got better over the  
13 years, but a lot of this is the mayor needs wins, the  
14 Council needs wins, the Comptroller needs more  
15 revenue, right? So, I would just argue that in the  
16 weeks that are coming up, you know, try, you know, to  
17 have a more transparent budget discussion that will  
18 balance the need to save for that rainy day or that  
19 recession and also provide vital services for the  
20 city. I do not subscribe to the notion that all  
21 agencies are spending into the ground. I've never  
22 said that. I've identified specific areas where we  
23 should have better policy and streamlined spending,  
24 but as you know in this big budget, a lot of these  
25 are fixed costs. Federal dollars, state dollars.



2 The police force. When you start adding up with this  
3 budget, very little move money. You see that with  
4 Council discretionary money, right? It's relatively  
5 small, but people needed. Very small when you think  
6 about a 92 billion dollars budget. It would be  
7 helpful to talk about budget reform and how better we  
8 can get to that product and I'd be happy to sit with  
9 you, Council member, and work on that.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Can you answer some  
11 of the other questions including shenanigans with the  
12 head count shell game?

13 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Well, I don't call  
14 that shenanigans. I like to refer to that as the  
15 budget dance and, again, one of the things I've tried  
16 to say to some Council members today is the best way  
17 for us to work together is if you do the hearings and  
18 ask the tough questions, I will be in the room making  
19 sure I do my job.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Then you haven't  
21 been following my hearings. I asked those questions.

22 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: All right. Well,  
23 I've got to get somebody to those hearings.

24

25

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

98

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: And as far as the  
3 corruption in around the capital costs of projects  
4 that are unfounded?

5 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: Corruption-- When  
6 you say the word corruption, then you should be  
7 willing to make a referral to a law enforcement  
8 agency.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Right. It's--

10 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: [interposing] If  
11 you have--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: 2750 dollars--

13 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: [interposing] If  
14 you have--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: a square foot for a  
16 library?

17 COMPTROLLER STRINGER: If you have  
18 information that you want to bring to me, I will find  
19 the right authority, but that's a heavy statement.  
20 You know? You've got to back that up. I could talk  
21 about mismanagement or finances or money better  
22 spent. I'm happy to have that conversation with you.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Okay.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And we need to move  
25 on. So, I have IBO coming in and then we have the

2 Speaker and the public portion is already seven  
3 minutes behind. So, I'm going to--

4 COMPROLLER STRINGER: This is the year of  
5 the Comptroller.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah. I'm going to  
7 ask Council member Gjonaj if we could end it here  
8 because I need to move on--

9 COMPROLLER STRINGER: [interposing] Thank  
10 you, Council member.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And I want to thank  
12 the Comptroller very much for coming in--

13 COMPROLLER STRINGER: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: and spending so  
15 much time with us. We appreciate a very, very much.  
16 Thank you.

17 COMPROLLER STRINGER: And, Council  
18 member, you Chair an amazing committee. The work you  
19 do is always benefited the city so I want to thank  
20 you for your courtesy and near tough question name.  
21 But thank you for everything you and all the members  
22 to for the city of New York. Thank you very much.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
24 much. And were going to go right into IBO. So I see  
25 that they are here. Thank you again.

2 [Background comments]

3 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: I think we just  
4 lost everybody. Did we just lose everybody? But  
5 they can't go too far. I guess they're going to have  
6 to come back for--

7 [background comments]

8 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: They used to. But  
9 then again, the gallery-- the balcony used to be  
10 full. So, I don't know. Dammit. Okay. I know I  
11 should be, you know, in any way, concerned.

12 UNIDENTIFIED: You're on there.

13 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: Okay.

14 [gavel]

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. We will now  
16 resume the city councils hearings on the mayor's  
17 executive budget for fiscal 2020. I'm alone.

18 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: No. Not at all.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, I'm sorry.  
20 Okay. Helen Rosenthal is here. Council member  
21 Helen Rosenthal has joined us. We just heard from  
22 the Comptroller and now we will hear from Ronnie  
23 Lowenstein, the director of the Independent Budget  
24 Office. In the interest of time, I will forgo in  
25

2 openings treatment, so we're going to go write to  
3 you, Director.

4 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: And should say that  
5 I am joined by George Sweeting who is IBO's deputy  
6 director. Thank you very much for the opportunity to  
7 testify. In an effort to be brief, I'm going to  
8 spare you my reading of my testimony and just gave  
9 you a few highlights. The bottom line on all of it  
10 is, despite an economic forecast of considerably  
11 slower US and local growth, particularly for 2020, we  
12 expect the city's physical condition to maintain  
13 relatively stable with gaps of a size that we have  
14 managed relatively easily in the past and a level of  
15 revenues that could largely take care of the gaps  
16 over in the next few years. Starting with the Econ,  
17 we expect that strong growth that we have enjoyed  
18 over the whole of the expansion, largely, to taper  
19 off during the end of this calendar year and  
20 throughout the next calendar year. Particularly  
21 sharp slowdown in 2020. We are expecting that the US  
22 economy will grow 2.7 percent and inflation adjusted  
23 terms this year, which is just slightly slower than  
24 we grew last year. But like most forecasters,  
25 including those at OMB and those that Council

2 finance, we are projecting much weaker US growth next  
3 year. We are expecting, at IBO, growth of 1.6  
4 percent in GDP, and there are a bunch of reasons for  
5 that, but I think the biggest reason is that the  
6 fiscal stimulus of the tax cuts and increases in  
7 spending that have bolstered growth over the past  
8 couple of years is starting to wane. And what was  
9 fiscal stimulus is really turning into fiscal drag.  
10 So that weakness in the US economy we expect to show  
11 up as a weakness in the local economy, as well. We  
12 are expecting CDD to 73,000 jobs this year, but just  
13 34,000 next year, which is less than half of this  
14 year's gains. And it's only about a third of the  
15 nearly 100,000 jobs on average that the city is  
16 gained over the course of the expansion. That is,  
17 since the recession. Moreover, the mix of jobs has  
18 been changing. Most notably, 40 out of the 93,000  
19 jobs the city added last year came into sectors, home  
20 healthcare services and individual and family  
21 services. In fact, New York City added more home  
22 healthcare services jobs last year than the rest of  
23 the country as a whole. It's great to have more  
24 jobs. If you'd like me to go into more detail on  
25 this, I will, but these jobs are largely part-time

2 and largely lower wage jobs, and so they are having  
3 less of an impact throughout the local economy than  
4 they would if these were full-time better paying  
5 jobs. And 40 out of 93 is just a huge share.

6           Okay. So, what does that mean for the  
7 city budget? Let's start with city tax revenues.  
8 Not surprisingly we are expecting growth in city tax  
9 revenues to slow over the planned period. We are  
10 expecting an average rate of increase over the  
11 financial plan of 3.7 percent a year. That's through  
12 FY 18-- FY 18 through 23. If we need to see tax  
13 revenue growth along those lines, that would be the  
14 slowest five year average throughout the expansion.  
15 It's being powered by property taxes, where we expect  
16 to see the strongest and steadiest growth. With an  
17 average growth rate of five and a half percent a  
18 year, which is amazing. And if that happens, we  
19 would expect that total property tax revenues would  
20 be 34 billion at the end of the financial plan  
21 period, which would be virtually half of all city tax  
22 revenue. And that's an important discussion to have,  
23 as well. In contrast, if you look at the cyclically  
24 sensitive taxes like the personal income tax, we are

2 expecting an average increase of roughly 1.6 percent  
3 a year.

4           So, turning to the other side of the  
5 ledger, the executive budget is proposing relatively  
6 modest increases in city spending. There are no  
7 proposals for new big-ticket items. Whatever  
8 spending growth we are seeing is largely attributable  
9 to unforeseen increases in the cost of providing  
10 services. Like it's going to cost more for Carter  
11 cases this year than we had anticipated. And also,  
12 to a number of actions in the state budget, including  
13 unfunded mandates for election reform and providing  
14 for early voting, for example. After adjusting for  
15 the use of prior-year surpluses and reserve funds, we  
16 project that city funded spending is going to be  
17 rising an average of 3.3 percent a year over the  
18 planned period. So, if you put those numbers  
19 together, tax revenues are rising at an average rate  
20 of 3.7 percent. City funded spending an average rate  
21 of 3.3 percent, our cities fiscal condition remains  
22 sound, despite our expectation that growth,  
23 particularly next year, is going to be very slow. We  
24 are expecting this year to end with a surplus of 3.9  
25 billion, which is 375 million dollars more than OMB



2 projects, and we are also anticipating a surplus of  
3 next year of 675 million while OMB sees the year as  
4 balanced. Assuming those surpluses get used to help  
5 both Spring 2021 into balance, we are left with a  
6 2021 Of 1.7 billion, which is just 2.3 percent to  
7 city funded spending and an amount that would largely  
8 be covered by the reserves already built into the  
9 city budget for that year. It's not all rosy,  
10 absolutely not. But under some fairly conservative  
11 assumptions about economic growth, particularly in  
12 the near term, the city is in good shape over the  
13 next few years. Thank you and I would be delighted  
14 to answer your questions.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm going to jump  
16 around a little bit because you said a number of  
17 interesting things. I'm just curious to know if you  
18 know who is taking those health aides jobs, the

19 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: Ah. That's  
20 particularly interesting. There's a program in New  
21 York State called the Consumer Directed Personal  
22 Assistance Program. It's kind of hard to put into an  
23 acronym. But, basically, seniors and disabled who  
24 are on Medicaid who need personal assistance are now  
25 able to tap people such as relatives or friends who

2 may have been providing them with care in the past  
3 and actually have them provide that care or entice  
4 them to provide care with payment through Medicaid.  
5 All of that makes a great deal of sense, but it  
6 appears-- we don't have proof of this at this point.  
7 But it appears that striven up the number of  
8 caregivers and fiscal intermediaries who are being  
9 funded through Medicaid dollars and have been in  
10 large part responsible for this really huge surge in  
11 home healthcare and individual and family assistance  
12 services over the past three years.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is there any  
14 savings, therefore, nursing home care?

15 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: That's an  
16 interesting question. I really don't know. And if  
17 this is something we can look into, we well.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah. I think it  
19 was one of the objectives of creating the program.  
20 It was to prevent people from having to go into  
21 nursing homes sooner than they would have to if they  
22 could provide some type of at-home care. Am curious  
23 to know. Then I was just wondering, too, if it's  
24 mostly family members who are taking advantage of the  
25 program or if it's outsiders. So, I would love to--

2 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: If we can get--

3 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: get more

4 information.

5 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: If we can get data  
6 on any of that, we well and we will keep you informed  
7 about whether we can--

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Great.

9 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: get it.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All right. Thank  
11 you. Budget risks. As of February 7th at a press  
12 conference, Mayor DeBlasio stated that there was an  
13 unusual level of uncertainty faced in the fiscal 2020  
14 budget. In particular, the cited three challenges  
15 which were in the economy and the risk of recession,  
16 the state budget, and federal policy. While the  
17 state budget process is done and we have a better  
18 sense of the impact on the city, challenges with  
19 federal policy and the economy continue to be  
20 imminent. What is IBO's view of these budget risks?  
21 Are there any steps the city should take to  
22 proactively address these risks other than what we  
23 are taking, I guess, at this point?

24 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: I think the city  
25 is-- has reserves that position us to deal near term

2 with some of these risks. And maybe I should  
3 amplify a point that started with the Comptroller.  
4 Whether the reserves are sufficient to tide you  
5 through a downturn, we would say that that's actually  
6 not the role of the reserves. Reserves are there,  
7 from our perspective, not to fill the whole, but  
8 rather to buy you enough time to make the policy  
9 changes whether it's cuts in spending or increases in  
10 taxes or shifts in funding that will see you through.  
11 If we were to build reserves to a point where they  
12 would see us through even a relatively modest  
13 downturn, those reserves, particularly given how our  
14 reserves are currently structured, would be a huge  
15 target, particularly for Albany. And if you think of  
16 all the risks that we're facing, those risks that  
17 come down the throughway, particularly through the  
18 MTA or from the feds or NYCHA or through Health and  
19 Hospitals, are major. So, we have a somewhat  
20 different viewpoint on the reserves. I think we have  
21 also expressed, particularly to the charter revision  
22 commission, concerns about the structure of the  
23 reserves. In part because the retiree health  
24 benefits trust, there is a limit to how much you can  
25 get out in a single year, so if the current limit to

2 what you can get out in a year is something in the  
3 vicinity of two and a half billion, putting more than  
4 5 billion in means that it's going to have to be a  
5 really long recession to continue to draw down that  
6 fun. Say nothing of the fact that the fund really  
7 provides some assistance in those long-term  
8 liabilities that we are all concerned about. And in  
9 terms of the other reserves, they are just surreal  
10 tempting target and there are no restrictions for  
11 drawing down either set of reserves even if it's not  
12 raining.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you.  
14 Let me go to another thing that you had mentioned in  
15 your testimony which was the growth and Carter cases.  
16 But I know that another piece of large growth in the  
17 Department of Education's budget was also for charter  
18 schools. I think it was something in the range of  
19 about 100 million dollars. Do you see that as a  
20 potential problem for us in the future? The  
21 continued cost of charter schools?

22 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: George, correct me  
23 if I'm wrong, okay? But the increase going into the  
24 budget for charter schools is funding the natural  
25 expansion of those schools as they add grades year in

2 and year out. It doesn't take any special  
3 forecasting expertise to know that if you have a  
4 fifth grade now, there is going to be a sixth grade  
5 next year. And I don't understand why the  
6 administration is often failed to add those funds  
7 earlier in the budget process.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, you would see  
9 an increase coming in terms of how much we have to  
10 spend until those slots are essentially all filled  
11 up?

12 DEPUTY DIRECTOR SWEETING: Perhaps good  
13 news is that, particularly at the moment with the cap  
14 still in place, we will run-- we will run out of  
15 that issue in, presumably, the next few years.

16 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: But if the cap were  
17 to be raised, the city would then have to endure that  
18 cost.

19 DEPUTY DIRECTOR SWEETING: Yes, it would.  
20 And, you know, we've been-- This has been a-- We  
21 call it a re-estimate or a re-pricing. You know, our  
22 review of the Mayor's budget financial plans. For  
23 probably 10 years now, we've been pointing out that  
24 they are not accounting for this every year. You  
25 know, and they are still not.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: In some ways, I  
3 think they were hoping for some state action on it,  
4 but it hasn't happened, so, you know? All right.  
5 So, personal income tax. The personal income tax  
6 collection seemed to have bounced back from the weak  
7 collections we solve this past December and January.  
8 Estimated payments for the month of April was about  
9 1.4 billion, nine tenths of which were made up of  
10 extension payments. This is 65 percent more than a  
11 pro of last year, so is this an indication of a  
12 rebound? An ongoing strength and the estimated  
13 payments?

14 DEPUTY DIRECTOR SWEETING: We actually  
15 think it's something to be concerned about because a  
16 significant portion of those estimated payments were  
17 associated with request for extension, which means  
18 that, you know, it doesn't necessarily indicate just  
19 basic, regular-- more regular estimated payments  
20 were growing that rapidly in the first quarter. In  
21 many cases, when people file for extension-- and the  
22 reason we think extension filing was so much higher  
23 this year than in recent past, is because people are  
24 still trying to figure out exactly what all the  
25 changes from the federal tax reform mean for their

2 individual tax returns. And so, we suspect what a  
3 lot of people looked on his file for an extension in  
4 April. And, in most cases, when you file for an  
5 extension and you make an estimated payment, you wind  
6 up actually having extra money on account, which  
7 means you are going to ask for a refund in the fall.  
8 So, you know, we have an expectation that refunds  
9 will actually be much higher in the fall than you  
10 typically have. So, we don't see this really as  
11 evidence of commie, certainly in the strong to  
12 rebound in estimated payments.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And so, your  
14 concerns mostly about those refunds coming in later  
15 on in the year?

16 DEPUTY DIRECTOR SWEETING: That's  
17 certainly-- I don't know if it's the most  
18 concerning, but it's certainly something that we  
19 flagged and we are going to pay attention to.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Business and  
21 corporation tax. Collection from the business  
22 corporation tax seemed to be on track to rebound this  
23 fiscal year. In fact, year to date collections as of  
24 April 19 are about 70 percent more in the same period  
25 last year. As a result, OMB is forecasting 12.6



2 percent increase in collection for fiscal 19. This  
3 being the first growth in the business corporation  
4 tax collections since the 2015 business tax reform.  
5 What factors are causing the higher-than-expected  
6 collections and, you know, I referred a little bit to  
7 this with Department of financing, I think of the  
8 Comptroller, as well.

9 DEPUTY DIRECTOR SWEETING: We think a lot  
10 of it has to do with all of these changes that have  
11 been going on, both at the state and local level with  
12 the business tax reform in 2015 and then the layering  
13 on of the-- some of the implications of the federal  
14 tax changes couple years later. So, just to go back.  
15 In 20-- When the state law was changed, and also  
16 affected the city law. It, you know, had really  
17 significant changes with the city's business income  
18 taxes and there were real questions about exactly how  
19 much people's liabilities would change. There was  
20 also jazz some processing issues. There was-- For a  
21 while, the city had not developed the tax return  
22 forms that people needed to file and people were  
23 encouraged to go ahead and file extensions instead of  
24 finals. So all of that delayed the process of seeing  
25 exactly what the impact of the 2015 changes were.

2 And then, on top of that, you now have the federal  
3 changes which, basic-- one of the consequences of  
4 the federal changes is too broad in the business tax  
5 base so that there is more income subject. Some of  
6 that news income that had been overseas that there  
7 are now reasons for companies to bring back money  
8 that they have kept overseas. Profits that they've  
9 kept overseas. At the federal level, they, then,  
10 broadening the base. They then cut the tax rate so  
11 that the effect was still actually a tax cut at the  
12 federal level. For the city, we've got this addition  
13 to our tax base and there hasn't been a corresponding  
14 change in the tax rate. So, at least part of the  
15 story, we think, is the fact that you got more income  
16 subject to tax because of the federal changes and  
17 then our rates, basically, remain as they were. So,  
18 you know, we are getting ex-- we think that accounts  
19 for a while looks like there's a lot of new revenue  
20 this year.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you.  
22 Going to turn it over to Council member Rosenthal and  
23 we have been joined by Council members Gibson and  
24 Cornegy and then, shortly, we are expecting the  
25 Speaker.

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

115

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Oh, great.  
3 Thank you so much, Chair Dromm.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: This will have to  
5 be the last question.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Sorry?

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You'll have to be  
8 the last questioner. Yeah.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Okay. So,  
10 thank you so much, Chair Dromm. And thank you,  
11 always, for both of you who bring such wisdom to the  
12 Council. We really appreciate that. I'm wondering--  
13 and I was just looking it up very quickly. But has  
14 IBO ever looked at the human service contracts with  
15 an eye toward the payment this inning games? The  
16 breadth of the payment and, also, about procurement  
17 and whether or not that affects costs and provision  
18 of services.

19 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: When you referred  
20 to the breadth of the payment, are you referring to  
21 contracts that are actually below the cost of  
22 providing the services? Is that--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Yes.

24 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: that's the issue?  
25 We've never done research on it. We've had

2 conversations with many people in the industry you  
3 have decried this and our current advisory board  
4 chair, Jennifer March from the Citizens Committee for  
5 Children and her predecessor, Nancy Wackstein (sp?),  
6 from--

7 DEPUTY DIRECTOR SWEETING: UNH.

8 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: from UNH. I was  
9 trying to get the underlying name. These are huge  
10 issues for them. It seems inappropriate from where  
11 we sit. You know, why would you increase services of  
12 every additional child you serve is going to lead you  
13 further in the red, but the access to that  
14 information-- those contracts is something we have  
15 never had. So other than lending a sympathetic ear,  
16 we've been stymied in trying to do something-- doing  
17 here call analysis on the issue.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: According to C  
19 Change, which is a consulting company that looks at  
20 the human services sector, it costs the sector  
21 about-- I forget the number. 782 million dollars a  
22 year because they're paid late.

23 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: [inaudible

24 02:21:30]

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Not even with  
3 the short change in the amount of money they get  
4 compared to the service they provide. Would you be  
5 interested-- and I'll shoot you a letter about this  
6 formally-- in doing some analysis? In IBO looking  
7 at how much we shortchange the human service sector,  
8 but different reasons why, and what the impact on the  
9 city's, both the city's budget would be should we  
10 meet our responsibility, but also on the city economy  
11 to the extent that we pay workers in this industry a  
12 living wage, you know, primarily women of color and--  
13 low income women of color who are single-family--  
14 single-family head of households. What the impact on  
15 the economy would be if we were to pay them living  
16 wages.

17 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: I'm not sure. Our  
18 past attempts-- We would love to, but our past  
19 attempts to look into the information really didn't  
20 get very far because it's all these separate  
21 contracts from so many different places. Is there  
22 something to write about that? I mean, we certainly  
23 have a desire to do it, but we've been stymied. I  
24 don't want to lead you astray. And as far as the  
25 impact, economic impact, just remember that

2 increasing wages for any sector is going to look like  
3 a very small fraction. It's going to look like a big  
4 number, as a share of the city's economy, some tiny,  
5 teeny percentage that doesn't do justice to the  
6 issues that are raised here.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you very  
8 much.

9 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: Be happy to sit  
10 down and talk to you about it with folks on our staff  
11 who have been trying to run up against it in the  
12 past.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I appreciate  
14 that. I look forward to it.

15 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: That would be  
16 great.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you so  
18 much.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All right. Thank  
20 you very much. We appreciate you coming in. We're  
21 going to-- we are little bit late starting the  
22 public portion, so we are going to get started with  
23 that in about five minutes. And we appreciate you  
24 coming in and giving testimony. Thank you. Always  
25 good to hear from you.

2 DIRECTOR LOWENSTEIN: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Will take a  
4 quick five minute break and then we will start with  
5 the public portion.

6 [gavel]

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. We will now  
8 begin the public session of the Council's fiscal 2020  
9 executive budget hearings. Thank you, Mr. Speaker,  
10 for joining us. Any member of the public who wishes  
11 to testify must fill out a witness slip with the  
12 Sergeant-at-arms. We will endeavor to group the  
13 witnesses by topic, so please indicate the topic of  
14 your testimony on the witness slip. We understand  
15 that seniors, students, or people with disabilities  
16 may need to leave by a certain time and we will try  
17 to accommodate that need by putting you on one of the  
18 earlier witness panels. If you need such an  
19 accommodation, please write it on your witness slip  
20 or speak with one of the sergeant-at-arms. If you  
21 wish to submit testimony for the official record, you  
22 can email your testimony to the finance division at  
23 [financetestimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:financetestimony@council.nyc.gov) and the staff will  
24 make it a part of the record. We will accept  
25 testimony through 5 p.m. on Thursday, May 30th, and

2 we will be limiting panelists to two minutes each  
3 when they come up to speak. So, we have many, many  
4 people who want to stay, so I will have to be  
5 somewhat strict about that. And, with that, I'm  
6 going to turn it over to our speaker.

7           SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair Dromm.  
8 I want to thank you all for being here this  
9 afternoon. A very important test for the Council  
10 about the budget process to hear from the public  
11 about priorities that New Yorkers have across our  
12 great city and I really just wanted to thank you for  
13 being here today. I want to thank you for taking  
14 time out of your busy days to be here to testify on  
15 matters that are important to you. Last year at the  
16 public portion of the executive budget hearings, we  
17 heard from a variety of witnesses and it really did  
18 inform our negotiations moving forward. I remember  
19 last year during this portion of the budget hearings  
20 there were, I think, five four six parents that came  
21 in testified about accessibility in the school system  
22 and spoke in a very heartfelt way about the lack of  
23 accessibility. And from that testimony, we were  
24 remote to negotiate 115 million dollars for  
25 accessibility and schools. So, your testimony here



2 today really does matter. It's not pro forma. It is  
3 meaningful to me and to Chair Dromm and I say we are  
4 joined by Council member Van Bramer, the Chair of our  
5 Cultural Affairs and Libraries Committee, and we are  
6 joined by Vanessa Gibson, the Chair of our  
7 subcommittee on capital and we are all grateful that  
8 you are here today. We are joined by Council member  
9 Rosenthal who is in the back and we look forward to  
10 hearing from you. And just wanted to personally  
11 thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules  
12 to be here and let you know that the council members  
13 that are present, the council members that are not  
14 present, and the staff here will look over and take  
15 into account all of the testimony that is given or  
16 submitted for the record here today. And, with that,  
17 I want to turn it back over to Chair Dromm.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
19 much, Mr. Speaker. The first panel today will be  
20 Maria Palacarlo (sp?), President Local 1757 DC 37,  
21 John Hyslop (sp?), President Local 1321, Queens  
22 Public Library Workers, Joseph Rhys, I believe.  
23 Sorry if I mispronounced it. Okay. Thank you.  
24 Local 374 DC 37. Ron Barber President Local 1482 and

2 Vincent Tolls, Treasurer Local 1505. Would you like  
3 to start over here?

4           MARIA PALACARPO: Good afternoon, Speaker  
5 Johnson, Chair Dromm, and fellow members of the City  
6 Council. My name is Maria Palacarlo. I am President  
7 of DC 37 Local 1757, which represents assessors and I  
8 work as an assessor with the New York City Tax  
9 Commission. I testified at the March 27th  
10 preliminary budget hearing and asked you to reference  
11 my original testimony where we urge you to prioritize  
12 funding for the hiring of additional assessors and  
13 both the Department of finance and the city Council.  
14 In the tax commission. I'm sorry. Staffing is  
15 currently at a crisis level. There are 40 percent  
16 less assessors in 2018 compared to 2001. This is  
17 unacceptable and detrimental. Assessors are  
18 responsible for overseeing the evaluation of  
19 approximately 1.1 million parcels within the five  
20 boroughs of New York City. There's hundreds of  
21 millions of dollars in uncollected revenue to capture  
22 which would be sustainable that could fund vital  
23 public services. Cell towers and billboards need  
24 regulation and monitoring, along with an audit  
25 process for those who do not report the income that

2 they produce. Physicals from alterations, new  
3 buildings, flip sales, and conjugal conversions are  
4 being missed due to the lack of time and assess her  
5 hands to spend in the field, the large unmanageable  
6 districts they are responsible for, and the many  
7 districts that are vacant. Meanwhile, funds are  
8 being wasted on technology without the necessary  
9 assessors to utilize it. Several field computer, but  
10 never worked, pictometry (sic), cyclomedia (sic), and  
11 now Lydar (sp?). How much is being spent on them and  
12 the managers and units created for them versus the  
13 cost of hiring additional assessors. The city  
14 Council-- The city continues to rely more and more  
15 on a flawed modeling system which generates poor  
16 values. The tax role is supposed to be produced  
17 based on fairness, equity, and transparency.  
18 Instead, there are increasing complaints from  
19 frustrated taxpayers because values are incorrect.  
20 This is evidenced by the number of property tax  
21 appeals filed with the tax commission, which is  
22 56,000 plus and counting. The current workforce is  
23 insufficient and is being overloaded. Together, with  
24 a noncompetitive salary compared to other  
25 jurisdictions, not to mention other titles within New

2 York City, this is causing the recruitment and  
3 retention issue with a high attrition rate. The  
4 impact of the shortage of assessments staff will be  
5 the loss of billions of dollars in tax revenue in the  
6 coming years along with tremendous liability incurred  
7 if property tax appeals are not settled. This is a  
8 reckless, considering the enormity of what we are  
9 responsible for. Local 1757 thanks you for your time  
10 and consideration I would be happy to answer any  
11 questions you may have.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
13 much. Next, please.

14 REYNALDO BARBER: Good afternoon, chair.  
15 I'll be speaking for all three of the library  
16 systems.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

18 REYNALDO BARBER: PLEASE allot me a little  
19 bit more time. Good afternoon, Chair Daniel Dromm,  
20 Speaker Corey Johnson, and fellow committee members.  
21 Thank you for giving me and my fellow presidents this  
22 opportunity to testify. Myself, Reynaldo Barber,  
23 President of Local 1492. Bob [inaudible 02:39:44] is  
24 absent, President Local 1930, John Hyslop, President  
25 of Local 1321, and Joseph Rhys, Vice President of

2 Local 374. We are here to come before you united in  
3 our requests for more library funding. Libraries  
4 have thrived with our allies in the city Council.  
5 You have constantly and consistently supported  
6 library funding for library workers to provide six-  
7 day service. A wealth of print and nonprint material  
8 that is unparalleled in this world. Programs and  
9 services such as video visitation programs in  
10 partnership with the Department of correction, my  
11 library NYC, adult literacy, Drag Queens story hour,  
12 after school [inaudible 02:40:39] ID NYC,  
13 technologies such as free Wi-Fi, circulating tablets  
14 and laptops, free computers, and printing in a safe  
15 and clean environment for everyone. Also, we are a  
16 host for many community groups to have their  
17 meetings. Fiscal year 2020 is no different. The  
18 city Council supports fully funding New York City's  
19 public library, however, and sadly, this mayor has  
20 proposed what other mayors have done in the past: cut  
21 library funding. If this budget is adopted, it will  
22 stop the hiring of qualified front-line workers that  
23 offer community needs and will have a cascading  
24 effect, eliminating universals six-day service,  
25 restricting the programs libraries offer, cutting

2 their material budget, cutting technology offering,  
3 and even the ability to maintain New York City's busy  
4 public libraries. Our main concern is the library  
5 human capital. The workers who are of the library.  
6 During the library systems testimony two days ago,  
7 much of those-- of the focus was on executive  
8 budgets cut to capital funding, and exclusion from  
9 the 10 year capital plan. This is a very real and  
10 understandable concern. What was not discussed as  
11 much was our human capital. The men and women who  
12 keep our libraries open, secure our buildings to  
13 provide safe space, clean our buildings to provide a  
14 healthy environment, create and support programs and  
15 services that not only educate, but entertained our  
16 thriving communities. Maintain and fix computers and  
17 busy-- and buy catalogs for library materials. If  
18 our funding is cut, then everyone suffers. During  
19 the testimony, the library administration provided  
20 with a wealth of information documenting our member's  
21 hard work and productivity. Our members know how  
22 valuable of the surface we are. Throughout our work,  
23 they, from opening to closing, our members come in  
24 contact with children, seniors, immigrants,  
25 jobseekers. Everyone. During the weekend summer

2 days-- summer months, rather, and evenings, working  
3 parents who cannot afford alternative, relies on the  
4 library to provide not just a safe space for their  
5 children, but a place where their children can  
6 continue to learn and thrive while school is closed.  
7 If we do not get me appropriate funding, libraries  
8 will not have the necessary staff and branches will  
9 close. They outcome may lead to more incidents of  
10 children being neglected or youth violence. The city  
11 Council knows libraries are vital. Everyone knows  
12 where their local library is. Everyone knows  
13 libraries are open for all. Everyone knows they can  
14 trust the library worker. We are truly democratic  
15 institution. At last Tuesday's rally, before the  
16 budget hearing, you heard from one New York public  
17 library user about how important his library has been  
18 through three generations of his family. That was  
19 truly a testament of our library workers. The city  
20 Council knows this and has always made library  
21 funding a budget priority. We need the mayor to  
22 listen to his constituents and fund our libraries.  
23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
25 much. I think Parks is next.

2 VINCENT TOWLES: Good afternoon, Chair  
3 Dromm, Speaker Johnson--

4 SPEAKER JOHNSON: If you could just pull  
5 them like a little bit closer to you.

6 VINCENT TOWLES: Sure.

7 SPEAKER JOHNSON: And tilt it down. Thank  
8 you very much, Sir.

9 VINCENT TOWLES: Good afternoon, Chair  
10 Dromm and speaker Johnson and members of the finance  
11 committee. My name is Vincent Towles. I am the  
12 treasurer of local 1505 imprisoning City Park  
13 Workers, CPWs, in the New York City Parks and  
14 Recreation Department. Our members work in all five  
15 boroughs conducting maintenance in all city parks. I  
16 wanted to start out by thanking the speaker and the  
17 city Council for urging the mayor to include in the  
18 funding for me 100 CPWs and 50 gardeners in his  
19 fiscal 2020 budget, but this does not go far enough.  
20 These 150 positions must be baseline in the city's  
21 budget so these workers do not have to worry every  
22 year whether or not they will have a job. We said it  
23 before and we'll say it again. The Department of  
24 Parks and Recreation is distinguishly--  
25 distressingly underfunded. The support of the City



2 Council is vital in order to continue to maintain our  
3 communities by keeping those underserved parks and  
4 communities beautiful. Furthermore, our members make  
5 15 dollars and 48 cents to start and it's becoming  
6 increasingly difficult to live and raise a family in  
7 the city. The city must take a long, hard wholesale  
8 look at how it can take care of its workforce. As we  
9 approach the summer-- the start of the summer season  
10 in the next several weeks, there's a lot of work to  
11 be done to prepare the parks for thousands of New  
12 Yorkers who will be taking strolls and enjoying the  
13 warm weather in the parks. The beautification of  
14 parks is important to all New Yorkers, as well as to  
15 the thousands of tourists who visit these areas.  
16 Once again, I want to thank the City Council to  
17 getting the Mayor to restore the funding in fiscal  
18 20. Fiscal year 20 for the CPWs and gardeners line.  
19 We are asking you to further push and urge the Mayor  
20 to baseline these 150 positions. Thank you for the  
21 opportunity to testify before you today.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
23 much. I know Council member Van Bramer wants to say  
24 something.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
3 much, Chair Dromm, and just say thinking to all of  
4 you. Obviously, in particular, I am enormously proud  
5 to represent all New York City public library workers  
6 out of the three systems and just want to say I  
7 really feel very, very proud to be a part of this  
8 Council with speaker Johnson and Chair Dromm and  
9 everyone so united behind libraries. And, as I said  
10 at the hearing, because I am really proud to be in a  
11 library worker for 11 years myself, that you can't  
12 have libraries without library workers and I know  
13 having been one of you for 11 years and now having  
14 been the chair of this committee for almost 10, 21  
15 years in this fight together to make sure that  
16 library workers are respected New Yorkers get the  
17 services and the programs they deserve. So, we've  
18 been heard. I know we've been heard loud and clear  
19 on City Hall steps a couple days ago. There have  
20 certainly been a lot of articles written about our  
21 fight for justice for library workers and I feel  
22 really grateful to have the Speaker's support and  
23 Chair Dromm's support, as well, as we fight with you  
24 to make sure that not only are cuts restored, but  
25 that we get what we really need and what library

2 workers get. So, I just want to say thank you and,  
3 of course, to all of you, thank you.

4 UNIDENTIFIED: All right. May I say  
5 one thing?

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Sure.

7 UNIDENTIFIED: Point of privilege.  
8 President Dickinson says what's up?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Tell him I  
10 said hello. He's one of my favorite people in the  
11 world.

12 SPEAKER JOHNSON: I really want to thank  
13 you all for being here today and for the work that  
14 all of the New York City employees to you are  
15 representing here today. The vital work you do for  
16 the assessors and the librarians on the library  
17 workers and in the parks department. The work you do  
18 is crucial for the day to day functioning of New York  
19 City and making our city run then keeping us the  
20 greatest city in the world. Then we couldn't do it  
21 without all of you in the hard work of the workforce  
22 of the different unions that you are representing  
23 here today. So, on behalf of the New York City  
24 Council, I want to thank you and the different unions  
25 you are presenting. Thank you very much.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And, finally, let  
3 me just say that anybody that mentions drag queens  
4 story hour in their testimony gets extra points with  
5 me. So-- [laughter] thank you all for coming in.  
6 Our next panel will be Lois Kellerman, Roxanne  
7 Delgal, Constance Lesold, and Lucy Sexton. We are  
8 missing someone. Is Lucy Sexton here? All right.  
9 Why don't we state here, then, with this woman. Yep.

10 ROXANNE DELGAL: Hello. My name is  
11 Roxanne Delgal from Pelham Parkway. As a friends of  
12 park group, Friends of Pelham Parkway, I learned a  
13 lot about how parks worked and how the city does not  
14 fund them adequately. New York City parks is a city  
15 park agency, but the city expects volunteers and  
16 donors to take responsibility for our parks. It is  
17 time for the city they take care of the parks as its  
18 own city agency as it does with other city agencies.  
19 Due to up his own name, homeless population, and  
20 warmer weather due to climate change, we have more  
21 usage in our Parkway. Due to the lack of  
22 enforcement, we have lots of illegal dumping and lots  
23 of illegal barbecuing. This not only burned streaks,  
24 but pollutes the air and takes away the clean air  
25 from parts dollars. The United Nations released a

2 report that over 1 million species of plants and  
3 animals on the brink of extinction within decades.  
4 The report calls on all of us to think globally and  
5 act locally. Park workers recently informed me that  
6 parks doesn't plant the trees and plants that will  
7 provide a natural food source for the wildlife  
8 because they don't have the staff to clean up any  
9 remaining fruits or seeds on the grounds. That is  
10 very shameful. Parks may be efficient with the money  
11 that they do receive, but it cannot care for parks  
12 adequately. It cannot care for the trees, the  
13 wildlife, and for community with less than .59 one  
14 percent of the entire city budget. We need a green  
15 deal for our New York City parks and we need to think  
16 globally and act locally. I'd like to thank my city  
17 Council member Mark Gjonaj who, with the limited  
18 resources he does have, he does help us clean the  
19 park. We need a dedicated staff. We need someone to  
20 care for our Parkway. We cannot rely on the  
21 residence to continue doing the quick fix that we  
22 need. We have the sinkholes in the Parkway. We have  
23 lost over 100 trees in less than two years and that's  
24 because they don't receive TLC. I'd like to say  
25 parks is one of the best hardest working people. I

2 love them, but they need more staff. Thank you so  
3 much, speaker. Thank you, Council member Gjonaj.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
5 much. Next, please. Just push the button so the red  
6 light is on.

7 CONSTANCE LESOLD: Okay. My name is  
8 Constance Lesold and I am the founder of the  
9 Committee of 100 to Free the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.  
10 Again. As you know, it was free for about a whole  
11 century until the nineties and then we, basically,  
12 have three free days and now we have nothing but half  
13 a free day. Brooklyn is not a wealthy borough.  
14 There are many people who really cannot take  
15 advantage of it. It's wonderful that the botanic  
16 Gardens allows college students in Brooklyn to come  
17 for free. We approve of. We approve of everybody  
18 that gets to come for free, but we need to have the  
19 public who is disadvantaged and not in these special  
20 groups like nannies with their children. Like  
21 homeless people. We don't want homeless people  
22 excluded from our parks and gardens. We want them in  
23 there, relaxing. I have suggested yesterday to the  
24 head of the parks department that we have exercise  
25 programs for homeless people in the parks rather than

2 throwing them out are trying to discourage them. We  
3 need to get housing, of course, for homeless people  
4 first and foremost and we are all for that. But  
5 getting back to the botanic Gardens, this situation  
6 cannot continue. Civilized countries have free  
7 gardens. All of them. And it's wonderful that you  
8 about all these beautiful waterfront gardens and I  
9 have nothing against partnerships, but the very  
10 wealthy developers who are benefiting by those free  
11 waterfront gardens cannot be allowed to go and build  
12 buildings that shadow the whole botanic Gardens and  
13 are predicted to damage half the plant life and  
14 others. Now, the other thing I want to mention in  
15 here, though, is the community gardens because the  
16 community gardens provide free services to the city  
17 and they are very unhappy right now because of the  
18 new leases. They don't cost you anything. People do  
19 free work in the-- I founded the garden over the  
20 Franklin Avenue shuttle that is called the Brooklyn  
21 botanic Garden stop. It's been in existence for over  
22 30 years providing free recreation for the city. We  
23 need these gardens to be protected. We don't need  
24 just developers saying, aha, that's a piece of public

2 land. That's the library. That's a community  
3 garden. That's this, therefore, we can take it.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, Constance, we  
5 need to wrap it up.

6 CONSTANCE LESOLD: Okay. Well, I'm  
7 counting on you because the community garden over the  
8 Franklin Avenue shuttle was built with the help of  
9 CUNY with the help of [inaudible 02:56:01] college--

10 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

11 CONSTANCE LESOLD: the botanic gardens. It  
12 was built--

13 SPEAKER JOHNSON: We have a lot of people  
14 to get to today.

15 CONSTANCE LESOLD: I know we do, but--

16 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

17 CONSTANCE LESOLD: I do want to tell you--

18 SPEAKER JOHNSON: We got--

19 CONSTANCE LESOLD: that the press has said  
20 that the gardens are not--

21 SPEAKER JOHNSON: We-- We--

22 CONSTANCE LESOLD: important to the public.

23 SPEAKER JOHNSON: No. No. We got your  
24 point.

25 CONSTANCE LESOLD: But they are.



2 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Constance.

3 CONSTANCE LESOLD: Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All right. Thank  
5 you.

6 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You're very  
8 passionate. Next, please

9 CONSTANCE LESOLD: Yeah, right.

10 LOIS KELLERMAN: I'm Lois--

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I just have to get  
12 that icon.

13 UNIDENTIFIED: Turn it on.

14 LOIS KELLERMAN: Oh, sure.

15 UNIDENTIFIED: Press it.

16 LOIS KELLERMAN: Okay. I'm Lois  
17 Kellerman. I'm the lesser of the two here.

18 UNIDENTIFIED: In what way?

19 LOIS KELLERMAN: Still learning in every  
20 way and, but I wanted to say something so simple that  
21 it gets overturned or put in a corner because we're  
22 so smart and we have such big words. And so, just  
23 wrote down something that I believe in his services.  
24 I am alarmed by the read of cement, steel, glass, and  
25 every living thing I see every day larger and larger

2 while those small tender grass dies. I hope the kids  
3 who are shorter than we are 10 looked down more  
4 frequently and realize how wonderful it is to run  
5 barefoot in our parks. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
7 much. Back over here.

8 LUCY SEXTON: Hi. Thanks for letting me  
9 speak. Sorry I was out of the room for a second.  
10 Lucy Sexton with New Yorkers for Culture and Arts.  
11 In this budget season I sat in on city Council  
12 hearings not just on culture, but on education,  
13 aging, immigration, criminal justice, and general  
14 welfare. At each of these hearings, I heard about  
15 the importance of cultural programs in doing their  
16 work. The criminal justice hearings presentation on  
17 probation programs was a salute to the power of arts  
18 and culture, referencing Carnegie Hall and their  
19 neighborhood partners extraordinary successful neon  
20 program working with youth on probation. At the  
21 general welfare hearing, I heard about the city's  
22 largest soup kitchen, Holy Apostles, which also  
23 offers live music, a writer's workshop, a drumming  
24 circle, and other cultural offerings to their guests.  
25 One homeless woman reported this place makes me feel

2 like a full human being again. That is as important  
3 as the food the soup kitchen offers. The chance to  
4 express yourself, connect with others, and reconnect  
5 with your own humanity. I know the world today is  
6 not fond of facts, but that data is clear. Art and  
7 culture help kids improve in school, help seniors  
8 live longer, healthier lives, helps people getting  
9 out of jail reenter their lives, strengthens  
10 communities of every background. You want to counter  
11 the current anti-science trend which is so dangerous  
12 to our democracy and our planet. No one educates  
13 more kids and grown-ups of the mystery is at the  
14 heart of the world we live in than our zoos, science  
15 museums, and botanic Gardens. Arts and culture are  
16 not extras that can be cut without any impact on the  
17 lives of your constituents. When you invest in  
18 culture, we invest in the dignity of every person in  
19 this great mosaic of the city. We can and we must  
20 fight for a city that counters the narratives of  
21 fear, division, and experience taking hold in so many  
22 places in our world. Our city can and must be one,  
23 which says that every person is valuable, every  
24 culture is rich, every story deserves to be shared.  
25 There is no better way to build community across

2 differences then with music, murals, dance, gathering  
3 in cultural centers to learn more about our world and  
4 each other. The CIG and program groups ask that you  
5 say no to this proposed cut to the cultural budget  
6 and to keep us harmless at 2019 level with a 25  
7 million dollar increase to the baseline. Thank you  
8 so much for allowing my testimony.

9 SPEAKER JOHNSON: We agree with you.  
10 It's--

11 LUCY SEXTON: Thank you.

12 SPEAKER JOHNSON: totally unacceptable  
13 what was proposed in, I mean, it's really offensive  
14 in many ways. We will not stand for any cuts to our  
15 cultural institutions.

16 LUCY SEXTON: Thank you. Thank you. Thank  
17 you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
19 much. Thank you for in this panel for coming in.  
20 Now I am going to call up our next panel and that is  
21 Joel Cufferman. Is Joel here? Emily Walker? Is  
22 Emily here? Okay. Gwendolyn Tindall. Alexandria  
23 Estrella. Brigitte-- I'm sorry. Brigitte Mousay  
24 and Kayla Jones and Bernardo Feliz. Yeah. I know.

25 [background comments]

2 EMILY WALKER: Do you want to sit here  
3 first since you're-- sit down.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Would you like to  
5 start?

6 EMILY WALKER: Yes. Good afternoon.  
7 My name is Emily Walker and I am the director of  
8 outreach and programs for New Yorkers for Parks. Our  
9 organization is a founding member of the Play Fair  
10 Coalition which currently includes 140 organizations  
11 citywide and has the support of a supermajority of  
12 the city Council. Thank you for those of you who are  
13 here today who have supported our campaign. We think  
14 this city Council committee on finance for allowing  
15 us to speak about the fiscal year 2020 executive  
16 budget. City-owned parkland comprises 14 percent of  
17 all city land, but last fiscal year, NYC Parks  
18 received only 0.59 percent of the entire city expense  
19 budget. While we were pleased to see the City  
20 Council embrace many of our budget proposals in our  
21 preliminary budget response, we were disappointed to  
22 see that the Mayor's office did not pick up any of  
23 our Coalition's asks in the executive budget. Enough  
24 is enough. Now is the time to play fair for Parks  
25 and committed to an increased budget for maintenance,

2 operations, and programming. We are asking the city  
3 to commit an intentional 100 million dollars for the  
4 preliminary budget for parks. While this might seem  
5 like a large ask, the reality is that this amount  
6 would increase the total proportion of the expense  
7 budget for parks from 0.59 percent to just 0.69  
8 percent of the budget. What would a 100 million  
9 dollars in addition to the expense budget for NYC  
10 parks provide? Baselining, truly baselining, 10  
11 million dollars would once and for all mean not 100  
12 city Park workers and 50 gardeners will have secure,  
13 stable jobs. I want to emphasize that we believe  
14 this funding should finally be made permanent after  
15 six years of asking for it. Nearly 4 million dollars  
16 means that NYC's natural forests will begin to  
17 receive the proactive care and maintenance they need  
18 to remain healthy and resilient in a changing  
19 climate. A little over 47 million dollars a little  
20 while the 48 largest parks in NYC to have dedicated  
21 crews that could better maintain, beautify, and care  
22 for vital neighborhood open spaces and regional  
23 parks. Nearly 18 million dollars would expand the  
24 fixed post crews to all eligible smaller neighborhood  
25 parks that currently lack of full-time dedicated

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE 143

2 staff. Just over 8 million dollars would fund  
3 improvements for all 550 green thumb community garden  
4 citywide. New soil, new raised beds, and new  
5 features to ensure that gardeners have the resources  
6 they need for their gardens to thrive. Nearly 4  
7 million dollars in the budget would mean that 395  
8 additional playgrounds citywide would be able to have  
9 structured sports and afterschool programs for  
10 children in every district via kids in motion. 3  
11 million dollars would mean 50 new urban park rangers  
12 and 6 million would mean that we could hire 80  
13 additional pep officers. I want to end by saying in  
14 a city that champions equity, we have to start  
15 treating our parks, gardens, and open space as  
16 critical city infrastructure which also means  
17 investing in the infrastructure of the thousands of  
18 people who care for them day in and day out. Thank  
19 you so much for listening to our testimony and we  
20 welcome any questions you may have.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
22 much. Next, please.

23 GWENDOLYN TINDALL: Good afternoon. My  
24 name is Gwendolyn Tindall. I am a proud parent of  
25 two students at MS 50. My son, Vaughn Clifford, is

2 currently in the 8th grade. My daughter, Elena  
3 Clifford in the 6th grade. My son, Vaughn, is  
4 suffering with autism. He has a speech impediment,  
5 but he does not stop from standing and standing firm  
6 of what he believes in. He receives ELT classes at  
7 MS 50. His confident level has grown tremendously.  
8 He has been able to rise on the honor roll from 6th  
9 grade to 8th grade every marking period entering MS  
10 50. Vaughn is determined to build his own computer,  
11 create math games for other kids to play. My  
12 daughter, Elena Clifford, has stepped out of her  
13 comfort zone while currently in MS 50. Involved in  
14 student government, debate-- excuse me. Volleyball,  
15 van (sic), and in the same school year. One school  
16 year term. Being involved viteriously (sic) and ELT  
17 classes has given her the drive to prepare herself  
18 for the future, show that she can do better in life.  
19 She can do anything she puts her mind to. She has a  
20 goal to either be a lawyer, judge, or maybe the first  
21 female president. I have been a proud parent and  
22 supporter of the ELT program of MS 50 and will  
23 continue to support and stand and fight for the ELTs  
24 for these kids. Please do not take these kids' ELTs.  
25 Thank you.



2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very--

3 GWENDOLYN TINDALL: And-- Sorry. And

4 I would like to add I need additional statements that  
5 I have from students and parents that I will be  
6 turning in. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
8 much. A group of students was here the other day and  
9 we heard you loud and clear at the education hearing  
10 and I'm also deeply concerned about the cuts to the  
11 middle school quality initiative where the mayor has  
12 taken away 2 million dollars from schools like yours.  
13 And so we are going to fight for you on that level,  
14 as well.

15 GWENDOLYN TINDALL: Thank you, sir.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,  
17 please.

18 ALEXANDRIA ESTRELLA: [speaking foreign  
19 language]

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [speaking foreign  
21 language] No? Okay. [speaking foreign language]

22 ALEXANDRIA ESTRELLA: [speaking foreign  
23 language]

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Come up.  
25 Come quickly.

2 [background comments]

3 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And just state your  
4 name for the record.

5 TRANSLATOR: My name is Alexandria  
6 Estrella. I am the mother of a student in 8th grade  
7 in Middle School 50. I would like to give thanks to  
8 the members of City Council for your time and support  
9 today. In particular, Council member Treyger and  
10 Council member Reynoso for supporting Middle School  
11 50. We would also like to thank Chancellor Carranza  
12 for his dedication and support in equity. I am here  
13 today because the ELT program is beneficial to us and  
14 we should-- it should not be cut. ELT allows  
15 student who speak another language, the opportunity  
16 to practice English and continue to be bilingual just  
17 like our debate Spanish team. I also spoke with  
18 parents and they told me the following points:

19 ELT offers students the opportunity to  
20 choose a variety of programs and find their passions  
21 and explore a career. Bernardo Feliz.

22 The students need productive activities  
23 after school and not to be able to be in the streets  
24 and that's why they need these productive activities.  
25 The students need ELT classes because it gives them

2 confidence when they try something new and they are  
3 successful. ELT also permits students with  
4 disabilities to have access to activities and  
5 opportunities. So often, after school programs do  
6 not let them participate because they do not have  
7 their paraprofessional and the bus doesn't stay for  
8 them. ELT gives students options and teaches them to  
9 have an open mind and to try new things. ELT gives  
10 students the opportunity to prepare for careers in  
11 the arts and to prepare for high schools in the arts,  
12 as well. Please do not cut ELT. We are having an  
13 orientation for our students this Thursday and we  
14 would like to be able to tell them that they will be  
15 able to receive the same opportunities as our  
16 students are currently receiving. Thank you for  
17 listening.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Great translation.  
19 You're hired. You're hired. Next, please.

20 KAYLA JONES: Good afternoon. Thank you,  
21 Speaker Johnson and Chairman Dromm and the rest of  
22 the Committee members for allowing us to testify  
23 today. My name is Kayla Jones and I am with  
24 JumpStart, which is an early childhood literacy  
25 organization. We were founded in 1993 to promote

2 high quality early learning for preschool children  
3 from underserved communities and, to do so, we train  
4 college students and community volunteers to provide  
5 language, literacy, and social emotional programing  
6 to more than 12,000 preschool children in underserved  
7 neighborhoods across the country. In New York City  
8 alone, our college student volunteers from 10  
9 universities support 40 preschool partners to deliver  
10 Jump Start curriculum to nearly 1500 children during  
11 the school year. And first off we want to thank  
12 Council member Adams. She's not here right now, but  
13 she is been a supporter of Jump Start programming and  
14 early literacy, so I just want to offer our thanks to  
15 her. And so, Jump Start recently surveyed 1168 of  
16 our alumni who served in our program to gain a better  
17 understanding of our influence in their college  
18 experiences and on their career and what we learned  
19 confirmed many of the barriers that we already knew  
20 about to enter the early education field. So, 84  
21 percent said their Jump Start experience was a major  
22 influence in their decision to pursue a career in  
23 early childhood education and 33 of those respondents  
24 in the EC field already make less than 20,000 dollars  
25 annually. 29 of the respondents stopped working as

2 an early childhood educator because of the salary and  
3 compensation they felt was inadequate.

4 BRIGITTE MOUSAY: My name is Brigitte. I  
5 will be testifying on behalf of Jump Start, as well.  
6 Thank you so much for giving us the opportunity. As  
7 my colleague mentioned, some of the data we found was  
8 also that 33 of-- 24 of these respondents carry  
9 between 25 to 50 in student loan debt and 21 of these  
10 responders said that primary-- the primary reason  
11 they decided not to become an early childhood  
12 educator was because the salary was not inadequate.  
13 Was inadequate. So this data reveals the urgency and  
14 necessity for pay parity for early educators. Even  
15 though Jump Start [inaudible 03:13:57] is very small  
16 percentage of the early educators in the early  
17 childhood field, their stories are a highlight of the  
18 challenges that many early educators feel. That's  
19 only 24 percent who actually make less than what they  
20 get paid annually. So, the research for this case,  
21 high quality preschool, is now well known. It has  
22 significant impact on children's literacy, math, and  
23 social emotional learning and has lifelong benefits  
24 such as increased high school graduation rates,  
25 lifetime-- an increase in lifetime earnings and

2 reduced crime and teen pregnancy. Yet, we also know  
3 that our children learn best when their teachers are  
4 well educated, professional, and stable forces in  
5 their lives. So, critical to all of these factors,  
6 pay the teachers. As Jump Start continues to provide  
7 high quality learning experiences for our children  
8 and college students, it is important that our  
9 teachers are well compensated and reflect the value  
10 they add to the classroom. I know that New York City  
11 recognizes the importance of early education and has  
12 become a leader in expanding across the high-quality  
13 preschool, but it's time for New York City to lead  
14 the nation in creating true pay parity among  
15 educators in every setting, including starting  
16 salary, salary increases, and benefits. Preschool  
17 quality for both nationwide and in New York City  
18 cannot improve without high-quality motivated, and  
19 well compensated professionals in classrooms. As  
20 such, I urge the committee of finance to make early  
21 educator pay a top priority and do everything in its  
22 power to advance the EC field in this year's budget.  
23 For our youngest learners to build strong foundations  
24 for lifelong learning, there educators must be well  
25 prepared, trained, and supported in order to succeed

2 so they choose to stay in preschool classrooms.

3 Thank you so much, again, for giving us the

4 opportunity to testify today.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Do you

6 know what I did before getting elected to the

7 Council?

8 BRIGITTE MOUSAY: I knew you were teacher.

9 So--

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes. I was a

11 teacher in the DOE and I was a teacher in an early

12 childhood center before that. So--

13 BRIGITTE MOUSAY: Well, I'm really glad

14 and we appreciate all your hard work.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: We are fighting for

16 you. Yes, sir.

17 FERNANDO RODRIGUEZ: [speaking foreign

18 language]

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [speaking foreign

20 language]

21 BERNARDO FELIZ RODRIGUEZ: [speaking

22 foreign language]

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [speaking foreign

24 language]

25 TRANSLATOR: Furiella Ybarra.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [speaking foreign  
3 language]

4 TRANSLATOR: All right. My name is  
5 Bernardo Feliz Rodriguez. I am the father of a  
6 student in 8th grade in Middle School 50 and I am the  
7 president of the PTA. I would like to give thanks to  
8 the members of city Council for your time and support  
9 today. In particular, Council member Treyger and  
10 Council member Reynoso for supporting Middle School  
11 50. We would also like to give thanks to Council  
12 member Carranza for his dedication and-- dedication  
13 towards the students of New York City so they can  
14 receive the best education possible regardless of  
15 their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, ability,  
16 gender, or where they live. I am here today because  
17 I believe that the ELT program in Middle School 50 is  
18 beneficial and should not be cut. The ELT at Middle  
19 School 50 have been a crucial part of our  
20 transformation strategy and the statistics do not  
21 live. We have increased four percent in attendance,  
22 doubled our enrollment, tripled our ELA state exams,  
23 and quadrupled our math state exams. Four years ago  
24 we asked students and families to identify those  
25 changes that they wanted to see in our school. We



2 took this information and created a program that  
3 centered on students-- on what students wanted to  
4 learn and combined it with teacher passion and  
5 teacher knowledge. Each year, we have included new  
6 classes based on interests the students have in right  
7 now we have a catalog of 38 distinct different  
8 classes based on the arts, STEM, sports, activism,  
9 and opportunities for students to receive additional  
10 help in ELA, math, science, social studies, and  
11 English acquisition. All of our New York City  
12 students deserve these opportunities. We need to  
13 continue programs like this that work and ELT works  
14 on our school. We are asking Mayor DeBlasio and  
15 Chancellor Carranza and city Council continue to fund  
16 ELT so that all of our students can continue to have  
17 these opportunities to explore and grow their  
18 creativity. Thank you for your time.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you  
20 very much. [speaking foreign language]

21 BERNARDO FELIZ RODRIGUEZ: [speaking  
22 foreign language]

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [speaking foreign  
24 language] Thank you everybody for coming. We're  
25 going to fight for you and we know that Antonio

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE 154

2 Reynoso went to your school also. So, we're not  
3 going to let you down.

4 PANEL: Thank you.

5 [background comments]

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Our next  
7 panel is Joe Puleo, President of Local 983, Daniel  
8 Clay, President of Local 1507. I can't read the--  
9 it could be Noelle Burns, Brooklyn is Stronger  
10 Together.

11 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Liesel?

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Liesel Burns?  
13 Ralph Yazo, small homeowner and renters and  
14 taxpayers. Robert Kraemer. Is Robert Kraemer here?  
15 And Douglas Davies. Is Mr. Burns here?

16 [background comments]

17 SPEAKER JOHNSON: What's your name?

18 LEISEL BURNS: Leisel Burns.

19 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Yeah. We called you.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, okay. Yeah.

21 Come one.

22 SPEAKER JOHNSON: We called your name.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yep. I'm sorry.

24 LEISEL BURNS: I can go first?

25 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yep.

2 LEISEL BURNS: Thank you very much.

3 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Why don't you start  
4 right away?

5 LEISEL BURNS: Yep. Yes. Greeting to  
6 counselors and it seems as though it's a very  
7 supportive group. I'm the retire clergy leader of  
8 Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture. And, among  
9 other things, what I wanted to focus on part of a  
10 group called Stronger Together Across Traditions  
11 which is part of something called United Religion  
12 Initiatives.org. URI.org on the web. And it's  
13 talking about partnership and the strengthening of  
14 culture in terms of solving the future problem. So  
15 I'm not really talking about money right now, but  
16 begging us to be the sanctuary city. To figure out  
17 how we can make access across age, generations.  
18 Across religious and indigenous and nonbelieving  
19 traditions because it seems to me that our culture  
20 nationally is being debased and that New York City is  
21 an island of diversity, but we need some help  
22 partnership grounds. Lang, I live in Park slope. I  
23 go to Haiti three times a year. We should be  
24 partnered with a little town in Haiti. It seems to  
25 me that the junior high, the 15, is a good example.

2 So, what I'm begging the Council tend to do is to do  
3 some sort of political organizing and think about  
4 what is sanctuaries say they really can ask of its  
5 citizens and it might be a special tax on the  
6 gentrified areas and the people that are developing  
7 these enormous buildings next to the public lands.  
8 But do anything that keeps us ahead of this debased  
9 culture. I love the poor People's campaign, Rev.  
10 Barber, because they say we want a moral revolution.  
11 You know, that systematic racism is a moral issue.  
12 The degradation of the earth and the environment is a  
13 moral issue. And, together, if we include  
14 nonbelievers and the-- say that other traditions are  
15 neighbors, not competitors and not customers, I think  
16 we can do that.

17 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

18 LEISEL BURNS: with your help. Thank  
19 you very much.

20 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Let's go right  
22 here, Sir. We'll start with you. We'll go this way  
23 this time.

24 RALPH YAZO: My name is--

25

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: No. No. I need  
3 the mic.

4 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Turn the mic on.

5 RALPH YAZO: Thank you. My name is Ralph  
6 Yazo. I want to start with a quote. 8 billion  
7 dollars and on a single page of paper. That, I don't  
8 know if people know who said that, but that was our  
9 esteemed Commissioner-- or Council person Dromm,  
10 Chairman. And that's to the health and hospitals,  
11 right? That's the way we, the taxpayer, are getting  
12 details on how the agencies are using their budgets.  
13 I just think that that's outrageous and why don't we  
14 vote no on that budget and get details. The  
15 taxpayers are paying for this. I have a question  
16 about the corrections. Department of corrections.  
17 They're cutting back by removing cars that were just  
18 used for commuting. Just use for commuting? Are the  
19 taxpayers paying for cars that are just used to  
20 commute back and forth to work? I think that's  
21 amazing. HPD, the person-- the commissioners on the  
22 job two days. Right? It's a pattern. All these  
23 commissioners, and that budget season. They are  
24 brand-new. And so, they say, I've only been on the  
25 job two days. Same with Health and Hospitals. The

2 Council-- also, we had one about housing. They said  
3 that they don't, we the pub blank and the Council do  
4 not have access to the affordable housing details. I  
5 think that is just amazing. That was Chair Cornegy  
6 saying that. And the only reason I can say that is  
7 because I listen to every single Council meeting and  
8 you know it's very difficult to see every single  
9 Council meeting because the videos are so hard to  
10 watch. So go to YouTube and look for New York City  
11 Council videos unofficial and you'll find all the  
12 Council videos there. And I have a lot of other  
13 questions, but I can see my time is running out. It  
14 just reminds me of a Seinfeld episode where we start  
15 on these commissions, right? We have a tax advisory  
16 commission, but we don't complete them. The tax  
17 advisory commission is-- I don't know what they're  
18 doing now. They seem to be asleep. So, just like  
19 the Seinfeld episode where they're renting the car  
20 telling the rent a car to hold a reservation, we have  
21 to complete hearings, too. So I ask the Council to  
22 ask the tax-- property tax commission what are they  
23 doing? Is no report. Nothing that I see. No  
24 hearings. No public hearings and I have a lot more  
25 questions.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you.

3 SPEAKER JOHNSON: You know you're speaking  
4 to really a New Yorker when they can stream together  
5 property taxes and a Seinfeld episode.

6 RALPH YAZO: Exactly.

7 SPEAKER JOHNSON: So, I'm grateful for  
8 your promoting our hearings and giving an official  
9 YouTube address and referencing cosmo Kramer and the  
10 property tax commission.

11 RALPH YAZO: Thank you. I thank you.

12 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you. Next.

13 DANIEL CLAY: Good afternoon everybody.

14 I'm Daniel Clay. I'm the President of the Gardeners  
15 of New York City. I'd like to firstly think you guys  
16 for your time, Chair Dromm and Speaker Johnson, and  
17 thank you for helping out our 150 boots on the ground  
18 for this year and secondly, I like to impart a little  
19 gardening wisdom everybody which is this: if you  
20 plant one single tree or one single flower you are  
21 much less likely to watch it grow and become  
22 fruitful. You are much better off filling up your  
23 pot or your window box with flowers are mainly two  
24 different kinds of flowers, right? A tree works the  
25 same way. You're much better going and buying a tree

2 at Home Depot with a couple of companion plants.  
3 Plants watch each other's back. One plant does this  
4 for that one while the other one-- B does that for  
5 plant A. They protect each other wind and hot  
6 afternoon sun and everything. And just like to say  
7 that this translates to us boots on the ground, too.  
8 I really hope that we could baseline are 150 CPI  
9 workers in the future. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,  
11 please.

12 JOE PULIO: Good afternoon, City Council  
13 people. My name is Joe Pulio. I am the President of  
14 Local 983. I represent the APSW, the Associate Parks  
15 Service Workers. I represent the city seasonal  
16 aides, I represent the Urban Park Rangers, the  
17 Associate Urban Park Rangers, and, as you know, the  
18 pep Officers. Now, every year we come here and we  
19 have this discussion and every year we know Parks  
20 money is not enough. Of course, we're going to ask  
21 for what's needed and we're definitely not going to  
22 settle for anything less than what we had last year  
23 and I know everybody here is pro parks and I'm happy,  
24 you know, for you guys to be as active as you are,  
25 but the bottom line is funding. You know, we can say



2 whatever we want, but we need the money for Urban  
3 Park Rangers. We need the money for pep officers.  
4 We need the money for all the seasonal workers that  
5 come back and rely on their incomes. Make the parks  
6 clean and safe for everybody else. But I find most  
7 alarming this time is the high cost of construction  
8 projects. Comfort stations. The prices are  
9 outrageous. They're tripling and it's really sad to  
10 me that people are not going to have their jobs so we  
11 can pay these contractors three times more than we  
12 did just a few years ago which were already  
13 overinflated in my opinion. We have to do something  
14 about it. Our APSWs, they're the ones that operate  
15 heavy machinery. Guess what? They are already  
16 digging up the dirt. They're doing it for the ball  
17 fields. Why can't they do this for the comfort  
18 stations? You know? We can enforce these jobs.  
19 Instead of us cutting workers, we can use that money  
20 that we spend on these projects to hire more workers  
21 to do the job for way less. When I say way less, a  
22 fraction of the cost of what we're paying. I think  
23 one-- I think it was you. Sorry. You said the  
24 average cost was 900 and something dollars a square  
25 foot. I mean, I don't know of any construction

2 project, even in this city, that comes anywhere near  
3 that cost, but we're using it for bathrooms. I won't  
4 take up any more of your time and I know your efforts  
5 are all well and I know you all mean well, but we  
6 just have to take this-- we all have to work harder  
7 to figure out solutions because, you know, we're  
8 really running, you know, at a time when we don't  
9 have as much money as we had in the past and rumors  
10 are we're not going to get as much as we had--

11 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank--

12 JOE PULIO: in the past.

13 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Pulio. I  
14 want to thank you for representing very, very  
15 important workers that make sure that our parks  
16 function every single day. From pep officers to  
17 urban rangers to the seasonal workers--

18 JOE PULIO: Thank you.

19 SPEAKER JOHNSON: that you represent.

20 They are key and every year we fight for them and we  
21 are going to continue to fight to ensure that they  
22 get the resources they need with, hopefully, a peace  
23 of mind and not having to be part of the budget dance  
24 every year and whether or not it gets baselined in  
25 take care of. So, we will continue to fight on

2 behalf of this very critical part of our parks  
3 workforce and I appreciate you being here today.

4 JOE PULIO: And I thank you all. Thank  
5 you.

6 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
8 much. Our next panel will be Robert Kraemer and  
9 Douglas Davies. Gregory Brender, Campaign for  
10 Children. Carolyn Capezzi. Amy Pamaro, CBO's for  
11 equity. Alice Bufkin, Citizen's Committee for  
12 Children. Leah Van Halsomen, Committee for Hispanic  
13 Children. I'm sorry if I'm slaughtering people's  
14 names. And Yolanda McBride, Coalition for Community  
15 School.

16 [background comments]

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Let's get  
18 started. We can switch seats, too, when somebody  
19 gets done. Do we have enough seats for everybody?  
20 All right. Let's start right here. That mic is not  
21 on.

22 ROBERT KRAEMER: Good afternoon, Speaker,  
23 Chairman, and all the Councilman. Thank you for  
24 giving me the opportunity to give this testimony.

2 Just to start anything, I'll just let you know I'm  
3 not asking for any money. So-- All I am--

4 SPEAKER JOHNSON: You get double the time  
5 today.

6 ROBERT KRAEMER: Okay. Our company is a  
7 company that operates here in New York City and we  
8 manufacture equipment that's energy-saving equipment  
9 that would help the whole infrastructure and  
10 resiliency of our city and what I am trying to do is  
11 very simple. I'm trying to use according to all the  
12 legislation that you have passed to save energy for  
13 the city of New York. Our equipment is capable of  
14 reducing the amount of money that you spend on the  
15 budget for heating and water and for other  
16 infrastructure. We are bringing this equipment to be  
17 installed in the city buildings and all the other  
18 buildings without any cost because our equipment is  
19 so energy-saving and saving water, that we can make  
20 enough on it without charging for the equipment.  
21 Just for the amount of lower cost of whatever the  
22 energy is supplied and I have to thank the city of  
23 New York. DCAS has given us an opportunity to  
24 demonstrate our technology and we have installed it  
25 in some of the facilities, including one of the

2 hospital facilities and including One Center Street.  
3 And they've been wonderful. They're great. They're  
4 working very hard to try and reduce the energy  
5 consumption and to save the programs that you have  
6 and money that you would be able to use in the  
7 buildings. Unfortunately, the way the system is set  
8 up, you're buying right now from [inaudible  
9 03:36:54]--

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Mr. Kraemer, we're  
11 going to have to--

12 ROBERT KRAEMER: energy--

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: move it along here.

14 ROBERT KRAEMER: at a very high--

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Finish up.

16 ROBERT KRAMER: And so what we are  
17 willing to install equipment in the infrastructure of  
18 New York City to be able to reduce the cost and  
19 create resiliency. If you recall when we had le--  
20 when we had the flood, we didn't have heat in many of  
21 the buildings. Our equipment, basically, provides  
22 resiliency to all the buildings in New York that use  
23 connetisent (sic) steam at no cost to the city. All  
24 we're trying to do is just to provide a whole  
25 infrastructure built at our own cost without any

2 expense to the city of New York at lower cost for--  
3 guaranteed lower cost and with full service for this  
4 equipment.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you.  
6 We're going to move onto the next one. You know I've  
7 been working with you. I'll help spread the word on  
8 it, as well.

9 ROBERT KRAEMER: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next, please.

11 CAROLYN CAPEZZI: My name is Carolyn  
12 Capezzi. I am the owner and educational director of  
13 Smart Start Early Childhood Center. We have been  
14 partners with the DOE providing pre-K since 1999. I  
15 am also a member of CBO's for equity on whose behalf  
16 I will speak. We are a community-based organization  
17 that is in partnership with the Department of  
18 Education in providing pre-K and 3K services to young  
19 children and their families. We sincerely thank the  
20 New York City Council for your support and for  
21 allowing us to address the perpetual inequities that  
22 we face as partners of the Department of Education.  
23 CBO's have been the backbone of early education in  
24 New York City for generations. We represent over 60  
25 percent DOE pre-K for all sites. We are not-for-

2 profit women and minority owned businesses, religious  
3 institutions, private schools, and storefront day  
4 cares. We are your neighbors and we are here to  
5 testify that we are deeply disappointed by Mayor  
6 DeBlasio and the Department of Education's lack of  
7 fiscal support. Along with early childhood advocates  
8 throughout the city, we are deeply troubled by the  
9 inequities and the lack of funding in the birth to  
10 five RFP. Our average cost per child of 11,000  
11 dollars has been stagnant for seven years and will  
12 remain stagnant for another eight. The average cost  
13 per child in a DOE run program is approximately  
14 30,000 dollars. We see no increase in salaries. A  
15 fully qualified teacher in CBO's earns an average of  
16 42,000 dollars, yet her equally qualified DOE  
17 counterpart has a starting salary at 59,000. Under  
18 Mayor to pause video and the DOE, there is no equal  
19 pay for equal work. Many CBO's can no longer retain  
20 qualified staff due to this gross inequity. The DOE  
21 now strongly encourages us to provide health  
22 insurance and retirement plans for our staff,  
23 something we fully support. Yet, they offer no  
24 resources for these exorbitant costs. We are asked  
25 to sign long-term contracts with no cost-of-living

2 increase and, if that's not enough, the RFPs pay for  
3 enrollment plan will definitely be the straw that  
4 breaks the camel's back. Just this week, all five  
5 borough president addressed a letter to the mayor  
6 asking him to pull the current birth to five RFP and  
7 start over. We fully support that move. Both the  
8 mayor and the Chancellor have stated again and again  
9 to the media and to this council that they hear us.  
10 That we are parts of the conversation, but we  
11 emphatically say that we have not been heard. Well,  
12 please hear us now. The current birth to five  
13 proposal puts all of our business is at risk. Your  
14 decisions impact our livelihood and our ability to  
15 keep our doors open for pre-K children and their  
16 families and our communities. When the DOE needed us  
17 as their partner, we provide it. When the mayor  
18 needed help reaching his goal of serving 70,000  
19 children, we provide it. Again and again, the DOE  
20 has come to once when they needed us and now we are  
21 being dismissed and ignored. We gave you excellent,  
22 Mr. Mayor. Now, where is equity?

23 SPEAKER JOHNSON: That is a very, very  
24 powerful testimony and I think there is a near  
25 unanimous agreement with that testimony that you



2 delivered today here at the city Council which is why  
3 you saw last year and this year us including this  
4 issue in our budget response. Last year, sadly, it  
5 wasn't able to get done. This year, I feel more  
6 optimistic about where we stand giving your advocacy,  
7 given the work that you all have done throughout the  
8 year in organizing and in shedding light on the real  
9 inequity that exists, so I'm really grateful you are  
10 here today. This conversation is continuing in a  
11 very ramped up in meaningful way between the Council  
12 and the highest level of the administration and we  
13 will continue those conversations and it will be a  
14 key part of our budget process. I can't guarantee  
15 anything. I don't mean that in a dismissive way, but  
16 we are going to continue to fight for you and work  
17 with you and this is one of the top issues that we  
18 are prioritized and are advocating for throughout the  
19 rest of this budget negotiation.

20 CAROLYN CAPEZZI: Thank you very much. We  
21 appreciate that.

22 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

23 AMY PAMERO: Thank you. Good afternoon,  
24 city Council members. My name is Amy Pamero and I am  
25 here on behalf of Tiny Tots Playhouse, a community-

2 based organization that provides pre-K for children  
3 in Bay Ridge Brooklyn district 20. I am currently  
4 the full day pre-K teacher at Tiny Tots, proudly  
5 standing before you as the third-generation in our  
6 family and, more specifically, women-owned business.  
7 Tiny Tots was established in 1936 by my grandma  
8 [inaudible 03:42:47] who is the child of immigrants  
9 from Spain, who instilled in her the importance of  
10 education and supported her through graduating  
11 Brooklyn College, though neither of them spoke  
12 English. Our school is thrived in our neighborhood  
13 through the Great Depression, economic shifts and  
14 recessions, and campaigns for decades worth of mayors  
15 and educational administrations. Under the  
16 leadership of my mother, Kim Pamero, we partnered  
17 with the DOE in 2000 to begin providing free pre-K to  
18 four-year-old children in district 20 and have  
19 successfully served in this capacity with full  
20 enrollment ever since. I come to share the reality  
21 that many community-based programs like ours are  
22 currently in jeopardy of closing down because of the  
23 oversaturation of pre-K programs and the opening of  
24 the DOE pre-K site for 254 students in Armenian area.  
25 As such, long-standing local businesses such as ours

2 are being forced to consider closing our doors. This  
3 will be the first time in our 19 years partnering  
4 with the Department of Education and 83 years in  
5 existence that we cannot meet our enrollment capacity  
6 and, as such, we may be forced to close. In the  
7 past, we were responsible for our own enrollment and  
8 recruitment of students. Last year, however, the DOE  
9 took over this process to streamline and began  
10 assigning our roster based on families that applied.  
11 Typically, the interest in our program far exceeds  
12 the number of students we can accommodate at our  
13 small school. This year, 146 families applied to our  
14 program with only 26 spots to fill. While this seems  
15 like a great advantage, DOE only placed us with 20  
16 students leaving six seats unfilled. The remaining  
17 families who have expressed interest in our program  
18 will not be informed of openings and we will not have  
19 access to their contact information to attempt to  
20 register them. Under enrollment to this extent would  
21 be a huge deficit to our budget and would not enable  
22 us to sustain our program.

23 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you. We got it.  
24 We understand. Submit the testimony. We are working  
25 on this. I want to hear from everyone, but we have a

2 long list today, so I really appreciate you being  
3 here. What you are saying is very meaningful for us  
4 and what is most-- what could be really helpful and  
5 see you submitting that testimony in working with the  
6 staff here in identifying the exact issue you are  
7 just talking about on what a fix could be for us.

8 AMY PAMERO: Okay.

9 SPEAKER JOHNSON: So, and really grateful  
10 that you're here we look forward to working with you  
11 to try to resolve this issue so important programs  
12 like yours can continue to serve the city in a way  
13 that helps children and get to the fair pay that you  
14 and the folks that work at your business deserve.  
15 So, I really, really want to thank you for being here  
16 today.

17 AMY PAMERO: Thank you.

18 ALICE BUFKIN: Good afternoon, Speaker  
19 Johnson, Chair Dromm, and members of the Committee.  
20 Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony  
21 today. My name is Alice Bufkin. I'm the director of  
22 policy for child and adolescent health with Citizen's  
23 Committee for Children. My written testimony  
24 includes the fuller list of CCC's priorities for the  
25 budget, but I want to touch briefly on a number of

2 them today. First, we appreciate the city Council's  
3 longstanding commitment to achieving salary parity  
4 and really appreciate the statements from Speaker  
5 Johnson just now. Unfortunately, you know, the  
6 executive budget, once again, fails to include pay  
7 parity. To ensure a high quality and stable early  
8 care and education system, we need not only parity,  
9 but we also need to address the serious limitations  
10 of the birth to five RFP which you have heard about  
11 some. Including addressing pay for enrollment, core  
12 versus non-core hours, reimbursing indirect costs,  
13 and covering escalating costs. We are also deeply  
14 disappointed that the executive budget, once again,  
15 failed to include summer programs slots for 34,000  
16 middle school students, forcing families and  
17 providers to, once again, face uncertainty in the  
18 face of the budget dance. We know we have your  
19 support and we urge the city to restore in baseline  
20 funding for these students. CCC is a co-lead of the  
21 family homelessness coalition and we greatly  
22 appreciate the city Council's work with the  
23 administration to baseline funding for 69 bridging  
24 the gap social workers. However, there is still 100  
25 or more schools with 50 or more students living in

2 shelter and we urge you to increase the number of  
3 bridging the gap social workers to 100.  
4 Additionally, we strongly support an additional  
5 500,000 dollars to establish an education support  
6 Center at path. We also fully endorse the 4.9  
7 million dollars that the city Council has proposed to  
8 add 57 social workers for children and families  
9 residing in DHS contracted hotels. In terms of  
10 children's health and nutrition, we strongly oppose  
11 the mayor's 6 million dollar cut to breakfast in the  
12 classroom. The flexibility proposed in this cut will  
13 lead to fewer children receiving breakfast and more  
14 children going hungry. This is a time to expand, not  
15 reduce, school breakfast options. We are also deeply  
16 concerned with the impact of state cuts to the city's  
17 article 6 public health programs which impacts  
18 programs like emigrant health, maternal and child  
19 health and reproductive and sexual health services.  
20 We know that there is at least 3.4 million for CBO's  
21 that is not been restored in the budget as proposed  
22 by the mayor. We also echo the city Council's  
23 support for a mental health support continue which  
24 will provide direct mental health services and  
25 behavioral health supports and schools. We also

2 support additional social workers in high need  
3 schools as well as increasing restorative practices  
4 throughout schools in New York. So, thank you again  
5 for all the support the city Council is done on these  
6 important issues.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
8 much. Then you know how familiar we are with those  
9 issues.

10 ALICE BUFKIN: I do. Thank you.

11 LEAH VAN HULSIMA: Good afternoon. My name  
12 is Leah Van Hulsima and I'm the director for the  
13 Early Care and Education Institute at the Committee  
14 for Hispanic Children and Families or CHCF. CHCF is  
15 a nonprofit organization with a 36 year history of  
16 combining education, capacity building, and advocacy  
17 to strengthen the support system and continuum of  
18 learning for children and youth who are perpetually a  
19 marginalized and under resourced within city systems.  
20 We'd like to thank the city Council for considering  
21 our testimony today. There are a number of issues  
22 that the Council laid out in their response to the  
23 preliminary budget that CHCF wholeheartedly echoes  
24 and applauds. While our full testimony goes into  
25 greater depth on a number of these areas, I will

2 primarily be speaking to an equitable access to well  
3 resourced, equitably funded, high-quality early  
4 education programs for our youngest New Yorkers. We  
5 applaud the councils call for 89 million dollars to  
6 begin to address wage and equity in the early  
7 education workforce, but we stress that the Council  
8 and the city must intentionally bring childcare  
9 providers to the forefront of these efforts. The  
10 city simply does not have the capacity to hold all  
11 birth through three seats in centers, even when  
12 accounting for CBO held seats. Beyond the fact that  
13 families, many families, preferring the support of  
14 the family child care provider, the city needs these  
15 providers to thrive in order to ensure early  
16 educational supports and interventions that place all  
17 children on the path for educational success. The  
18 state maintains a low market rate that does not  
19 reflect the true cost of care or invest in the  
20 professional growth of its home-based workforce in an  
21 intentional way. Meanwhile, the low reimbursement  
22 rate or the reimbursement rate stagnated with the  
23 remaining costs of care falling on families and  
24 providers themselves. There are indications that a  
25 high rate of home-based providers are closing



2 licensed programs, expanding the childcare desert.  
3 This is not only about the first inputs the city must  
4 make in ensuring educational equity. It's about  
5 sustaining the livelihood of a workforce that is  
6 predominantly women of color, many of them  
7 immigrants. We must invest in these small business  
8 owners, not only for their own well-being, but for  
9 the betterment of our children and educational  
10 system. CHCF echoes the concerns regarding the DOE  
11 early learn RFPs. While the city has established  
12 universal 4k and is in the process of growing 3k,  
13 these are school day programs, meaning they only run  
14 to around 2:30 p.m. Early learn does bring extended  
15 day and year and infant/toddler care under the  
16 purview of the DOE, but only for children with  
17 subsidies. Estimates by the Ready for  
18 Kindergarten/Ready for College Campaign show that  
19 only about 25 percent of children eligible for some  
20 cities are receiving them in New York City.

21 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you. We  
22 appreciate you being here.

23 LEAH VAN HULSIMA: Thank you.

24 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Gregory.  
25

2 GREGORY BRENDER: Thank you. And thank  
3 you for your leadership on the issues I'm about to  
4 briefly discuss. I am Gregory Brender from United  
5 Neighborhood Houses, today speaking on behalf of  
6 Campaign for Children, a coalition the more than 150  
7 organizations working towards high-quality early  
8 childhood education and after school for every child  
9 in New York City. As everyone on this panel said, we  
10 have an incredible outreach and concern about the DOE  
11 RFPs which present five issues that are essentially  
12 fatal to the providers who are the back of the  
13 system. Their failure to address salary. The, the  
14 failure to include cost escalators and indirect  
15 costs, the creation of the core versus non-core  
16 system which interrupts the day, and reinstatement of  
17 a pay for enrollment system which will force  
18 providers to receive lower funds even when enrollment  
19 is actually controlled essentially through the DOE.  
20 I also wanted to highlight an issue that the Council  
21 has been a champion for many years which is around  
22 Sonics summer programs. Once again, 34,000 Sonics  
23 summer programs for middle school students have been  
24 cut in the executive budget and these are programs  
25 that should be funded in the preliminary budget

2 because providers need to be able to plan their  
3 programs. To hire their staff, to enroll children,  
4 to secure space that DOE buildings, many of which are  
5 going through construction in the summer. So we  
6 think the Council for its leadership in continually  
7 pushing to restore these programs and we urge the  
8 city to restore them immediately so that providers  
9 can provide high-quality programs throughout the  
10 summer. Finally, we wanted to continue to thank the  
11 Council for pushing for expanding elementary  
12 afterschool programs. There are many schools  
13 throughout-- elementary schools throughout the city  
14 that do not have access to programs and there are  
15 many compass programs that have long wait lists of  
16 students where families have no option to find  
17 somewhere for their kids, even though the work day is  
18 much longer than the school day. And we look forward  
19 to working with you towards expanding access to  
20 elementary schools after school programs. Thank you.

21 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you, Gregory.  
22 Thank you. Thank you all very much. Oh. Council  
23 member Powers.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Yeah. Just for  
25 Tiny-- Tiny Tots. Is that it? I just sent your

2 note over to the DOE about your issue and the pre-k  
3 division and they're going to follow up with you on  
4 it. And you could reach out to your Council member,  
5 as well. Okay. Thanks.

6 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Our next  
8 panel. Yolanda McBride. Lisa Caswell. Maureen  
9 Senseca. Randy Levine. Salma Malik. And Maggie  
10 Mera.

11 [Background comments]

12 SPEAKER JOHNSON: You may begin.

13 SALMA MALIK: Good afternoon. My name is  
14 Salma Malik and I'm the founder and director of Climb  
15 to Autism Services. I attended a city Council  
16 meeting a few months ago and I just wanted to  
17 reintroduce Climb to. We are small and we are a  
18 grassroots organization that seeks to provide autism  
19 and developmental disabilities services to  
20 underserved and bilingual children with autism,  
21 developmental disabilities, and their families and we  
22 are looking to serve women all five boroughs. Right  
23 now we are all volunteer-based, so I'm trying to  
24 really expand to be able to provide services beyond.  
25 Training and workshops and really do more like trips

2 and community outreach. Things which require more  
3 funding. So I'm requesting funding for fiscal year  
4 2020 and I have attached in my testimony our mission  
5 statement and some information about us. And I know  
6 that New York City is trying to expand the language  
7 services for all of their city agencies and I think  
8 that the languages I'm representing are not really  
9 being covered currently which are Urdu, Hindi,  
10 Punjabi, Arabic, and I really hope that I'm afforded  
11 the opportunity to service community. I know my  
12 testimony is a bit short, that's it.

13 SPEAKER JOHNSON: No. Thank you for being  
14 here.

15 LISA CASWELL: Good afternoon, Speaker  
16 Johnson, Chair Dromm, and other esteemed members of  
17 the New York City Council. My name is Lisa Caswell.  
18 I'm a senior policy analyst for the Daycare Council  
19 of New York. For more than 70 years, the Daycare  
20 Council has successfully served the needs of  
21 nonprofit organizations that sponsor childcare  
22 programs across the five boroughs of New York City.  
23 Currently, we have 91 members who operate more than  
24 200 early childhood education programs under contract  
25 with the administration for children's services. We

2 are also responsible for negotiating collective  
3 bargaining agreement on behalf of our member agencies  
4 with the two unions, DC 1707 and the Council of  
5 Supervisors and Administrators who represent the  
6 child care workforce and their programs. We would  
7 like to thank the city Council for including the  
8 Daycare Council's 89 million dollars salary parity  
9 proposal in your response to the mayor's preliminary  
10 budget. This is 83 million for certified teachers  
11 and directors and 6 million for support staff. This  
12 action, in conjunction with the intensive multi-year  
13 advocacy efforts of the campaign for children and DC  
14 1707 has resulted in the start of discussions to  
15 address the long-standing issues of salary disparity  
16 in early childhood education. We are off to a good  
17 start and, with the city Council's continued support,  
18 we look forward to that proposal being fully included  
19 in the upcoming final city budget. I just want to  
20 say I can't understate the fact that you're  
21 supportive and everything in terms of getting us to  
22 the table at this point. Some of you have received  
23 our report on salary parity entitled The Value of  
24 Early Childhood Educators. It outlines our proposal  
25 for unionized nonprofit settings who are members of

2 the daycare Council, as well as those employed in New  
3 York City early education centers. Our goal is  
4 salary parity for the entire early childhood  
5 education system. We believe that all certified  
6 teachers are entitled to the same compensation as  
7 their counterparts in the DOE. This is the only way  
8 we will stem the tide of certified teacher departures  
9 from the nonprofit sector. We would also like to  
10 sincerely thank you for including 500 million in  
11 capital funding for NYCHA's community facilities  
12 where many of our members are struggling with serious  
13 maintenance issues. NYCHA's PNA, physical needs  
14 assessment projected a 31.8 billion in capital  
15 repairs needs across their portfolio. We will  
16 continue to advocate with Live On New York and UNH to  
17 expire repairs and identify additional revenue  
18 sources. Other members of-- other colleagues and  
19 talked about what's going on with the RFP. I'm just  
20 going to go over briefly to mention a serious issue  
21 and I won't take long. With reference to the  
22 Department of Education's birth to five request for  
23 proposals, we have expressed our concern on  
24 enrollment base funding and previous testimony above  
25 for the General Welfare and Education Committees. We

2 recently learned that one of the priority status  
3 categories for public school kindergarten seats is  
4 prior enrollment in school-based pre-K classrooms.  
5 Many of our members continue to lose children to  
6 school-based you PK settings even when their parent's  
7 first choice was to keep them--

8 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

9 LISA CASWELL: with their nonprofit  
10 providers.

11 SPEAKER JOHNSON: We-- We got it.

12 LISA CASWELL: Yep. So, the real  
13 concern right now is the pay for enrollment system.

14 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

15 LISA CASWELL: Yes. Thank you.

16 YOLANDA MCBRIDE: Good afternoon. My name  
17 is Yolanda McBride. I'm director of public policy at  
18 Children's Aid and I'm actually reading testimony on  
19 behalf of my colleague, Ronald Cope who is interim  
20 acting director at Children's Aid. And I just wanted  
21 to just quickly thank Speaker Johnson and Chair Dromm  
22 and the members of the Council for your leadership on  
23 several issues and many of my colleagues have already  
24 spoken about some of the pressing issues that are a  
25 concern for children's aid in terms of the early



1 childhood education RFP and an after school-- but I  
2 wanted to focus his testimony on a request to the  
3 city to provide 3.2 million in funding tempering all  
4 20 existing, pre-existing, community schools that  
5 receive funding through the state under the mayor's  
6 community school initiative. Beginning in 2013, the  
7 New York State education Department awarded two  
8 cohorts of three grants. The Community-based  
9 organizations, there were 61 grantees statewide and  
10 25 were in New York City. 20 remain and these goals  
11 currently do not have funding under the mayor's  
12 community school initiative. They will lose funding  
13 June 30 of this year and we are asking that the city  
14 funded the schools. We do know that the state  
15 education department has-- that New York City will  
16 receive 117.6 million dollars in foundation aid,  
17 community schools foundation aid for fiscal year 20  
18 and that this is an increase of 27.7 million in  
19 funding for community schools from last year and so  
20 we do strongly believe that the funding is there and  
21 we would like these community schools to be  
22 permanently baselined under the mayor's initiative  
23 and it-- through 3.2 million dollars. That is the  
24  
25

2 ask. And we just thank you for just your time.

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIR DROMM: Thank you very much. Randi.

5 RANDI LEVINE: Thank you very much for  
6 the opportunity to speak with you. My name is Randi  
7 Levine and I am policy director of the Advocates for  
8 Children of New York. We have provided you with  
9 detailed written testimony. I'm going to speak now  
10 about a few children whose stories demonstrate the  
11 need for the Council to continue advocating for  
12 several education priorities you laid out in your  
13 response to the preliminary budget. Ryland who is  
14 nine and Shoshana who is 13, live in a homeless  
15 shelter with their grandmother, Desiree Adonis. When  
16 they became homeless, the city placed them in a  
17 shelter in Queens far from their school in Manhattan.  
18 Ms. Adonis did not want her children to change  
19 schools, but the commute was very long. Fortunately,  
20 there school has a bridging the gap social worker who  
21 secured a transfer to a shelter just a mile away from  
22 their school. Shoshana had a very hard time coping  
23 with life in the shelter and started engaging in  
24 concerning behavior. The bridging the gap social  
25 worker provided her with weekly counseling proving

2 she had the training needed to address Shoshana's  
3 needs. Ms. Adonis describes the bridging the gap  
4 social worker as an encyclopedia of resources for  
5 families who are homeless, however 100 schools have  
6 50 or more students living in shelter and no bridging  
7 the gap social worker. We recommend adding to the  
8 adopted budget 5 million dollars to increase the  
9 number of bridging the gap social workers for  
10 students living in shelter from 69 to 100 and 500,000  
11 dollars to established in education support center at  
12 PATH. We represented an eight-year-old Latino  
13 student with a disability who was sitting at lunch  
14 with others students playfully poking each other with  
15 a plastic utensil. The other students wouldn't let  
16 him play, so he used the utensil to poke at one of  
17 them. He became agitated when school staff singled  
18 him out and grabbed the utensil out of his hand.  
19 School staff contacted the school safety agents who  
20 further escalated the situation. NYPD officers were  
21 called in and handcuffed the boy and insisted that  
22 EMS transport him to the hospital in handcuffs. At  
23 the hospital, doctors determined that he did not pose  
24 a risk of harm and released him. We recommend that  
25 the adopted budget include 15 million dollars for

2 mental health continuum to provide direct mental  
3 health support to students. 20 million dollars to  
4 add at least 150 school social workers for high need  
5 schools, and 30 million dollars to expand whole  
6 school restorative practices to 100 additional  
7 schools. Our testimony also includes the need for--  
8 to ensure that no child placed in foster care is  
9 forced to change schools due to lack of  
10 transportation and includes an example we learned of  
11 this week of a kindergarten student who applied for  
12 bouncing with the Department of Education after being  
13 placed in foster care. The scene was denied. The  
14 department of education is only giving a Metro card.  
15 That's not going to be sufficient to get them to  
16 school. We need to fix this problem. We look  
17 forward to continuing to work with you as the budget  
18 process moves forward. Thank you so much for your  
19 leadership and support.

20 SPEAKER JOHNSON: And, Randi, I want to  
21 thank you, as always, for your incredibly thoughtful,  
22 granular important testimony that provides a roadmap  
23 on critical investments that the Council should be  
24 advocating for them. Advocates for Children were  
25 really instrumental and key last year in bringing to

2 the forefront the issue of inaccessibility's in our  
3 schools and the testimony that was given at the same  
4 hearing last year was instrumental in the councils  
5 successfully negotiating 150 million dollars, which  
6 is now up to 750 million dollars for greater school  
7 accessibility. So, really grateful you are here, as  
8 always, and we look forward to looking over your  
9 testimony and working on some of the issues that were  
10 identified.

11 RANDI LEVINE: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just quickly,  
13 Randi, I'm sorry. Can I just ask how old was the kid  
14 they handcuffed?

15 RANDI LEVINE: The child was eight  
16 years old.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Eight? That's got  
18 to stop. Really. That's got to stop. Okay.  
19 Maggie?

20 MAGGIE MOREOFF: Good afternoon. I'm  
21 Maggie Moreoff. I am the coordinator of the Arise  
22 Coalition. Arise is made up of parents, advocates,  
23 educators, stakeholders that have been working  
24 together for about a decade to push for systemic  
25 reforms in special Ed. I have attached a member list

2 to my testimony. I also happen to be the special  
3 education policy coordinator at advocates for  
4 children and one of the things I want to talk to you  
5 today is the school accessibility that the speaker  
6 just referenced. So I'm here today speaking on  
7 behalf of arise in support of both that 750 million  
8 to be spread out over the next five years to make  
9 schools more accessible and the proposed special  
10 education investments in the fiscal year 2020  
11 executive budget. As many of you know, a data brief  
12 released last year I had the kids laid out a truly  
13 dismal picture of accessibility in the public  
14 schools. You know, to very basic highlight from  
15 that, so one-- less than one in five of the city  
16 schools is currently fully accessible. In seven  
17 districts, less than one in 10 schools is fully  
18 accessible. And in district 75, only about a quarter  
19 of the schools are fully accessible. So, let me say  
20 first that we are incredibly thankful to the Council  
21 and to so many of the people on the Council for your  
22 leadership and for your strong voice in support of  
23 the accessibility funding. Given the embarrassing  
24 state of school accessibility, we are really excited  
25 about the five-year plan and, you know, continue to

2 look forward to your leadership in this. I also  
3 wanted to talk a little bit about the proposed  
4 investment of 33.4 million in the new-- in funding  
5 to improve special education services here in the  
6 city. There is a tremendous need for additional  
7 staff for special education teachers,  
8 paraprofessionals, psychologists, social workers, and  
9 related service providers. Far too many of our  
10 students with disabilities are going unserved or  
11 underserved in the city at this time. That money is  
12 going to be used for that. Also pleased to that the  
13 city, really quickly, plans to use some of that money  
14 to build new programs for students with autism in  
15 district 75 and for students with print disabilities,  
16 another issue that I have come before the council on  
17 a few times in the community school districts. We--  
18 I'm going to cut myself short, but we are thankful  
19 and we're here to answer any questions and we  
20 appreciate your continued leadership.

21 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you. I know you  
22 will continue to be in touch with Chair Treyger of  
23 the Education and, of course, Chair Dromm of the  
24 Finance Committee on these priorities. So, thank  
25 you.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thanks. Maureen?

3 MAUREEN FONSECA: Thank you, Speaker

4 Johnson and thank you, Chairman Dromm and member of  
5 the committee. My name is Maureen Fonseca and I am  
6 here on behalf of the sports and arts in schools  
7 foundation, SCSF, now doing business as New York and.  
8 Our mission is to help bridge the opportunity gap for  
9 New York City students by extending the school year  
10 and the school day with wholesome skill building  
11 activities designed to improve academic performance.  
12 And we have seen huge impact there. Health and  
13 wellness, attitude towards school, self-confidence,  
14 character, and values. The overwhelming majority of  
15 youth served by our programs are black, Hispanic, and  
16 new immigrant populations from the highest poverty  
17 neighborhoods in the city. With the councils these  
18 past 27 years, we have become the largest school-  
19 based provider of free afterschool and summer  
20 programming in New York City and right now we serve  
21 35,000 youth in those underserved communities at 128  
22 schools. We are in 42 of the 51 council districts.  
23 Additionally, our programs have proactively involved  
24 throughout the years to meet the needs of New York  
25 City's children and families. Academic construction



2 now makes up more than 50 percent of our programs.  
3 We also serve a lot of students who are in temporary  
4 housing. And we understand the problems families  
5 have. We are also known to be at the forefront of  
6 social emotional learning, helping children process  
7 the difficulty is that they are facing in their lives  
8 and that impact on their learning. So in order for  
9 our free programs to operate this summer and next  
10 school year, we ask you to please continue to fund us  
11 in the upcoming budget under the councils after  
12 school enrichment initiative. And if enhancement are  
13 available, we ask that you consider increasing that  
14 citywide funding to 1.5 million dollars as our  
15 councils citywide funding has stayed flat for the  
16 last 11 years while expenses have increased and we  
17 are trying to serve more children. With the support  
18 of the Council, we continue to provide these  
19 experiences that are only available to more affluent  
20 families. So, thank you again for all your support  
21 and help us get our 35,000 students the edge they  
22 need to succeed. Thank you so much.

23 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you, Maureen. We  
24 love SCSF and we're grateful you're here today and we  
25 also love former Council number Jimmy Vaca who I know

2 works with you all and so we are grateful for the  
3 work that you do. Thank you.

4 MAUREEN MOREOFF: Thank you very much.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just also to say  
6 about the RFP, we are very aware of it and I  
7 addressed it with the Chancellor last week, so we  
8 will follow up with you more on that later, slow.

9 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

10 MAUREEN MOREOFF: Thank you.

11 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Michael Greco, Vice  
12 President of Local 2507. Oren Barzilay from FDNY EMS  
13 Local 2507. Vincent Vorallo from EMS Officers Union.  
14 Melissa Sclars from SAGE. Caitlin Andrews from Live  
15 On New York. And Rebecca Reed from NYCCAL. My  
16 apologies if I meant anyone's name. Go ahead, sir.

17 MICHAEL GRECO: Good afternoon. Thank  
18 you. Thank you, speaker and all the councilmembers  
19 and the staff here today. My name is Michael Greco.  
20 I'm the Vice President of Local 2507 which represents  
21 the EMTs, paramedics, and fire inspectors. First  
22 off, like to congratulate and acknowledge the two  
23 FDNY EMS Chiefs who were recently promote. Chief  
24 Bonsonur (sp?) and Chief Siriel (sp?) represent 60  
25 years of EMS experience and it's nice to see two

2 people who get promoted based off merit and  
3 dedication to our service as opposed to who you know.  
4 I want to acknowledge the achievements in EMS. While  
5 everyone else is focusing on their diverse city, I  
6 wasn't going to because I didn't want to cause any  
7 embarrassment. Not embarrassing to them. Chief  
8 Bonsonur is well aware that she's a woman and she's  
9 gay. Chief Siriel is well aware that he is Hispanic.  
10 EMS is so diverse in those categories that that's the  
11 last qualification that we look for. The  
12 embarrassment is to the mayor. He justifies our pay  
13 disparity in EMS while promoting diversity.  
14 Understand, these two chiefs are making 50,000  
15 dollars less than their counterparts with the same  
16 stars on their chest. This is outrageous. I sat and  
17 listened to questions given to the department about  
18 the budget and the answers were mind-boggling. They  
19 justify our staff shortages and higher response  
20 times, especially in the Bronx, by promoting 1200 of  
21 our members to firefighters. They say it benefits  
22 them because the medical knowledge brought over helps  
23 them when they respond to medical calls. You know  
24 what would help those response times? 1200 more EMTs  
25 and paramedics responding to medical calls. To fix

2 it, they propose a two year plan to increase class  
3 sizes by increasing capacity at the training center  
4 and increase the PR you program. That going to be  
5 two years before they even get a staffing level to  
6 fix those response times. The solution is simple.  
7 Pay parity for EMS. If you increase the pay, you  
8 increase the staffing, you increase the retention.  
9 Treat us the way you treat other first responders and  
10 you will get the great response times of other  
11 services. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next  
13 please.

14 OREN BARZILAY: Good afternoon. My name  
15 is Oren Barzilay. I'm the President of the FDNY EMS  
16 Union Local 2507. I thank you for giving us the time  
17 and opportunity to speak. On May 14th there was a  
18 rain here regarding the finances of the FDNY. There  
19 were a few issues that raised our concerns as  
20 previous hearings were held where our demands were  
21 for more facilities, better wages, better work  
22 conditions, inhuman work conditions. We only have 35  
23 stations citywide. Some of our members are still  
24 changing their uniforms on the apparatus floors.  
25 Women are still having one installed in their

2 bathroom in the Bronx. They discuss how there is a  
3 full percent retention rate on the firefighting side  
4 while in EMS, it's nine percent. The fact is the  
5 number is double. They don't include our members,  
6 1200 of our members leaving to fire. Part of their  
7 attention calculations. They spoke about building  
8 bigger classes. It doesn't matter how big the class  
9 is. If people are not going to stay for the wages,  
10 they're going to leave regardless. They talked about  
11 180 people going per clip. That's millions of  
12 dollars that are being spent of taxpayers' money for  
13 people who are not staying. The 30-- 40,000 dollar  
14 gap. Nobody is going to stay. It cost about 30 to  
15 40,000 dollars to train each individual. You  
16 multiply that by 180 times per class per individual,  
17 that number six of them. I appreciate the time.  
18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
20 much. Next, please.

21 VINCENT VARIALLE: Good afternoon, Speaker  
22 Corey Johnson and distinguished members of the City  
23 Council. My name is Vincent Varialle. I am  
24 President of the Uniformed EMS Officers Union  
25 representing over 500 EMS Lieutenants and Captains in

2 the New York City Fire Department. This testimony is  
3 in response to the FDNY fiscal 2020 executive budget.  
4 We heard testimony on May 14th. While funding for  
5 the new needs are always welcome, it is unfortunate  
6 the current needs are still being ignored. Many of  
7 the issues that continue to plague EMS were mentioned  
8 in prior meetings and testimony provided at the city  
9 Council hearings, yet they remain unaddressed. Our  
10 mayor continues to crack the whip over the EMS  
11 plantation by providing 15 million dollars to expand  
12 the APRU fly car program, however there is no  
13 compensation being provided for the over 100 officers  
14 in the Bronx who continue to work three jobs in this  
15 pilot program. Our mayor promised to bring fairness  
16 and equality, yet these men and women continue to  
17 work as a lieutenant, paramedic, and training  
18 officers. These dedicated professionals were already  
19 paid 40,000 dollars less annually than other first  
20 responders and uniformed agencies. Now, to add  
21 insult to injury, they must continue to endure the  
22 increased workload, liability, and responsibility  
23 without the additional benefit or compensation. Let  
24 me be clear. This is not a pay contract or labor  
25 issue. It's a public service issue. The lack of

2 adequate compensation creates a negative work  
3 environment and disgruntled workforce. It continues  
4 to negatively impact proper staffing levels for EMS.  
5 We heard testimony last week that the turnover rate  
6 for EMS is nine percent, but that does not include  
7 the members who leave the EMS workforce to go to  
8 fire. In one year, EMS which has a workforce of  
9 approximately 4100, had lost approximately over 900  
10 EMTs and paramedics. It's a 22 percent turnover  
11 rate. While our dedicated men and women continue to  
12 be underpaid and remain understaffed, we are also  
13 experiencing serious overcrowding at EMS stations.  
14 Many of the stations have locker rooms have expanded  
15 out into the garage area of the station creating  
16 little or no privacy to change and unsanitary  
17 conditions. Additional stations would improve  
18 working conditions and morale and decrease response  
19 times by reducing the distance units would have to  
20 travel for tour changes. I appreciate the  
21 opportunity to provide this testimony and am  
22 available for any questions that you may have. Thank  
23 you.

24 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Varialle.  
25

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I think Council  
3 member Gibson wanted to comment.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Very quickly.  
5 Thank you, again. I just wanted to personally, on  
6 behalf of my district and the Bronx, thank all of you  
7 for your incredible support and your advocacy for all  
8 of our EMS and EMTs. Particularly, there is no  
9 greater sacrifice than what we witnessed with EMT  
10 Adira Arroyo and I want to make sure that it's  
11 reflected on the record. She is representative of  
12 what most EMTs endured. The day that she was killed  
13 in the line of duty, she was working overtime to take  
14 care of herself and her five sons. So, when you talk  
15 about working conditions and providing more services  
16 for not just for men, and also the women, I think it,  
17 obviously, has so much merit and validity in the city  
18 Council supports those efforts. And I also thank you  
19 for your support of Chief Alvin Seriel. Although  
20 he's in Brooklyn now, he's from the Bronx and he  
21 served in my district and certainly helped me  
22 personally through the Arroyo tragedy and working  
23 with her family. And even to this day, we celebrate  
24 her every year. We'll block parties in her honor.  
25 We have renamed the street and we continue to keep



2 her legacy alive. But I think there is nothing  
3 greater than keeping her legacy alive then making  
4 sure that we improve the conditions for EMS and EMT  
5 so that a tragedy like that never happens again in  
6 our city. And so I want to thank you for your work,  
7 for your partnership, for all that you have done for  
8 both myself and the Bronx delegation and the entire  
9 city and certainly we have to keep talking. We know  
10 these issues are not going away and, as the  
11 population grows in New York City, there is only  
12 going to be more of a need. And so, I recognize the  
13 pay parity issue and a lot of the working conditions  
14 you talked about that exist and we want to be  
15 supportive and help as much as we can. So, thank  
16 you, Speaker and thank you, Chair.

17 VINCENT VARIALLE: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
19 much. Melissa?

20 MELISSA SCLARS: Thank you. On behalf of  
21 SAGE and the LGBT elders that we serve, I want to  
22 thank you for holding this hearing. Thank you,  
23 Speaker Johnson, Chair Dromm, Chair of the Aging  
24 Department, Margaret Chin, and the entire City  
25 Council. My name is Melissa Sclars. I'm the senior

2 government relations strategist for SAGE. We're  
3 founded in 1978 by a small group of people in a  
4 living room. Today we are coast-to-coast nationwide  
5 with affiliates all over, including SAGE centers and  
6 for all five boroughs here in New York City. The  
7 centerpieces besides our case management and the vast  
8 array of services is LGBT affordable housing. That  
9 will be opening this year. First in the [inaudible  
10 04:20:37] residence in Fort Green and then early next  
11 year in Crotona (sp?) in the Bronx. In fact, our  
12 applications for Ingersoll start next week. Exciting  
13 times for SAGE. Because of our relationship with the  
14 Council, we've been able to achieve all of this. We  
15 have our SAGE centers and all of our locations. We  
16 will be moving into new SAGE centers. The problem is  
17 that, in spite of your generosity, we've been trying  
18 to reach out to DIFTA and they've been supportive,  
19 but not supportive enough. And so we still need the  
20 final piece and we are hoping that DIFTA-- we've  
21 reached out to them numerous times. So, today were  
22 asked in that city Council support our effort urging  
23 DIFTA to enhance their support for our program and  
24 services that we offer throughout our SAGE centers  
25 and both Ingersoll and Crotona. We're very grateful

2 for the partnership that we've had with you. This is  
3 an exciting time for the LGBT community in New York.  
4 Where leading into the fiftieth anniversary of the  
5 stonewall uprising. Our city is hosting a global  
6 celebration of pride. We cannot think of a more  
7 powerful message the city would send to the world the  
8 New York City takes care of its LGBT elders. Thank  
9 you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
11 much. Next, please.

12 CAITLIN ANDREWS: My name is Caitlin  
13 Andrews. I'm here to testify on behalf of Live On  
14 New York. Thank you, Chair Dromm, Chair Chin,  
15 Subcommittee Chair Gibson, and the entire counsel for  
16 the opportunity to testify that they. On behalf of  
17 Live On New York, this pivotal time in the city's  
18 budget negotiations, I would like to clearly  
19 articulate the urgent and significant need for  
20 increasing funding that exists for New York's senior  
21 service providers. I also would like to fully  
22 appreciate and thanks the city Council for your  
23 steadfast support of senior programs throughout the  
24 years and this year in particular. For your  
25 inclusion to the necessary increase to meals funding

2 in your preliminary budget response. We are hopeful  
3 that this recommendation will rightly make its way  
4 into the final budget. Just this afternoon,  
5 thousands of lunches were served at senior centers  
6 across the five boroughs in every neighborhood. The  
7 majority of these meals go to individuals who report  
8 that this meal makes up more than half of their daily  
9 food intake. However, in spite of the clear value of  
10 these meals, they have, for years, been funded far  
11 below their worth with the last across-the-board  
12 increase to providers being a mere quarter in 2014.  
13 Today, providers of both home delivered in congregant  
14 meals in our high-cost city are funded at a rate that  
15 is 20 percent below the national average. The effect  
16 mission driven community-based providers are losing  
17 money on every meal they serve or, to put it another  
18 way, they are supplementing the city for its true  
19 cost of doing business. This is unsustainable and  
20 unfair. It's time to be, fair city for all ages by  
21 investing 20 million in DIFTA's congregant meal  
22 program and 15 million in DIFTA's home delivered  
23 meals program. In the picture that I just painted,  
24 it's not an anomaly. The underfunding of meals is  
25 not an anomaly. This is what happens across human

2 services contracts. In many cases, the culprits are  
3 the pervasive underfunding are indirect costs and low  
4 reimbursement rates. And that's why we are also  
5 proud to stand with the human services Council and  
6 city Council in your call for a 106 million added to  
7 human services contracts. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,  
9 please.

10 BECCA REED: Thank you. Good afternoon.  
11 Thank you, Chair Dromm. Speaker Johnson has left and  
12 everyone else sitting today on the Council. My name  
13 is Becca Reed and I will be testifying on behalf of  
14 NYCCAL, the New York City Coalition for Adult  
15 Literacy. Excuse me. A coalition comprised of adult  
16 literacy teachers, program managers, students, and  
17 allies from over 40 community-based organizations,  
18 CUNY campuses, and library programs across the five  
19 boroughs. As we all know, today in New York City  
20 there are approximately 2.2 million adults who lack  
21 English language proficiency, high school diploma, or  
22 both. Over 75 percent of these are immigrants and  
23 yet public funding for adult literacy education is so  
24 limited that fewer than four percent of these 2.2  
25 million adults have access to basic education, high

2 school equivalency, or English classes. NYCCAL  
3 wishes to express our deepest appreciation to the  
4 Council and the mayor for the 12 million dollar  
5 expansion for adult literacy funding and services  
6 over the past three years. We also think mayor to  
7 policy oh four including an 8 million one year  
8 restoration for adult literacy programs in the  
9 executive budget. We also ask that in the FY 20  
10 budget that we restore and baseline that 12 million  
11 to bring the total baseline to 15.5 million so that  
12 DYCD funding can provide essential services, thwart  
13 the threat of closing programs, closing classes, and  
14 in order to do that, we also would like to raise the  
15 rate per student to 2000 dollars which would then  
16 allow us to reach 7500 students per year. So we  
17 think you for the time today. Thank you for allowing  
18 me to testify.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
20 much. Council member Margaret Chin.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you, Chair.  
22 I just wanted to thank the panel for coming today and  
23 the talk about all these critical issues. And I  
24 wanted to especially highlight, you know, the fight  
25 for our older adults, our seniors, and with SAGE, I

2 mean, very happy that the senior buildings are being  
3 built, but we've got to remind the administration  
4 that senior building has to come with support  
5 services. And I think that the new commissioner,  
6 she's very supportive, so hopefully that will happen.  
7 And I also wanted to thank Lavonne and all the senior  
8 advocacy organizations that the seniors were out  
9 there advocating on the meal program with their  
10 aprons and their trays and highlight the importance  
11 of senior meals at those centers. So, hopefully will  
12 get OMB on board that money will be put in before we  
13 finalize the budget. And thank you so much for all  
14 your advocacy.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And for  
16 NYCCAL, you know, we're fighting to get that  
17 baselined. So--

18 BECCA REED: Yeah. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Thank  
20 you to the panel for coming in. We appreciate  
21 everything. Thank you. Our next panel Carlyn Cowen,  
22 CPC. Po Ling Ng, CPC. Gia Mui, CPC. Lynn  
23 Necozoval, CPC. Amy Torres, CPC. Alex Kang, CPC.  
24 And Mary Sikarevich, CPC. So--

2                   AMY TORRES: Good afternoon. Amy Torres,  
3 director of policy at CPC, the Chinese-American  
4 Planning Council. CPC is the largest Asian American  
5 social services organization in the United States  
6 providing social and economic empowerment programs  
7 and services for over 60,000 low income immigrant and  
8 API New Yorkers each year. We are a proud member of  
9 the UNH, NYCCAL, 15 percent and growing, Live On,  
10 Human Services Council, and FPWA and we are in  
11 support of all of the asks that those coalitions are  
12 also uplifting today. I'm going to be speaking on  
13 behalf of CPC and our role in the New York counts  
14 2020 coalition and our concerns for senses 2020  
15 funding and planning. CPC is incredibly grateful and  
16 glad to see the Council's support of immigrant  
17 communities and especially the fierce opposition that  
18 are leaders in the city and state have had against  
19 the addition of the citizenship question to the  
20 census. Without going into all the unprecedented  
21 challenges associated with senses 2020, we would like  
22 to remind the Council that the state is far behind  
23 its plans for funding robust census outreach and we  
24 worry that the city, without thoughtful planning, may  
25 be behind, as well. Without thoughtful preparation



2 and defense against all of the changes that may deter  
3 people from responding to the senses, the census  
4 alone could be one of the federal administration's  
5 single most weapon knives to tax for  
6 institutionalizing segregation, institutionalizing  
7 poverty, and racism in our city and our state and  
8 across the country. For these reasons, CPC wishes to  
9 remind the Council that community-based organizations  
10 are the best tool to fight back over concerns and  
11 anxieties that immigrant and low income communities  
12 have towards the senses. We acknowledge that 22  
13 million has been put into the executive budget for  
14 senses funding, but we wish to remind the Council  
15 that, in negotiations, community-based providers  
16 follow the same rationale of all other services  
17 contracted through the city, that we have the earned  
18 trust in the relationships to compel people to fill  
19 out the senses and fight for a fair and accurate  
20 account. Thank you very much.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
22 much.

23 CARLYN COWEN: Good afternoon. My name  
24 is Carlyn Cowen. I'm the chief policy and public  
25 affairs officer at CPC. I'm going to talk about a

2 few issues today. The first is immigrant legal  
3 services. As you may know, Asian American Pacific  
4 Islanders, about 80 percent speak a language other  
5 than English at home, yet there is not in Asian  
6 American legal services provider in all of New York  
7 State. At the same time, 20 percent of all active  
8 immigration court cases are Chinese-American. We  
9 urge the city to invest in linguistically appropriate  
10 legal services for all immigrant New Yorkers. The  
11 second is salary parity for early childhood  
12 educators. We want to support the asks that all of  
13 our other coalitions that we are a part of have  
14 uplifted today and simply add to it that one of our  
15 directors of our early childhood education centers  
16 who has been with CPC for 47 years is paid less than  
17 a first-year DOE teacher. The last is you're going  
18 to hear from some of our other amazing CPC staff and  
19 community advocates about a bunch of our different  
20 programs that we are fighting for funding for, but  
21 I'd like to uplift one of our programs at CPC and is,  
22 perhaps, less popular because its outcomes are so  
23 terrible. And that's the program where we subsidize  
24 the city to do the basic contracting for human  
25 services that the city is required to do. In that

2 program, we subsidize the city for nearly 1 million  
3 dollars in indirect funding that is unreimbursed  
4 every year. We pay 157,000 dollars each year in late  
5 fees and interest from late payments and we wait for  
6 the city to pay us for over 1 million dollars in  
7 contracts it is owed us in the past three years.  
8 With that money, just from interact which the Council  
9 of been a huge champion in advocating for on behalf  
10 of nonprofit providers, we could be using met 900,000  
11 dollars that we pay to provide 300 students with  
12 afterschool education for a year, 3000 students with  
13 English language education for a year, or 75,000  
14 meals for our seniors. Thank you to the Council for  
15 your support.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
17 much. Can you just refresh my memory because I have  
18 been speaking at the immigration hearings in  
19 particular about the distribution of the legal  
20 services funding and why we don't have Asians  
21 speaking legal service providers?

22 CARLYN COWEN: Yes. Absolutely. So,  
23 while the state does fund the legal services through  
24 opportunity centers of which CPC is one, what we  
25 really lack is community based legal services

2 providers and, although CPC community members speak  
3 over 25 different languages and, obviously, the Asian  
4 American community speaks many more languages, what  
5 we see is that actually lawyers through programs like  
6 NYLAG or IJC will happen to have a lawyer that speaks  
7 a language rather than having specific providers.  
8 And so, community organizations are left to fill the  
9 gap.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Uh-hm. Okay.  
11 Thank you.

12 PO LING NG: Good afternoon. My name is  
13 Po Ling Ng. I, on behalf of the senior service  
14 division want to [inaudible 04:34:03] the very  
15 important information to you. May is an older  
16 American month, so I want everyone to respect us  
17 because we are the seniors. We need your help.  
18 [inaudible 04:34:22] us. You know, when the seniors  
19 retire, you should respect them, let them really  
20 enjoy their safe life. So, that's why today I really  
21 want raising my voice. And CPC is 54 years. I serve  
22 at the CPC 51 years. Why I like to stay in this  
23 organization I think CPC-- I see the power of that.  
24 Because CPC [inaudible 04:34:54] we had the  
25 [inaudible 04:34:55]. Everyone open our heart to

2 [inaudible 04:35:00] the elite people. Make the  
3 country more beautiful. The children is our future.  
4 The senior is our, you know, contribute us. Today, I  
5 just want to thank you of your Open Door really  
6 facing our, not only Open Door, our senior services  
7 really facing about the money problems. Thank you.  
8 Thank you our lovely honorable Chair of the Aging  
9 Committee, Margaret Chin. Margaret Chin is really  
10 very good listen, very good action person. But she  
11 work really hard. She really [inaudible 04:35:53]  
12 all the senior center and listen our voice. And  
13 [inaudible 04:35:59]. So, I thank you last time and  
14 Department for the Aging had 249 senior center, but  
15 last year supposed the [inaudible 04:36:16]. But I  
16 just wonder Open Door is a very good office center.  
17 We don't get even one dime from the [inaudible  
18 04:36:21]. We cannot survive, but thank god. Thank  
19 god. We have the lovely Council lady Margaret Chin.  
20 I really keeping her really busy. I talk to her. I  
21 say, Margaret, I need your help. Without your help,  
22 we are going to die. Our center, my center's name is  
23 Open Door. It should be Closed Door. But finally  
24 Margaret Chin listened to me and give me some money  
25 so I could survive. My friend, two minutes is over.

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

214

2 I just want you follow our lovely Margaret Chin's  
3 step. Listen to us, concerning to us, senior is very  
4 important for this country. You know that a  
5 government is all the people, by the people, for the  
6 people. How you do that? Please. You are very  
7 smart. Give us more money. Let us, you know,  
8 provide best quality and quantity services. Senior  
9 power, senior voice, and thank you, Chair. Chair.  
10 Our lovely Chair. Please. After you listen my  
11 voice, don't just keep smiling. Give us money.  
12 That's most important. Not only smiling. Money.  
13 Money. Money. Then we can survive. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
15 much. You are a very powerful voice and we heard  
16 you. Money. Money. Money. We hear you. All  
17 right.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: I'm so glad I was  
19 here for this.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,  
21 please.

22 GIA MUI: My name is Gia Mui. I am the  
23 director of the [inaudible 04:38:23] Social Services  
24 at CPC, Chinese-American Planning Council. Thank  
25 you, Chair Dromm and the Speaker Johnson and the

2 members of the City Council for the opportunity to  
3 testify today on article 6 funding and community-  
4 based health initiative. Today, we are deeply  
5 concerned about the New York City article 6 cuts.  
6 While the New York City executive budget includes 69  
7 million in funding to mitigate these cuts, it does  
8 not cover the million in lost article 6 matching  
9 funding for the City Council discretionary budget  
10 public health programs which supports immigrant  
11 health, education, insurance access, HIV/AIDS  
12 prevention, treatment, child and maternal health,  
13 transgender health equity, viral, hepatitis, and  
14 more. These programs give organizations like CPC the  
15 resources we need to connect our community members  
16 with much needed health insurance services and health  
17 care resources. The need for these programs is great  
18 and we should be expanding them, rather than fighting  
19 potential cuts. For example, in our first year  
20 participating in the health access health initiative,  
21 our target set was 180 and to date, we have already  
22 enrolled 248 community members and many more need our  
23 services. At the time in a climate of fear for  
24 immigrant New Yorkers, many community members have  
25 expressed concerns whether their health insurance

2 enrollment or use of services will impact their  
3 immigration status. This makes community bases  
4 health initiatives all the more important. We are  
5 prepared to fight back at the state level next  
6 session, but we urge New York City Council and the  
7 city to fill the gap in the executive budget and  
8 ensure that community based health initiative like  
9 access health are expanded, not cut. CPC appreciates  
10 the opportunity to testify on these issues that so  
11 greatly impact the community we serve. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, also.  
13 Thank you very much.

14 LYNN NAKAZAWA: Thank you, Chair Dromm,  
15 and members of the city Council for the opportunity  
16 to testify today. My name is Lynn Nakazawa and I am  
17 the adult literacy program director at CPC. Of all  
18 CPC's, programs, limited English proficiency may one  
19 of the top barriers for community members. CPC's  
20 dental literacy program serves over 800 adult  
21 literacy ESOL students every year, but our weightless  
22 grows every year and is currently at 533. One of the  
23 reasons our weightless continues to grow as the  
24 unstable and unpredictable nature of funding for  
25 adult literacy programs. Each year, programs like



2 CPCs are subject to a budget dance at the state and  
3 city level that prevents us from predictably  
4 scheduling classes. Anyone who has studied a foreign  
5 language knows that without daily consistent  
6 practice, it is easy to lose traction and forget key  
7 concepts. However, many programs are forced to shut  
8 in this because single investment funding awards are  
9 not guaranteed in those same students reregister in  
10 late fall or winter at a significantly lower literacy  
11 level than when we last saw them. This year, we've  
12 seen significant cuts to the state's office for new  
13 Americans where ESOL classes have been eliminated  
14 entirely. CPC applauds the mayor's restoration of  
15 many million dollar one year investment, but much  
16 more is needed to fill a now much larger gap. Adult  
17 literacy programs are a gateway for the newest New  
18 Yorkers to participate and thrive in our city. It is  
19 through adult literacy classes that student learn  
20 about labor protections, their rights with  
21 immigration and law enforcement, and upcoming issues  
22 like the census or elections. Losing access to these  
23 classes means losing access to a network of peers,  
24 allies, and resources. For these reasons, CPC  
25 recommends to restore and baseline the 12 million

2 dollars for DYCD funded adult literacy services.  
3 Combine these funds with the existing 3.5 million in  
4 baseline DYCD funding. CPC appreciates the  
5 opportunity to testify on these issues that so  
6 greatly impact the communities we serve and we look  
7 forward to working with you on them. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And,  
9 you know, the Speaker and I did come, along with  
10 Carlos Menchaca, to see what was going on and it was  
11 very, very moving and very emotional, actually, to  
12 see people struggling and wanting to learn English.  
13 It was a very, very nice day. Thank you.

14 Good afternoon. Thank you, Chair Dromm  
15 and the members of the city Council for the  
16 opportunity to testify today. My name is Alex Kong.  
17 I'm a student at CPC. I'm also an immigrant. I came  
18 to America 10 months ago and I have been studying  
19 English in America for five months. Since I'm living  
20 in America, I need to learn English well. Then my  
21 friend recommended me to come to CPC. These English  
22 class help me a lot to improve my English. At first,  
23 I didn't dare to speak to English speaking people.  
24 Now, I can talk to them easier than before. I would  
25 feel frustrated if English classes were cut because I

2 have to pay the rent and all kinds of bills and buy  
3 food for my family. I'm the only one in my family  
4 who can speak some English. I have to handle  
5 everything for them such as English letter, English  
6 telephone calls, bills, and my son's homework.  
7 Sometimes I have to spends three hours to assist him  
8 to finish his homework simply because our poor  
9 English. I have to translate everything by  
10 ourselves. Our son's subjects science and social  
11 studies are very difficult for us to understand.  
12 Since our English is not our first language, please  
13 restore more money adult literacy classes. Thank  
14 you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: What country do you  
16 come from?

17 ALEX KONG: I'm from China.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: From China. And  
19 you spoke such beautiful English. So thank you for  
20 that testimony. It's very moving to hear someone  
21 like you give testimony like that. We appreciate  
22 that very much. Thank you.

23 ALEX KONG: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you to this  
25 panel. We appreciate you coming in and your concerns

2 are-- we're taking them very seriously. Thank you.  
3 Okay. Our next panel Kelley Sabatino, Community  
4 Health Network. Seongeun Chun, I think. New York  
5 Immigration. Juan Panton, Managed Care Consumer  
6 Assistance. Annette Guadino, Treatment Action Group.  
7 And Kate O'Bryan, Treatment Action Group.

8 [background comments]

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is Kate O'Brien  
10 here? Okay. I'm sorry. Annette Guadino? Okay.  
11 Juan Panton? Okay. Seongeun Chun, New York  
12 Immigration Center? Okay. I'm sorry if I say your  
13 name horribly. Kelley Sabatino? No. Is Kelley  
14 here? Okay. I'm going to also call Juan Grajedan--  
15 Oh. Juan from Emerald Isle. I saw him here. Is he  
16 here? He left? Okay. And Reid Vreland from Housing  
17 Works. Is Reid here? Okay. Okay. Anthony  
18 Furliamo, Commission on the Public Health System. Is  
19 Anthony here? Okay. Great. And Enrique Jervez from  
20 Havoc. He left. Okay. Okay. All right. Last one.  
21 Louie Sawi from the Coalition of Asian-American  
22 Children and Families. Okay. Very good. All right.  
23 Would you like to start?

24 JUAN PINZON: Thank you, Chair Dromm and  
25 members of the committee, for the opportunity to

2 testify. My name is Juan Pinzon. I'm the director  
3 of health service at the Community Service Society  
4 and I'm here to talk about the medical debt epidemic  
5 and health care affordability crisis that New York  
6 City's residents are facing. Medical debt affects  
7 New Yorkers every year more and more and, despite the  
8 affordable care act gains and affordable health care  
9 coverage, the issue with medical bills and people not  
10 being able to negotiate the healthcare sys--  
11 navigate the health care system is still a big issue.  
12 And I'm not here to tell you, you know, how to solve  
13 the problem of medical bills or, you know, why we  
14 have this problem. This is a very complex issue that  
15 requires legislative action at the state or federal  
16 level. But I'm here to tell you that there is a  
17 program that can provide immediate relief to New York  
18 City residents who face these issues and the name of  
19 this program is Managed Care Consumer Assistance  
20 Program. It was actually an initiative that was  
21 funded by city Council between 1998 and 2010 and  
22 saved 140,000 in funding and so I'm here to urge the  
23 city Council to provide 1 million in funding for this  
24 program. Funding for this program will, basically,  
25 allow our organization to train advocates from

2 community based organizations to provide those  
3 services in the community. It will help us train  
4 them to assist clients with negotiating their medical  
5 debt, applying for charity care, and navigating the  
6 healthcare system in general. So, I urge the city  
7 Council to provide funding for this initiative as a  
8 Speaker initiative. And I'm also here to support  
9 funding to meet-- 2.5 million in funding the Access  
10 Health NYC and also we oppose the article 6 cuts that  
11 will really hinder the ability of CBO's to provide  
12 these vital services in the community.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you.

14 Next, please.

15 SEONGEUN CHUN: Good afternoon. My name  
16 is Seongeun Chun and I'm the senior manager of health  
17 policy at the New York Immigration Coalition. Thank  
18 you to Finance Committee Chair Dromm for calling this  
19 meeting and for the opportunity to testify today.  
20 I'm here to talk about several key NYC priorities  
21 including city funded access health initiative and  
22 the mayors NYC care. The NYIC is an advocacy and  
23 policy umbrella organization for more than 200 groups  
24 across the state working with immigrants and  
25 refugees. As access health NYC initiative approaches

2 its fifth year, it has become more important than  
3 ever, especially thanks to the enhancement in fiscal  
4 year 2019 to 2.5 million. However, in the most  
5 recent New York State budget, the governor and the  
6 state legislators cut New York City's article 6  
7 matching funds which effect essential NYC public  
8 health programs such as access health NYC. The mayor  
9 has proposed filling in the gap for some DOHMH  
10 programs, however, his proposal does not include  
11 replacing the lost state matching funds to the city  
12 Council discretionary funding initiatives. First and  
13 foremost, we need the Council to restore the existing  
14 2.5 million investment in access health, but we also  
15 need at least 3.4 million gap failed to continue to  
16 empower trusted CBO's to provide culturally  
17 responsive and accurate information to ensure that  
18 all NYC New Yorkers understand their rights to health  
19 care coverage and services.

20 NYC care. The mayor is proposed 25  
21 million in fiscal year 2020 for the initial rollout  
22 of NYC care starting in the Bronx, ramping up to 100  
23 million annually at full scale starting fiscal year  
24 2021. It is unclear how this is possible without a  
25 greater upfront investment. Given that H&H is the

2 sole entity that will provide services under NYC  
3 care, additional funding to more dramatically expand  
4 capacities necessary to meet the demands of providing  
5 care to a larger number of patients, especially if  
6 the city declines to expand the network of NYC beyond  
7 H&H. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
9 much. Next, please.

10 ANNETTE GAUDINO: Chairman Dromm and the  
11 committee members, thank you for the opportunity to  
12 meet with you today and to talk to you today. My  
13 name is Annette Gaudino. I am the local and state  
14 policy director for Treatment Action Group.  
15 Treatment Action Group, along with some of our very  
16 close partners, include being vocal New York and  
17 housing Works, specifically Reid Wheilden (sp?), who  
18 could not be here today, have been instrumental in  
19 New York state being the leader nationwide in terms  
20 of declaring our intention to end the HIV epidemic in  
21 2014 and then following in 2018, the hepatitis C  
22 epidemic. And we are working on TP. So, while I'm  
23 here, I really wish I could be talking to you-- or  
24 prefer to be talking to you about baselining the 1.9  
25 million dollars of our hepatitis initiative that the



2 Council funds every year and related programs talking  
3 about adding an additional 875,000 dollars to expand  
4 community outreach, education, and screening and  
5 prevention for TB and talking about how we can shore  
6 up our sexual wellness clinics, which have been very  
7 successful and are moving us towards our elimination  
8 goals for HIV, but I am having to talk about article  
9 6 cuts. So, you know, you know the numbers. The  
10 mayor has pledged-- made a verbal commitment to  
11 throw in 59 million dollars to make up for DOHMH  
12 funding. We know that that is an estimate. It could  
13 be much more, so we really want to hold the mayor  
14 accountable for that. We want the mayor to show some  
15 leadership and not just put it on the Council and say  
16 it is the Council's problem to solve. The Council,  
17 to close the Council gap, the 3.4 million dollars, he  
18 needs to show some leadership there. I want to  
19 specifically call out some programs in addition to  
20 the ones I've already mentioned. Obviously access  
21 health, emigrant health initiative, trends equity  
22 programs and maternal and infant health services,  
23 which also keep New Yorkers healthy and which also  
24 help advance our ambitious goals to and use  
25 infectious disease epidemics. So, in conclusion, I

2 again want to thank the Council for the opportunity  
3 to speak on the mayor's executive budget. We expect  
4 and hope for your leadership and that we can partner  
5 together to close these gaps. Thank you very much.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
7 much. And the speaker and I are both aware of the  
8 article 6 issue and, you know, were trying to deal  
9 with it. Yeah.

10 KATE O'BRIEN: Hi. I want to thank you  
11 guys for the opportunity to speak. Chairman Dromm  
12 and the committee members, thank you very much. Like  
13 many people here, I'm dismayed that Governor Cuomo  
14 and the state legislation cut New York City's article  
15 6 public health funding. So you guys seem to be  
16 familiar with it, but the city needs these programs  
17 and healthy communities face support to function. I  
18 really have to point out that the lawmakers that are  
19 supposed to protect us are leaving the city's most  
20 marginalized very vulnerable. I am not one of the  
21 cities most marginalized. I've lived a pretty  
22 privileged and easy life until I contracted an active  
23 tuberculosis infection when I was pregnant. It was  
24 terrible. It was an awful ordeal and you can read  
25 more about it in my written testimony. But I was

2 isolated from the world for 75 days about Roosevelt  
3 Hospital. In 2015, the year my TB was diagnosed and  
4 treated, it was the first time in decades that  
5 tuberculosis cases in New York City rose. It's  
6 really important for me to note to you guys and for  
7 everyone here to understand that tuberculosis is  
8 difficult to treat even after diagnosis. Beyond  
9 hospitalization or isolation, each case requires a  
10 lot of manpower. A public health worker had to watch  
11 me take my medication for a year. I need to visit a  
12 clinic regularly for scans and samples. A full  
13 contact investigation needed to be performed of my  
14 family, friends, and my job. I didn't have resistant  
15 TB, but those cases are increasing around the world  
16 and in New York City. We can't afford a resistant  
17 tuberculosis epidemic. It's extremely expensive. It  
18 will be a huge strain on our public health resources.  
19 I have to tell you that I've been in all--  
20 obviously, I've been in a lot of these clinics. They  
21 stretch every single dollar. They make a dollar out  
22 of 15 cents every day for the people in this city.  
23 If you give them a little money, they will do so much  
24 with it. Public health initiatives are a small  
25 fraction of the multimillion dollar New York City

2 budget. Each dollar works. I see the time is  
3 getting short. I've just got to say all of us are  
4 here. None of us want to live in a city where the  
5 families of Sunset Park are treated differently from  
6 the families like mine from Park Slope. That's not  
7 why people live here. That's not why they raise  
8 their families here. And that's not why they voted  
9 for mayor DeBlasio. I deeply appreciate that the  
10 mayor said he will commit to restoring the funding to  
11 the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's budget.  
12 I really do think that's great. Please restore this  
13 commitment as soon as possible. I also implore Mayor  
14 DeBlasio to join to city Council to full fund all  
15 Council-funded public health programs, at least an  
16 additional 3.4 million dollars. These programs are  
17 an incredible return on investment. That money will  
18 do so much for the safety, health, and well-being of  
19 the city than I was born in and that I love so much.  
20 Thank you all.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. You  
22 have a lot of energy.

23 KATE O'BRIEN: I've got two kids.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next, please.

2 ANTHONY FELICIANO: Good afternoon.

3 I'm Anthony Feliciano. I'm the executive direction  
4 of Commission on the Public Health System. Good  
5 afternoon, Speaker Johnson, Chair Dromm, members of  
6 the Council, Gibson and Chin. You heard from our  
7 colleagues similar what we were going to say. We  
8 want to store 2.5 million to access health NYC which  
9 I want to applaud and command the original champion,  
10 which was Corey Johnson when he was the Health  
11 Committee Chair and now Mark Levine pushing this.  
12 And it's, critically, I think is important dude in  
13 the federal climate, right? The threats all across  
14 the board for not only immigrants, but all  
15 marginalized communities. But also the reckless ways  
16 and really racist ways of trying to change  
17 eligibility for options and coverage. Now recently  
18 around the issue of the poverty line and so on. So,  
19 we need access health because these are 30 CBO's with  
20 five of us as being leads really accessing and  
21 reaching out to hard-to-reach populations. That can  
22 get all undermined. Part of it can get undermined  
23 because of article 6 cuts and we agree with everyone  
24 here that, even though the mayor put in 59 million,  
25 we have the programs that are not baseline, so

2 they're not protected. Particularly programs that  
3 align and support the baseline programs like  
4 maternity and infant child health. If you cut  
5 services to do list services, that undermines the  
6 other part of the program and elder services. Part  
7 of it is also to us to really work with the Council  
8 in the future to really mitigate so we don't have to  
9 go back to this fight because it was the governor's  
10 doing. The other thing I just want to is I agree  
11 with the immigration coalition around NYC cares and  
12 then also to really protect our public hospital  
13 system. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you.

15 LUIS AUWE: Good afternoon. My name is  
16 Luis Auwe. I am a policy coordinator with the  
17 coalition for Asian American Children and Families,  
18 also known as CACF. I will also echo that I would  
19 like to thank Chairperson Daniel Dromm, Speaker  
20 Johnson, and the Committee on Finance for holding's  
21 important hearing on this executive budget. CA CF is  
22 building a community that's too powerful to ignore.  
23 Since 1986, we have been the nation's only pan- Asian  
24 children and families advocacy organization that  
25 leaves the fight for improved and equitable policies,

2 systems, funding, and services to support  
3 marginalized Asian-Pacific American children and  
4 families. With the cut of article 6, obviously this  
5 is going to affect a lot of our member organizations  
6 and there are over 50 of them that provide services.  
7 Specifically 11 of our Asian-Pacific American  
8 community based organizations provide education,  
9 outreach, and assistance on health services and they  
10 are the most culturally competent to do that in the  
11 most underserved of our communities. So, this  
12 elimination of the article 6 funding will impact our  
13 organization's capacity to conduct health literacy  
14 workshops, develop materials tailored to different  
15 languages, hire culturally competent staff that  
16 reflects the APA communities that they serve in  
17 outreach and more. So this is why we asked the city  
18 Council to call on the mayor to replace the 3.4  
19 million dollar loss from the article 6 state budget  
20 cut and restored 2.5 million for access health NYC  
21 for fiscal year 2020. So, thank you for your  
22 considering our concerns and recommendations.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you to  
24 this panel. You know, we've got a fight ahead of us  
25 and so we look forward to working with you. Thank

2 you. Okay. Our next panel. Arlene Cruz from Make  
3 the Road New York. Ray Briggs from NYSNA. Roxana  
4 Garcia NYSNA. Robin Vitalle at the American Heart  
5 Association. Scott Daly from New York Junior Tennis  
6 League. And Mon Yuck Yu from the Academy of Medical  
7 and Public Health Services.

8 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Is that everyone who was  
9 called up?

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I saw Scott here,  
11 but I don't know where--

12 [background comments]

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, okay.

14 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Here he comes.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is Ray here?

16 [background comments]

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Roxanna?

18 Okay. Robin?

19 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Yep. Robin's here.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Scott's  
21 here. Mon Yuck Yu? Okay. And Arlene? Arlene is  
22 not here. Okay.

23 SPEAKER JOHNSON: So, we'll take this one.

24

25



2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All right. Let's  
3 call Carol Gross. Early Childhood Equity. Is Carol  
4 here? Okay, Carol.

5 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Great.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Come on up.

7 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Go ahead.

8 ROXANNA GARCIA: Good afternoon, Council.  
9 My name is Roxanna Garcia and I'm an ICU nurse at  
10 Woodhull Hospital. This is not usually how I spend  
11 my day, giving testimony at budget meetings. Usually  
12 I work in the ICU where I take care critically ill  
13 patients. Usually I should have about two patients,  
14 sometimes one depending on the level of nursing care  
15 that is needed, but I have worked many shifts where  
16 I've had three, sometimes even four patients. Now,  
17 that may not sound like a lot to you, but when you  
18 are taking care of patients that are on ventilators,  
19 that are on IV medications that need to be monitored  
20 closely, or if they go into cardiac arrest, when you  
21 are asked to care for that many patients, you are  
22 risking patient safety. We've had families say to  
23 us, we see you working so hard running back and forth  
24 all day. They need to have more staff here. And all  
25 we can say is, yes. We know. We know because we

2 hardly get to take a full hour for lunch. We know  
3 because we skip breaks and don't use the bathroom all  
4 day. We know because we are haunted by the things  
5 that we may have missed during our shifts on the  
6 mistakes made or by the patient that fell that  
7 would've never fallen if we would've had enough staff  
8 on the unit. We know because at the end of the  
9 shift, all we can say is we wish we could have done  
10 more for our patients, but we just couldn't. New  
11 York City has the largest public hospital system in  
12 this country, but we still struggle to provide every  
13 patient with the care that they deserve and the need  
14 is great. We serve everyone, regardless of their  
15 immigration status or their ability to pay. We serve  
16 everyone because we must. Public hospitals cannot  
17 run traditional business models because a lot of our  
18 patients don't pay for the care they receive because  
19 they can't afford to pay for the care that they  
20 receive. We serve everyone because we see them as  
21 patients and not as profits. That is created a two-  
22 tier healthcare system. New York's story of  
23 inequality continues. The tale of two cities, the  
24 tale of two hospital systems. Health and Hospitals  
25 and our patients continue to struggle for resources

2 and bear a financial burden that the private  
3 hospitals do not. We need to do better. Every New  
4 Yorker deserves quality healthcare. Health and  
5 Hospitals needs resources so we can serve our  
6 communities. The budgeted and proposed of 25 million  
7 is not enough. NYSNA estimates that the system needs  
8 about 120 million dollars just to hire an acceptable  
9 number of staff, nurses and ancillary staff take care  
10 for the patients that we already have. And it's also  
11 not just about money. We need to be wise with how we  
12 spend that money so we can provide the best care for  
13 all of our patients. Study after study shows that--

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: going to have to  
15 ask you to wrap up.

16 ROXANNA GARCIA: Okay. Sure. An  
17 adequate staffing, it improves patient safety and  
18 outcomes. I know that the city Council is committed  
19 to providing quality healthcare to all New Yorkers  
20 and so we are emphasizing the need to provide enough  
21 money in the budget so that we can have enough nurses  
22 and staff to provide excellent quality care to all  
23 New Yorkers.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

25 RAY BRIGGS: My name is Ray brings.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Red light has to be  
3 on.

4 RAY BRIGGS: Yes. It's on now. Okay.

5 Good afternoon, community members. [inaudible  
6 05:05:00] committee. My name is Ray breaks. I work  
7 at Coney Island Hospital. That's south Brooklyn.  
8 I'm from NYSNA and it's a pleasure to be here this  
9 afternoon. This is considered an SOS call on behalf  
10 of the public sector nurses and I would like to go on  
11 to say just to read a short story from our nurse  
12 {inaudible 05:05:20}. This is a book that was  
13 composed of a lot of short stories of nurse's  
14 experiences of patients. Nursing means looking  
15 beyond what is written on a patient's chart and  
16 understanding what is going on in a patient's life  
17 that impacts our health. A few days ago in the  
18 urology clinic, we saw a patient who had multiple  
19 comorbidities noted on his chart. The patient was  
20 diagnosed with urinary retention which required him  
21 to go to the clinic for change of his catheter. Each  
22 visit he would complain the ambulance companies  
23 didn't want to transport him to the hospital be he  
24 lived in a building with no elevator and the  
25 transporter would have to carry him for flights down.

2 It would take them, on average, two hours to get to  
3 the hospital in two hours to return home. I thought  
4 this was unacceptable and decided to see how I could  
5 help him. [inaudible 05:06:12] to ask here who  
6 provided services for outpatient. [inaudible  
7 05:06:17] arranged for a nurse to go to the patient's  
8 house to change the catheter for him right in the  
9 comfort of his own home. The patient was incredibly  
10 thankful for this and, even worse, a written letter  
11 but hand with his nondominant hand was very touching.  
12 This is basically one nurse. Her name is Delgar  
13 Fiono (sp?), our head urology department from Coney  
14 Island Hospital. It does go on to show-- I'll make  
15 this very brief. That [inaudible 05:06:50] in enough  
16 supply for the care at the public health hospital and  
17 in terms of an H gap (sic) score, we have suffered  
18 tremendously in terms of a low percentage in our H  
19 gap score and we have-- [inaudible 05:07:02] our  
20 triad agency is proposing that patient satisfaction,  
21 worker satisfaction, and efficiency of the system.  
22 None can exist without the other. So, if you don't  
23 have the resources in terms of the money availability  
24 to provide all these sources, which is approximately  
25 100 and-- 225 million dollars.

2 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank--

3 RAY BRIGGS: They're shortchanging the  
4 people of New York City.

5 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you. Thank you,  
6 Ray.

7 RAY BRIGGS: Thank you very much.

8 SPEAKER JOHNSON: I want to thank you for  
9 being here. NYSNA is so important. Nurses are so  
10 important for our city and have been proud to stand  
11 with you on advocating for safe staffing ratios  
12 across the system so that nurses still have to make  
13 really untenable decisions on who to care for because  
14 there is a shortage of nurses and units across the  
15 system, whether it be the ICU or NICU or any of the  
16 important units are staffed and currently are not  
17 staffed with an adequate number of nurses. So, for  
18 you to be here today on a day that you should be  
19 resting at home since you're not at work, you're not  
20 at Woodhull or Coney Island, I'm really grateful that  
21 you are here today. I'm really proud of the work  
22 that NYSNA does every single day and we look forward  
23 to continuing to work with you and advocating on your  
24 behalf. So, thank you.

2 RAY BRIGGS: Thank you. Thank you so  
3 much.

4 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Robin?

5 ROBIN VITALLE: Thank you, Speaker.  
6 Yes. Thank you, Speaker, Chair, and committee  
7 members. My name is Robin Vitalle. I serve as vice  
8 president of health strategies for the American heart  
9 Association here in New York City. Our testimony has  
10 numerous proposals relative to how the city can  
11 leverage important public funding in support of our  
12 mission, which is essentially the save lives. We  
13 need to break down to several proposals, initially  
14 looking at healthy eating and nutrition access,  
15 making sure that New Yorkers, regardless of what  
16 neighborhood they live in, can access and afford  
17 healthy food. We need to ask first say be  
18 expenditures focusing in on both the build  
19 environment, the establishment of a city's specific  
20 HFFI, as well as expanding the worker programs like  
21 sharp healthy, which support business owners to bring  
22 fruits and vegetables into existing bodegas are  
23 corner stores, as well as helping to expand the reach  
24 of health bucks, the snap incentive which, obviously,  
25 has tremendous evidence supporting low income New

2 Yorkers to have improved nutrition with access to  
3 produce. We are also looking at improvements to  
4 physical activity and making sure that, again,  
5 regardless of where you live, you can access safe  
6 space to be physically active. We applaud all the  
7 efforts looking at protected bike lanes and expanded  
8 greenways, as well as efforts within the school. The  
9 chair is keenly aware of the work that has been  
10 achieved under physical education and we applaud the  
11 impact that's been done under the PE works initiative  
12 and we understand that some funding might be  
13 baselined in this current budget and we are very  
14 excited about that. We need to encourage continued  
15 focus around the infrastructure within our schools to  
16 make sure that students have a safe space to have  
17 quality effective physical education, as well. We  
18 are also very interested in after school athletics  
19 and activities, making sure that our recreation  
20 fields are inappropriate shape and, obviously, there  
21 is a provided need for investing in that space, as  
22 well. We are also very focused on patient care. So,  
23 after individual experiences: heart attack, cardiac  
24 arrest, or stroke, what happens then. We are  
25 encouraging the city to look at the article 6



2 funding, especially around the beating hearts  
3 initiative to make sure that that program is kept in  
4 place and ultimately expanded and its reach and we,  
5 of course, want to make sure that tobacco control and  
6 other programs like that are not going to be  
7 impacted. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you.  
9 Next, please.

10 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Robin, you're amazing.  
11 We are always grateful to be able to--

12 ROBIN VITALLE: I was one second over.  
13 Sorry.

14 SPEAKER JOHNSON: No. We are grateful and  
15 always be able to work with you and I had the  
16 pleasure of doing it when I chaired the Health  
17 Committee. I know you've been doing it with Council  
18 member Levine, the new chair of the Health Committee,  
19 as well. Some recent bills he worked with Council  
20 member Kallos on. Happy Meals Bill. So, thank you--

21 ROBIN VITALLE: Thank you.

22 SPEAKER JOHNSON: for being here today, as  
23 always.

24 ROBIN VITALLE: Thank you for that.

2 MON YUCK YU: Good afternoon. My name is  
3 Mon Yuck Yu. I'm the executive vice president at the  
4 Academy of Medical and Public Health Services, a  
5 public health not-for-profit organization in Sunset  
6 Park, Brooklyn. We provide free clinical health  
7 screenings integrated with individualized health and  
8 literacy education services to the immigrant  
9 populations of New York City. Our priorities in FY  
10 20 are to address [inaudible 05:11:23] of health by  
11 removing barriers to health care, providing  
12 preventative health and screening services, mental  
13 health therapy, improving community literacy, and--  
14 in the English language and enabling our communities  
15 to reach socioeconomic stability and advocate for  
16 their own rights as New York City residents.  
17 Currently, nearly 90 percent of clients at our  
18 organizations do not have health insurance and have  
19 not seen a provider in decades. Over the past years,  
20 federal immigration threats, hate crimes, and  
21 violence, assimilated stress, and migratory trauma  
22 have increased anxieties among immigrant communities.  
23 Threats to resend DACA and terminate TPS programs  
24 will further disenfranchise more members of this  
25 community from accessing healthcare, leading to an

2 unprecedented increase in uninsured immigrants in the  
3 health care services through our organization.  
4 Sliding scale fees, even through the NYC cares  
5 program, despite being reduced, will still be  
6 unaffordable for many of our clients. Mental health  
7 services will average at around 90 the 200 dollars  
8 per client even under the system. Recently, the  
9 mayor announced detrimental articles 6 cuts to the  
10 immigrant health initiative. Again, there are about  
11 130,000 New Yorkers who lack health care access in  
12 New York right now due to their documentation status.  
13 In our current environment, community organizations  
14 like ours play an important role as a safety net to  
15 safety net to help fill a gap that are federal and  
16 state governments have created. Disinvestment and  
17 articles 6 funding will be detrimental for our free  
18 health, mental health, and social assistance  
19 programs, threatening not only the health outcomes of  
20 the immigrant communities, but also the public health  
21 of our city. The proposed cuts will lead to further  
22 limit our health programs including limiting our free  
23 mental health counseling to only 15 hours per week,  
24 reducing a third of our public health outreach

2 initiatives which are provided in a culturally  
3 competent manner by our community health workers.

4 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank-- Thank you. We  
5 appreciate you being--

6 MON YUCK YU: Thank you.

7 SPEAKER JOHNSON: here and your testimony,  
8 we'll review it. Thank you.

9 SCOTT DALY: Good afternoon, Speaker  
10 Johnson, Chair Dromm, Council members, staff. My  
11 name is Scott Daly and I am director of NYJYL's free  
12 tennis program for kids throughout the city. New  
13 York Junior Tennis and Learning has been a partner  
14 with the city of New York for many, many years. We  
15 serve every Council district throughout the city  
16 every year with a free program for kids. No one ever  
17 gets rejected from the age of 5 to 18. They can come  
18 to us. Most of these kids never seen a tennis racket  
19 and never have played before. As I speak to you  
20 right now at 3:30, we have 31 different locations  
21 throughout the five boroughs that are up and running  
22 providing something to do for these kids with trained  
23 coaches on a daily basis for five days a week. We  
24 have extended into standard a programs because many  
25 of these kids can't make the Monday to Friday

2 programs. In addition to the free community tennis  
3 programs, we have what we call STP, school time  
4 tennis program. We train in New York City DOE gym  
5 teacher to teach Jim to kids during the school day.  
6 We further support that by sending in our senior  
7 staff to further implement and get it off the ground  
8 in the schools with the hope that these cans will  
9 come out and play at our community tennis sites. We  
10 have advanced training for the kids. Let me just  
11 break down some numbers that you'll see in the  
12 testimony. Demographics last year. In total, we  
13 served 85,000 kids. Many of them through the STP,  
14 some-- most through the community tennis program.  
15 25 percent are Asian. 25 percent are African-  
16 American. 25 percent are Latino. We are open to  
17 everybody any time all through the year. Here's the  
18 big ask. 11 years ago we got cut. Our funding got  
19 refunded under the physical education and fitness  
20 initiative. We have remained stagnant at that  
21 number. It is increasingly impossible and difficult  
22 to go through this. Seven years ago, just let me  
23 leave you with this one thought. The minimum wage 11  
24 years ago-- I'm sorry. 11 years ago minimum wage  
25 was seven bucks. Or up to 15 dollars now.

2 Everything has increased. I need an increase. I  
3 want to thank the city Council for all you've done  
4 for the kids of the city of New York.

5 SPEAKER JOHNSON: How much do you get  
6 right now?

7 SCOTT DALY: 800.

8 SPEAKER JOHNSON: 800,000.

9 SCOTT DALY: Yes, sir.

10 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

11 CAROL GROSS: I'm Carol Gross. I'm a  
12 retired early childhood teacher educator. I work  
13 with teachers in the Bronx and pre-K and community-  
14 based organizations. We thank you for your  
15 commitment to the children of New York City. Through  
16 your pre-K for all and 3k initiatives, our  
17 communities are receiving high-quality education that  
18 would not be available otherwise. We appreciate your  
19 willingness to come to the table to discuss equal  
20 funding for early childhood services that occur  
21 outside the Department of Education buildings. More  
22 than 1300 programs are affected by the outcomes of  
23 these conversations. We send our support as the  
24 committee works to achieve a successful solution. We  
25 are a community-based organization. The outcomes of

2 negotiations will have a critical and far-reaching  
3 impact on low resourced communities. Many of our  
4 programs were started by parents and neighbors in the  
5 community who set out to bring early childhood  
6 education options to their community. We are central  
7 to our community and we employ families and  
8 neighbors. Community-based organizations are 60  
9 percent of your signature 3K and pre-K programs, over  
10 1000 programs in the city. The work is a joy and we  
11 are proud to do it. When you enter our schools, you  
12 see passionate educators who give children an  
13 education equal to their Department of Education  
14 colleagues and you see happy children learning. We  
15 have a unique opportunity to bring equity to your  
16 budget station you have a unique opportunity to bring  
17 equity to your education initiatives. This is a  
18 necessary step to make it a sustainable network of  
19 early childhood education. With equity and funding  
20 for students and fair enrollment practices, we can  
21 equalize salaries. Right now, teachers who have  
22 equal qualifications to the Department of Ed teachers  
23 are making far less and working far longer hours in  
24 these programs. We can eliminate pay for enrollment.  
25 We can provide adequate funding for indirect costs

2 and stabilize our communities. We urge you to pass  
3 the Council proposal and embrace equal funding for  
4 equal work and we invite you to visit our programs.

5 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you very much.  
6 Thank you all for being here today.

7 PANEL: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All right. Eunhye  
9 Grace Kim, Korean Community Services. Tazmin Uddin,  
10 Turning Point for Women and Families. Selvia Sictor,  
11 In the Home. Zara Ali, Our American Family Support  
12 Center. And Kasfia Aman, Coalition for Asia-American  
13 Children and Families. Okay. Good. So why don't  
14 you start?

15 EUNHYE GRACE KIM: Good afternoon. My name  
16 is Eunhye Grace Kim. I am an assistant director at  
17 Korean Community--

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just pull it a  
19 little close to you so it--

20 EUNHYE GRACE KIM: Okay.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: It's a little hard  
22 to hear.

23 EUNHYE GRACE KIM: So, good afternoon. My  
24 name is Eunhye Grace Kim and I'm an assistant  
25 director at Korean Community Services of Metropolitan



2 New York known as KCS. I appreciate the opportunity  
3 to share with you how the New York City articles 6  
4 budget cut will impact the lives of our community  
5 members. And the importance of restoring [inaudible  
6 05:19:50] program. In the 15 percent growing  
7 campaign for Asian Pacific American communities. I'd  
8 like to start by thanking the Speaker and the Chair  
9 and the Finance Committee for holding today's  
10 hearing. KCS has been the first social service  
11 nonprofit organization in New York serving Korean  
12 community and today KCS serves a daily average of  
13 1100 individuals through its six program sites.  
14 First, like to share some of our successes through  
15 articles 6 funding. FY 20 with access health funding  
16 we were able to conduct cultural and linguistic  
17 appropriate outreach events and educate 670 community  
18 members about basic knowledge of health insurance,  
19 Medicare, and their health care right. And,  
20 furthermore, through the vital help that is funding,  
21 our team discovered 26 new chronic patients and  
22 provided with service coordination for 76 Hep B  
23 patients because of this funding. We educate chronic  
24 Hep B patients on to manage their diseases as well as  
25 offer follow up [inaudible 05:20:54] to the patient

2 who did not have and cannot afford health insurance.  
3 And articles 6 budget, will affect these great  
4 services that we expect about 50,000 dollar cut from  
5 this funding. Second, I would like to urge city  
6 Council members to support MCCAP program. Managed  
7 care consumer assistant program as a speaker and it  
8 should have by providing 1 million dollars in funding  
9 in the FY 20 budget. MCCAP is designed to help New  
10 York City residents by providing one-on-one  
11 assistance to understand their medical bills and the  
12 case management. Just one thing specifically. There  
13 are many LEP, limited English proficiency, issues in  
14 our community and there is no place for us to  
15 referring them for this issue. So, with this MCCAP  
16 program, we will be able to at least one staff and  
17 provide necessary service for our community members  
18 from the community trusted organization with  
19 appropriate languages.

20 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you. We love KCS.  
21 Thank you for being here.

22 TASFIA RAHMAN: Good afternoon. My name  
23 is Tasfia Rahman and I am a policy coordinator at  
24 the Coalition for Asian American Children and  
25 Families, CACF. Thank you, Speaker Johnson and

2 Chairperson Dromm, in your leadership for advocating  
3 for key funding and resources necessary for  
4 communities to thrive in these challenging times.  
5 CACF leads the 15 percent and growing campaign, a  
6 group of over 45 Asian-lead and serving organization  
7 that work together to ensure that New York City's  
8 budget protects the most vulnerable Asian-Pacific  
9 American New Yorkers. Campaign members employ  
10 thousands of New Yorkers and serve hundreds of  
11 thousands of our members. Currently, the APA  
12 community is the fastest growing group in New York  
13 City, nearly doubling every decade since 1970 and  
14 currently making up 15 percent of the population.  
15 Unfortunately, current levels of public funding for  
16 APA communities remain disproportionate to our  
17 community's needs. Nearly a quarter of EPA's live in  
18 poverty, the highest of all racial groups in NYC and  
19 a majority of us are foreign-born whales of the  
20 highest linguistic isolation rate at 42 percent. So,  
21 I have a longer written testimony where I'm--

22 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Yes.

23 TASFIA RAHMAN: listing out the  
24 recommendations, but I just wanted to highlight two.  
25 What this means is that we have people struggling to

2 find suitable high-paying jobs to support their  
3 families in these hard times. Rising housing and  
4 living costs have four-star communities into  
5 overcrowded housing and schools. Contrary to the  
6 Asian model minority myth, we still hear about  
7 stories of APA immigrant children that continue to  
8 interpret for their parents to just have access to  
9 vital services such as health insurance or care. We  
10 have immigrant parents wanting to be more involved in  
11 their children's schools, but being too uncomfortable  
12 or embarrassed by their limited English proficiency  
13 to do so. As a result, feelings of isolation are  
14 common among children, yet our communities, as well  
15 as organizations that serve these communities still  
16 lack the resources to provide critical services to  
17 the most marginalized APA's. Therefore, we do think  
18 the Council for calling on the Mayor to invest in  
19 initiatives and programs such as the 70 million  
20 dollars in annual bridge program funding that was  
21 promised by the mayor years ago. We want to ensure--  
22 we still want to ensure that there are opportunities  
23 for largely immigrant and limited English proficient  
24 populations to access resources and programs to  
25 obtain the skills they need for well-paying jobs,

2 especially individuals like my mother still sees  
3 herself as an undereducated Muslim woman and that she  
4 would never meet the requirements for current price  
5 level program. And I just wanted that this one  
6 thing. We also thank you for your leadership in  
7 calling for investments in social and emotional well-  
8 being of children. Right now in our community we  
9 have students telling us that they don't know why  
10 they bother getting out of bed, why it's worth going  
11 to school when they don't know why they are going. I  
12 don't blame them because many of our families are in  
13 survival mode. Our students are not given the  
14 opportunity to discover their own interests and  
15 unique talents. Instead, schools are forced to  
16 assess the value of our students through over testing  
17 and standards that do not address the needs of our  
18 students. Thank you so much for giving me the--

19 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

20 TASFIA RAHMAN: opportunity to testify.

21 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

22 ZARA ALI: Thank you to the New York  
23 City Council committee and the Finance Committee for  
24 inviting community-based organizations to comment on  
25 budget proposals for FY 20. My name is Zara Ali.

2 And the development communication manager at that  
3 Arab-American Family Support Center. I'm honored to  
4 testify with 15 percent and growing campaign today on  
5 behalf of immigrant and refugee family use throughout  
6 New York City. At the Arab-American Family Support  
7 Center, we have strengthened immigrant and refugee  
8 families since 1994. Over the past year, our trauma  
9 informed home-based services kept 830 children from  
10 329 families safely in their homes and out of foster  
11 care. We assisted over 1200 survivors of gender-  
12 based violence, offering case management, crisis  
13 intervention support at family justice centers across  
14 the city. We also launched a new mental health  
15 initiative to address the heightened risk of  
16 depression and anxiety immigrants face in this  
17 atmosphere of uncertainty and hostility. Immigrant  
18 community members face multiple challenges including  
19 language barriers, limited education and resources,  
20 and unfamiliarity with our complex social service and  
21 healthcare delivery systems. We understand the needs  
22 of our community members and we recognize the city  
23 Council is committed to their health and well-being.  
24 Today we call on the New York City Council and the  
25 committee on finance to ensure our budget safeguards

2 and expands programs essential for immigrant New  
3 Yorkers. For FY 2020, we respectfully request  
4 continued and full funding of city Council  
5 initiatives that provide life-saving and  
6 transformative services for immigrant families.  
7 Including the domestic violence and empowerment  
8 initiative, the initiative for immigrant survivors of  
9 domestic violence, as well as compass and sonic  
10 elementary school programs. We also request  
11 increased city support for our community-based  
12 organizations that have relied on access health  
13 funding in the NYS match. Robust funding for census  
14 outreach, and finally we thank the Council for your  
15 advocacy to ensure adult literacy initiative is set  
16 to 12 million for community-based organizations.  
17 Thank you for your attention and we hope the city  
18 Council will continue including organizations that  
19 work intimately with immigrants and refugees and  
20 conversation about community needs.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
22 much.

23 SYLVIA SIKDER: Thank you, Speaker  
24 Johnson and Chair Dromm, and the members of the  
25 committee for giving me the opportunity to testify.

2 My name is Sylvia Sikder. I'm the program manager at  
3 India Home. India Home is a nonprofit organization  
4 founded by the community leaders and we have the  
5 population who are 100 percent foreign-born and 80  
6 percent of them are limited English proficiency,  
7 which limits their access to mainstream services.  
8 India Home and other immigrant led organizations that  
9 it serves seniors fill a critical gap in the  
10 surveying and intersection only vulnerable  
11 population. The city Council has been an invaluable  
12 partner in our efforts to provide these critical  
13 services to the immigrant older adults. However, our  
14 community resources are running thin. Despite our  
15 senior clients increasing day by day, the changes in  
16 the Mayor's budget do not reflect the growing need of  
17 the senior's population. The budget cuts for the  
18 mayor's executive budget for FY 20 will affect to the  
19 operational support to culturally competent and  
20 linguistically accessible non-DIFTA senior centers  
21 like ours. India Home tries to address the growing  
22 needs of senior center services, however, we are in  
23 need of more expense funding. We understand the city  
24 is facing budget cuts in the state level. However,  
25 the community we are serving are facing increasing



2 challenges to lead a safe and steady life.

3 Therefore, we have some recommendations. Creative

4 [inaudible 05:28:21] funding should be expanded to

5 include more diverse organizations. Funding for

6 technologies support and senior centers should be

7 made a priority the way that it is in the school.

8 Transportation is a dire need for the seniors.

9 Funding needs to go beyond capital to include

10 operating expenses for the vehicles. The demand for

11 case management is extremely high in immigrant

12 populations due to the language barriers. Funding

13 for case management has to be increased for this

14 population's needs to be met. Housing for a diverse

15 population needs to be funded for a small number of

16 units to [inaudible 05:28:55] of cultural needs of

17 this group. Asian led organization provides the most

18 effective culturally competent and language

19 accessible services that has the largest impact in

20 addressing the needs of our community. New York City

21 Council must continue to support the increase of the

22 discretionary dollars given to the Asian community-

23 based organization. Thank you for your time and

24 consideration. Thank you.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
3 much.

4 TAZMIN UDDIN: Good afternoon. My name  
5 is Tazmin Uddin. I'm the youth program coordinator  
6 at Turning Point for Women and Families. Thank you  
7 for the opportunity to testify today. Turning Point  
8 for Women and Families was founded in 2004 and is the  
9 first nonprofit to address domestic violence in New  
10 York City's Muslim community. Turning Point helps  
11 Muslim women and girls affected by domestic violence  
12 empower themselves and transform their lives through  
13 a wide range of culturally competent services focused  
14 on safety and self-sufficiency. Today, we have  
15 worked directly with over 2500 women, adolescent  
16 girls, and children. The situations of our survivors  
17 are made more difficult by language or cultural  
18 barriers, poverty, and limited knowledge about their  
19 rights. Turning Point is grateful that the city  
20 Council has not only restored, but increased funding  
21 allocated for the immigrant opportunities initiative.  
22 This increase will help provide better access to  
23 legal assistance and programs that will help our  
24 survivors obtain the language skills they need to  
25 secure citizenship and decent jobs. Since 2015,

1 Turning Point has offered ESOL classes to help senior  
2 Muslim women, all of whom are immigrants, and learn  
3 English and pass the citizenship exam. In this past  
4 year alone, four of our seniors have obtained  
5 citizenship and six more in the pipeline. Programs  
6 such as ours that provide adult literacy services and  
7 native tongues are crucial to sustain especially in  
8 the current anti-Muslim and anti-emigrant climate.  
9 Turning point urges the city Council to increase  
10 funding for adult literacy programs and senior  
11 centers for immigrant populations. While city  
12 Council has allocated 10 million for senior centers,  
13 turning point joins the 15 percent and growing  
14 campaign and asking for 2.8 million to be allocated  
15 specifically for senior centers for immigrant  
16 populations. These centers provide emigrant seniors  
17 with the place to find community and break isolation  
18 while learning to be independent. When our seniors  
19 participate and our ESOL classes, they are not only  
20 learning English, but are also learning to advocate  
21 for themselves. Nine of our seniors attended APA  
22 advocacy Day on February 27th, 2019. They stood on  
23 the steps of City Hall to advocate for more equitable  
24

2 funding for immigrant senior services and they are  
3 counting on your support. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
5 much. I'm very familiar with everybody on the panel.  
6 I know your needs a while and we are going to fight  
7 for you. So, let's say. Okay.

8 SPEAKER JOHNSON: I want to thank you all  
9 for being here. You all and then really tremendous  
10 allies and advocates, not just, of course in the  
11 current year that we are in, but year after year  
12 after year. The organizations that you represent do  
13 such a tremendous amount of work and provide a  
14 tremendous level of service for New Yorkers and it is  
15 really amazing to see, it was five, I believe, but  
16 for women of color up there advocating in a strong,  
17 bold, amazing way for New Yorkers. The greatest part  
18 of New York City is our diversity. The fact that 38  
19 percent of New Yorkers were not born in the United  
20 States of America, but came here with dreams and  
21 aspirations for themselves and for their families.  
22 And so, to have you up there advocating on behalf of  
23 so many New Yorkers, especially vulnerable New  
24 Yorkers, is really, really key and we are  
25 tremendously grateful for your advocacy and for your

2 leadership and for your partnership. So, thank you  
3 so much for being here today.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. All  
5 right. Don Cowl. Levka Starcova. Quandell Freeman.  
6 Asia Avery. And Emma Rayhack.

7 EMMA RAYHACK: Do we have to [inaudible  
8 05:33:22]--

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Make sure we start  
10 over here.

11 EMMA RAYHACK: I-- Okay.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yep.

13 EMMA RAYHACK: Okay. I thought I had  
14 three minutes, so I'll go fast, but apologies in  
15 advance. I'm here on behalf of project Reach, as  
16 program within CPC. My name is Emma Rayhack. I am  
17 17 years old. I live in central Harlem and I'm  
18 currently a junior at Eleanor Roosevelt high school.  
19 I am a member of my school leadership team or SLT, a  
20 cofounder and leader of my school's equity club, and  
21 I am also a senior member of a restorative justice  
22 program called the Harlem Youth Corp. my involvement  
23 in these columns and organizations over the past two  
24 years has allowed me to develop a very close and  
25 personal relationship with project reach. A full

2 description of the things I have learned and the  
3 support I have received from project reach cannot be  
4 translated in a three-minute testimony. I am Asian,  
5 but my first words were in Dutch. I live in the  
6 majority black neighborhood of central Harlem with a  
7 white immigrant single mom. The process of  
8 acknowledging my privilege, while also uplifting the  
9 less represented parts of my identity as an  
10 experience that I struggle with daily. Project reach  
11 is taught me what it means to live in intersectional  
12 life. They have taught me how to differentiate  
13 between race and ethnicity and how to differentiate  
14 from sex from gender. Project reach has taught me  
15 the history of racism that we don't learn in school  
16 and they have taught me how to be aware of my own  
17 unconscious biases. Project reach is taught me what  
18 it's like to be part of a safe environment that  
19 empowers, rather than protects and they have taught  
20 me to create that kind of save space on my own.  
21 Project reach has taught me how to turn anger into  
22 productive energy. They have taught me how to care  
23 and take care and they have taught me how to ask for  
24 help. Had I been exposed to the project reach in the  
25 work that they do earlier or more extensively, my

2 experiences as a student and as a human who is part  
3 of society, those experiences would've been much more  
4 positive, much less strenuous because, from project  
5 reach I have learned that the things I carry are not  
6 burdens. There are tools to empower. So I hope  
7 project reach will be given the resources necessary  
8 to expand their work as much as possible because the  
9 work that they do does not simply educate or support.  
10 It shifts culture, dismantling systems of  
11 discrimination one conversation at a time. Thank  
12 you.

13 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Tell me your name,  
14 again.

15 EMMA RAYHACK: Emma Rayhack.

16 SPEAKER JOHNSON: You're unbelievable.

17 EMMA RAYHACK: Thank you.

18 SPEAKER JOHNSON: You give me help for our  
19 future and for--

20 EMMA RAYHACK: Thank you.

21 SPEAKER JOHNSON: and for the city. That  
22 was such a moving--

23 EMMA RAYHACK: [interposing] I was  
24 Harvey Epstein's field director--

25 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Oh--

2 EMMA RAYHACK: so I feel like we've  
3 crossed paths.

4 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Well, you're amazing and  
5 I'm so grateful that you're here today and it was so  
6 moving to hear about just incredibly heartfelt and  
7 wonderfully eloquent testimony from you today and  
8 I'm--

9 EMMA RAYHACK: Thank you.

10 SPEAKER JOHNSON: really, really grateful  
11 that you are here today. So, thank you.

12 ASHA AVERY: Thank you. My name is Asha  
13 Avery and I am a senior at Eleanor Roosevelt high  
14 school and I am here to testify also on behalf of  
15 project reach and the CPC. I am the granddaughter of  
16 Colombian immigrants, while also being African-  
17 American on my father's side. I can trace my  
18 family's history back to the 1700s as slaves in South  
19 Carolina and our families continue to live there to  
20 the present day. I graduated from Manhattan Country  
21 School when I was 14 years old. I went there my  
22 entire life and I have had the honor of working with  
23 Chairwoman Helen Rosenthal with her work that she's  
24 also done with our middle school. I know she's not  
25 here right now, but as I entered high school and got



2 to Eleanor Roosevelt, was one of the first places  
3 where I was really able to see the important work  
4 that has been done by project reach and it was the  
5 first time that I was ever able to see actual  
6 meaningful work done post Brown versus Ed to address  
7 the inequalities that have been built into our system  
8 from the beginning of our school systems, but really  
9 addressing the inequalities that don't go just  
10 between integrating schools. That go beyond simply  
11 race, but also the intersection holiday of privilege,  
12 as a person who has had a lot of privileges in life  
13 to have gone to private school for most of her life  
14 and has lived a very privileged life, also  
15 understanding the complexities of race and gender and  
16 how those things play into interactions in the micro  
17 aggressions in the different things that happened  
18 within a school system when you have mostly white  
19 students with few students of color. Project reach  
20 has been the first organization that I've ever seen  
21 and has done such meaningful work with me and  
22 empowered me in such a serious way to understand and  
23 be able to have these conversations with my  
24 classmates and to have these conversations to reach  
25 out to students who might feel marginalized for

2 different reasons and to acknowledge and accept their  
3 experiences with them, also, the context of different  
4 privileges, so you thank you. Yeah.

5 SPEAKER JOHNSON: How old are you?

6 ASHA AVERY: I'm 18.

7 SPEAKER JOHNSON: I am like slack jawed  
8 sitting up here. I am like in awe of the amazing,  
9 amazing young adults that are here today. Thank you.

10 LUVKA STARCOVA: Hello. My name is Luvka  
11 Starcova. I am here on behalf of project reach  
12 internship. I am pansexual and gender fluid. My  
13 pronouns are they/them and for most of my life I've  
14 not been able to express myself the way I wanted to.  
15 The project reach internship for me, personally, is a  
16 very safe space. A safe space that my home and my  
17 family's not been able to provide, but I believe in  
18 chosen family because, as the saying goes, blood of  
19 the covenant is thicker than the water of the world.  
20 So, to me, many people in the internship are my new  
21 family or at least the family I chose to have and  
22 also project reach has helped me learn to discuss  
23 topics that are never brought up in schools or in  
24 families and thanks to project reach internship, I  
25 now can facilitate discussion within my school and

2 within other communities and the internship has  
3 helped me connect with other members of the LGBTQ  
4 plus community. So, to me, it's a safe and secure  
5 space where I can express my views and opinions  
6 without fear of being harassed or judged for what I  
7 believe in.

8           SPEAKER JOHNSON: That's very brave of you  
9 to be here today and to talk about that experience.  
10 And one of the things that I have learned, even  
11 though our experiences are, of course, very, very  
12 different, but as someone who is part of the LGBT  
13 community that has had an affirming family, I still  
14 have had have the ability to have a chosen family, as  
15 well. And I know that Council member Dromm would  
16 similarly say about one of the things that you learn  
17 as an LGBT person-- not just LGBT people, but people  
18 that have been marginalized, is the ability to make  
19 decisions on how we choose who we get to spend our  
20 lives with and who we get to interact with and bond  
21 with. So, to hear that experiences very, very moving  
22 and I'm very grateful for your bravery and being here  
23 today and discussing it so openly.

24           LUVKA STARCOVA: Thank you.

2 QUANDELL FREEMAN: Hi. My name is Quan--  
3 Oh. This mic's on, too.

4 LUVKA STARCOVA: Sorry.

5 QUANDELL FREEMAN: My name is Quandell.  
6 I'm 17. My pronouns are he/him. I'm black, Native  
7 American, and Latino. I've pretty much grown up in a  
8 military background and a little bit of everywhere.  
9 So I've been turned up project reach over the years  
10 and pretty much I go to the school Urban Assembly for  
11 Emergency Management where I'm currently a captain  
12 for my wrestling team. One of my closest friends and  
13 fellow teammates is gay, but he's scare due to the  
14 fact of society, so he identifies as bisexual. He's  
15 scared of the sexism that comes with being gay and  
16 pretty much the fear of what-- not knowing what's  
17 going to happen and like not being accepted by his  
18 teammates, by his classmates, even by his opponent  
19 due to the fact of him being openly gay. So he  
20 identifies as bisexual. With project reach, it's  
21 more of an anti-discrimination like environment and  
22 it fills more environments like this and pretty much  
23 helps kids broaden their view. I feel like he  
24 wouldn't have this fear and wouldn't fear coming out  
25 and wouldn't fear pretty much being truly who he is

2 on the inside and that he knows he's going to be  
3 accepted by everyone. But it's not like that. But  
4 it feels more like a place like project reach, it  
5 would be.

6 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you very much. So  
7 moving the hero for review today. And Don Cowl, you  
8 have a tough act to follow after these four  
9 incredible testifies are here today. And I want to  
10 thank you all.

11 DON COWL: I'm glad I only have two  
12 minutes. Well, I've been with project reach for 35  
13 years. Unlike these young people, I wasn't able to  
14 move on, so I stayed. I'm a little emotional  
15 because, you know, we all do what we do hoping that  
16 we can have some impact and this is the second year  
17 that Catherine Chambers, my coworker, has not been  
18 able to be here with us because of challenges she  
19 faces in spite of the fact that she is an excellent  
20 trainer. She came to us-- Catherine is Bengali  
21 Muslin transgender female. Came to us at 17 and is  
22 now 23 and is my partner in crime, if you will. We  
23 do the internship. As a result of the  
24 antidiscrimination clinics we've done and, in your  
25 packet, you'll see that we have five of them that are

2 today clinics, 12 hours each working with young  
3 people and then we repeat it with adults who work  
4 with young people because we feel that the only way  
5 that you can change culture the way that Emma  
6 described is by working with everybody. But it's  
7 been a real challenge because we've lost quite a bit  
8 of money and, if it were not for this Speaker and  
9 Council member Dromm, Council member Chin and a  
10 number of other-- in the city Council in general, we  
11 wouldn't be doing our work. We would have been  
12 closed down. In spite of that, I would say that, in  
13 2017/2018-- Well, last fiscal year, two years ago we  
14 served about 5000 people, the two of us, after we  
15 reduced our staff by four. And this past year, we  
16 served over 7000. And still had to find the time to  
17 do an internship, which is our in-house program and  
18 to be in places like Scholars Academy out in the Far  
19 Rockaway. We were just there for two days. We were  
20 up at Destination Tomorrow, which I'm proud to say is  
21 the new LGBT Center in the Bronx. It is actually run  
22 by transgender people of color. But we're getting  
23 tired. And so, we appreciate what the city Council  
24 has been able to do. We don't seem to be able to get  
25 state funding and so were asking for an increase so

2 that we can get more staff people, more trainers,  
3 because, as a result of our wonderful government in  
4 DC, we have more work than we can handle and we would  
5 like to be able to do more work and I would have to  
6 say that our soldiers are sitting here with me and we  
7 are hoping we can get more so for. We have also  
8 applied for the trends equity initiative because  
9 Catherine has been a magnet for transgender and  
10 gender nonconforming and non-binary young people and  
11 we are hoping to be able to get enough money so that  
12 they can have a youth run trends under safe space  
13 called-- I can't remember. What was the name of it?  
14 [inaudible 05:46:58]. A room of one's own or  
15 something like that. Anyway, with your support, were  
16 hoping to grow or work. The last part I want to say  
17 is that we actually have a center that we can afford  
18 anymore because we had it with half 1 million dollars  
19 of state funding and we now house the American Indian  
20 community house which lost all of its funding and,  
21 fortunately, Council member Chin has provided some  
22 funding for them and were still trying to figure out  
23 how to access the funding, but they are the only  
24 organization serving indigenous and native people and  
25 we are trying to get the Council and possibly the

2 mayor to bring back some thing that Dinkins had which  
3 was a commission on indigenious people. And right  
4 now, the only people we are talking to at the moment  
5 is Nicolotta who is under Immigrant Services for the  
6 mayor's office. And so we ask you to consider--

7 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

8 DON COWL: helping us--

9 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you, Don.

10 DON COWL: help the community.

11 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you all for being  
12 here today. Thank you so much. Okay. Next up we  
13 have Jessica Yeager from WIN, Women in Need.  
14 Mercedes Jennings for the Partnership for the  
15 Homeless. Catherine Trapani for Homeless Services  
16 United. Marcus Diego from the Fair Futures  
17 Coalition. Annie Juano from the New York Junior  
18 League and Sarah Chiles from the Fair Futures  
19 Campaign. Okay. Begin in whatever order you'd like.  
20 Just make sure the red light is on on the microphone  
21 in front of you.

22 [background comments]

23 JESSICA YEAGER: Good afternoon. My name  
24 is Jessica Yeager and I am the vice president of  
25 policy and planning for Women in Need, New York



2 City's largest provider and shelter and services for  
3 homeless families with children. Thank you for the  
4 opportunity to testify today. First, I'd like to  
5 address two issues currently pending before the  
6 council. First, social workers and schools. There  
7 is substantial evidence that housing instability and  
8 homelessness have serious consequences for a child's  
9 education. WIN is asking for the Council's continued  
10 leadership in ensuring funding for 100 bridging the  
11 gap social workers to help homeless students stay on  
12 course. The second pending issue is housing set  
13 asides. Among the most daunting obstacles faced by  
14 homeless families is New York City's scant supply of  
15 affordable rental apartments. To afford the 2016  
16 median asking rent of 2695 dollars in New York City,  
17 a family would need to work about four jobs at the  
18 current 15 dollar minimum wage. WIN strongly  
19 supports efforts to increase the set aside for  
20 homeless families in city subsidized properties.  
21 Next, I'd like to highlight for you to other key  
22 issues that WIN plans to work on in the coming year.  
23 The first is housing voucher reform. The current  
24 city [inaudible 05:50:21] rent limit of 1557 dollars  
25 a month for three or four person household is too low

2 for New York City. Increasing the limit to 2100  
3 dollars a month would open access to two-bedroom  
4 apartments in 16 different neighborhoods,  
5 dramatically increasing the pool of units affordable  
6 with the voucher. SODA, the city's one-year rental  
7 voucher, assumes families will be able to pay the  
8 full rent without assistance at the end of the year.  
9 SODA families with continued financial need should be  
10 eligible for continued rental assistance without  
11 needing to return to shelter. The final issue I'd  
12 like to mention quickly is the need to support  
13 children not only in school, as noted, but also in  
14 shelter. Shelters must be equipped to help families  
15 address their children social, emotional, and  
16 educational well-being. At WIN, we've been able to  
17 do that because we have that flexible funding, but  
18 social workers are not widely available across the  
19 family shelter system for children. There's more  
20 detail in my written testimony. Thank you very much.

21 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

22 MERCEDES JENNINGS: Good afternoon.

23 Thank you council for allowing me to speak today. My  
24 name is Mercedes Jennings and I have been working for  
25 the Partnership for the Homeless for four and a half

2 years. The partnership is a not-for-profit that  
3 strives to eliminate the root causes of homelessness  
4 and we actually believe that it is solvable. And  
5 then, with that, the partnership defined homelessness  
6 as an economic circumstance and a housing  
7 affordability issue that continues to negatively  
8 affect families. Currently, the vast majority of the  
9 population and the shelter system or families, making  
10 the largest group residing in shelter children.  
11 Children miss an average of 10 school days from the  
12 moment of families evicted from housing to have been  
13 found eligible for shelter placement at PATH. As DOE  
14 staff are aware or anyone working in the department  
15 of education, 10 consecutive school days would make  
16 them ineligible for promotion and doubt of being held  
17 over in school. Suffering from homelessness should  
18 not be the reason children continue to be  
19 disconnected from their schools. The partnership  
20 applauds the administration's efforts so far by  
21 bridging the gap program, as well as adding more  
22 staff to PATH. However, all the assets that the city  
23 has put forth the sponsor would be in vain if the  
24 root problem keeping people in their homes is and  
25 also addressed. First families that are entering

2 path, the partnership supports the position of having  
3 newly constructed shelters placed in the  
4 neighborhoods that the children were evicted from.  
5 This solution limits the number and severity of  
6 school disruptions that typically impact families  
7 transitioning to homelessness. Additionally, in  
8 order to keep children in school, we must first keep  
9 children in housing. Preventing infection is not  
10 only cost-effective, but prevents homelessness today  
11 and tomorrow. The most effective way to ensure  
12 children's access to education is for the  
13 administration to make a robust investment into  
14 financial assistance services. The partnership has  
15 already met with a couple of Council members and will  
16 continue to do so in order to advance this effort.  
17 We ask the administration for the 2020 fiscal year--  
18 I'm about to finish off-- to focus on investing more  
19 funding into eviction prevention work. This policy  
20 focus will help keep children stable so that they  
21 could stay in school, thus preventing the likelihood  
22 of future homelessness in New York City. Thank you  
23 for your time.

24 CATHERINE TRAPANI: Thank you. My name  
25 is Catherine Trapani. I'm the executive director of

2 Homeless Services United. We had the coalition of  
3 the mission driven nonprofit homeless service  
4 providers in New York City. I want to do first is to  
5 express my gratitude to the city Council and Speaker  
6 Johnson. You included many of our priorities in your  
7 budget response in the preliminary budget including  
8 social workers for homeless families placed in  
9 hotels, which is hugely important, bridging the gap  
10 social workers in schools for students living in  
11 temporary housing, educational support Center at  
12 PATH, and funding to fill the gap between providers  
13 indirect costs to contract reimbursement rates from  
14 the city. So, all of those things are hugely  
15 important and we thank you for your support. I want  
16 to touch on a couple of things that weren't in there  
17 and the next minute. One is the model budget  
18 implementation for Department of Homeless Services  
19 shelters. We are still waiting for money to be out  
20 the door that was committed at least two budget  
21 cycles ago at this point. So, we need urgent action  
22 to accelerate the pace of registering the amendments  
23 and contracts on the DHS budget side. I also want to  
24 talk a little bit about prevention, to piggyback on  
25 the Partnership for the Homeless Testimony. The city

2 has recently, due to a budget shift from the state,  
3 taken over the state faheps (sic) program and the HRA  
4 budget, while it does increase funding to account for  
5 the differences in the rent levels for state faheps,  
6 and does not provide funding for the CBO's to  
7 actually facilitate enrollment and that is a huge  
8 loss. We need to keep people in their homes and we  
9 need the 3 million dollars for the CBO's that are  
10 facilitating faheps reim-- enrollment to be put back  
11 into the budget. So that's a huge need on the  
12 prevention side for, frankly, very little money. And  
13 I just want to make sure that you are aware of that  
14 shift because it hasn't really been talked about that  
15 much, but reiterate my support for, certainly, the  
16 service rich environment within the shelters for  
17 those who to become homeless, including bridging the  
18 gap social workers, and the social workers at hotels.  
19 Thank you.

20 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you. Of course,  
21 speaking to the Chair of our General Welfare  
22 Committee, Steve Levin, about these issues throughout  
23 the cycle-- throughout the process. That would be  
24 very helpful. Thank you.

25 CATHERIN TRAPANI: Yeah. Thank you.

2                   MARCUS DIEGO:        Good afternoon. My name  
3 is Marcus Diego and I'm here to advocate for funding  
4 for Fair Futures Model for Foster Youth. All young  
5 people in foster care need individual support with  
6 their academic and career goals and we are not ready  
7 to be on our own at age 21. We need someone who we  
8 can trust and who won't be here for us until age 26,  
9 through all of the transitions in our lives. That  
10 said, through the Fair Futures Campaign, we are  
11 asking the city for 15 million so that all young  
12 people in foster care can have a coach in the support  
13 they need from sixth grade to age 26. We, as foster  
14 youth, as well, need to get support for the next  
15 generation. It was out of foster care agency and I  
16 grew up in the system for 16 years and they didn't  
17 have a coaching program. They told me that they  
18 didn't have enough funding for a program like that,  
19 but I eventually found a mentor. My mentor help me  
20 become the person that I am today. He's been there  
21 for me through the beginning of my college career and  
22 will be there to the very end. All young people in  
23 foster care need a coach because we grow up every day  
24 without families and have caseworkers who don't  
25 really care for us. We have to move from home to

2 home when no one understands us. We are asking the  
3 city for 50 million so all young people can have  
4 support from sixth grade through age 26. Thank you.

5 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Marcus, thank you for  
6 being here. Very important to hear your personal  
7 testimony, so thank you.

8 ANNIE WONG: Hello. My name is Annie Wong  
9 and I'm a member of the New York Junior League which  
10 is a nonprofit organization of women committed to  
11 promoting volunteer is on, developing women's  
12 potential, and improving communities through the  
13 affect of action leadership of trained volunteers.  
14 Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the  
15 importance of increasing the number of bridging the  
16 gap social workers for students living in shelters.  
17 I am reading the following testimony on behalf of  
18 Jane Delaney, a parent who was homeless and was  
19 unable to be here in person due to her child's  
20 schedule. She wanted to make sure her voice was  
21 heard.

22 This is the testimony of Jane Delaney: I  
23 live in a shelter with my child, Riley, who is seven  
24 years old and is diagnosed with autism. My son and I  
25 entered the shelter in Manhattan towards the end of



2 the school year last year. My son began attending PS  
3 129 in Manhattan which had the 1211 special education  
4 class he needed. I was very lucky that PS 129 has a  
5 bridging the gap social worker, Ms. Friedman. Ms.  
6 Friedman made sure that Riley was the most  
7 comfortable he could be at a new school. She could  
8 get all the paperwork in place for his individualized  
9 education program, IEP. She reached out to me more  
10 than anyone in any school ever had before. This was  
11 a point in my life when Riley and I needed support  
12 and Ms. Friedman was truly a godsend. The city then  
13 transferred Riley and me from our shelter in  
14 Manhattan to a shelter in the Bronx. I faced a  
15 difficult choice. As a child with autism, Riley has  
16 a lot of trouble with transitions and I did not want  
17 him to switch schools. PS 129 had the special  
18 education class he needed and he was use to his  
19 teachers, his friends, and classroom routines.  
20 However, long bus ride was also very hard on Riley.  
21 Ms. Friedman got right to work. She reached out to  
22 the right person to get us moved back to a shelter in  
23 Manhattan near his school. Ms. Friedman provides  
24 counseling to my son once a week, helping him with  
25 his social emotional skills. When he has had a bad

2 day in class, his teachers can call Ms. Friedman to  
3 help. As a social worker, she has the training to  
4 know what to do to address Riley's needs and help  
5 him, so I'm truly grateful for bridging the gap  
6 social work program, but what about all the children  
7 whose schools don't have a bridging the gap social  
8 worker? Every child and every parent deserves to  
9 have the support while living in shelter. I hope the  
10 city will pay more for bridging the gap social  
11 workers. Just think about all the children who would  
12 be helped. The children are our future and we should  
13 give them what they need to succeed. Thank you.

14 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you. I'm really  
15 proud. This counsel, we were the advocates and  
16 champions for bridging the work social workers last  
17 year. Bridging the gap social workers last year. We  
18 fought for in our budget response. You saw some  
19 monies show up in the mayor's executive budget. We  
20 are going to continue to beat the drum on this  
21 because we know how important it is for homeless  
22 families and children in the shelter system, but also  
23 in hotels. And we need to ensure these young people,  
24 especially when you have a significant number of  
25 schools where a large percentage are unstable he

2 housed families and homeless families, that those  
3 schools have social workers, but also the shelters  
4 and the hotels themselves have it. So, I'm really  
5 grateful to hear Ms. Friedman's personal testimony  
6 and I thank you for reading it here today.

7 ANNIE WONG: Yes. Of course.

8 SARAH CHILES: Thank you. Hi. My name  
9 is Sarah Chiles. I'm the executive director of the  
10 Red Lake Horowitz foundation. And we provide  
11 financial support for the Fair Futures Campaign. We  
12 are a philanthropy dedicated to improving the foster  
13 care system in New York. In recent years, we've  
14 granted close to one and a half million dollars to  
15 ACS for technical assistance and over 4 million  
16 dollars to New York City foster care agencies. I  
17 want to thank Chairperson Dromm for permitting this  
18 testimony regarding Fair Futures to support youth in  
19 an aging out of foster care with critical coaching  
20 and education supports from age 14 to 26. And we  
21 thank the entire counsel for recognizing the value of  
22 Fair Futures and its response to the 2020 preliminary  
23 budget and especially to Speaker Johnson. Thank you  
24 very much. With 100 organizations in the fair  
25 futures coalition rallies and all five boroughs and

2 tons of press, we know you have heard a lot lately  
3 about the critical improvements in education and  
4 career outcomes this model achieves for young people  
5 who have experienced foster care. But what you  
6 haven't heard a lot about is the important role  
7 coaches play in stabilizing foster care placements,  
8 reducing our cities reliance on expensive residential  
9 care and improving permanency outcomes for our youth  
10 in foster care. Often, the behaviors of young people  
11 in foster care stem from trauma and the need for  
12 attention, emotional support, and someone to believe  
13 in them. Coaches meet all these needs and help young  
14 people thrive in homes, rather than in institutions.  
15 In fiscal year 2018, Graham Wyndham, of terrific  
16 foster care agency here in the city, there permanency  
17 rate where most youth received coaching and  
18 residential care is 14.5 percent, compared to a  
19 system wide average of 10.3 percent. If this model  
20 were taken system wide, it's estimated that the  
21 improved permanency for youth in foster care would  
22 save the city up to 7 million dollars annually. I'd  
23 also like to just know that several foundations have  
24 committed 2 million dollars to match public funds and  
25 we are investing in infrastructure to track results

2 and train staff, but we need 50 million dollars in  
3 public funding to scale these successes across the  
4 city. Lastly, I would just like to know that several  
5 young people have submitted testimony today in  
6 support of Fair Futures. They were not able to calm  
7 because they are at a training for the foster youth  
8 shadow today, which is on May 29 and we invite you  
9 and all councilmembers to please talk to these young  
10 people about Fair Futures and the important services  
11 that coaches have provided them. Thank you very  
12 much.

13 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you, Sarah. Thank  
14 you all for being here today. Okay. Next up is  
15 Michelle Jackson from the Human Services Council.  
16 Maria Lazardo from NMIC. Ozman Achmed from FPWA.  
17 Faith Beyham from UJA Federation of New York. Nora  
18 Moran from United Neighborhood Houses and Laura from  
19 Supportive Housing Network. Okay. Why don't we  
20 start on this side? Just make sure that red light is  
21 on.

22 UZMAN AHMED: Thank you so much, Speaker  
23 Corey Johnson and to Council member Gibson and Gjonaj  
24 for sticking it through all the way. I'd especially  
25 like to thank my Council member, Daniel Dromm for

2 hearing all the testimony that was presented today.

3 While a lot of talk has been about executive budget,

4 I'm here to talk about to city Council discretionary

5 funded initiatives. My name is Uzman Ahmed. I am

6 senior policy analyst at FPWA. FPWA is an anti-

7 poverty nonprofit with a human service membership

8 around 160 providers all throughout the city. I am

9 here to talk to you all today about access health

10 NYC, a city Council funded initiative that provides

11 outreach services and connects low income and

12 marginalized communities to healthcare and all the

13 five boroughs. And the reason I'm here to talk to

14 you about that today is because of article 6 that are

15 coming down from Albany and the fact that, while the

16 mayor has put forward 59 million dollars in the city

17 budget to mitigate those cuts, he is not provided

18 funding to mitigate cuts to discretionary funded

19 campaigns as other folks have talked about on this

20 panel. So, I'm here to ask city Council to not only

21 restore access health NYC at 2.5 million in the next

22 fiscal year, but to also provide 3.4 million dollars

23 to mitigate our article 6 cuts. On top of that, I am

24 also here to talk about the day laborer workforce

25 initiative and others city Council discretionary

2 funded initiative which has been funded for the last  
3 four years. I'm here to talk about that initiative  
4 because, in the past month alone, for day laborers  
5 have fallen to their deaths on construction sites in  
6 the city. And as the city tries to enforce  
7 construction safety, and also needs to invest in  
8 workforce development for this community of laborers  
9 that provides a really flexible workforce for the  
10 city, but it's also on the front lines of  
11 construction safety accidents. So, I'm going to stop  
12 there and thank city Council for their continued  
13 support.

14 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you. Tell  
15 Jennifer that we send our love. She's the best--

16 UZMAN AHMED: I sure will.

17 SPEAKER JOHNSON: and we love FPWA. Thank  
18 you.

19 MICHELLE JACKSON: Good afternoon. My name  
20 is Michelle Jackson. I'm the deputy executive  
21 director of the Human Services Council. I'd like to  
22 thank Speaker Johnson, Chairperson Dromm for having  
23 me today to testify about the human services sector.  
24 So, we represent about 170 human service providers in  
25 New York. You've heard from many of them today. I

2 think you've heard a lot of really impassioned  
3 testimony from CPC, from SAGE. You'll hear more from  
4 people on this panel. I'm really what they all have  
5 in common is that they are telling you that the  
6 nonprofit sector is under resourced in every program  
7 that the city funds that are so-- some of these  
8 programs are so instrumental to the fabric of New  
9 York and we are not funding them appropriately. We  
10 really want to thank the city Council for your  
11 commitment to the 106 million dollars for indirect  
12 funding then mad investment, we are disappointed that  
13 the mayor is not made the same commitment. While  
14 there has been an expansion in dollars for programs  
15 over this administration, it's still being-- it's  
16 money being put into a broken system. We need to  
17 better invest in human services organizations and  
18 this 106 million for indirect funding is a real step  
19 in that direction. Indirect funding is super wonky.  
20 It's not as sexy or interesting is what you hear  
21 about from the programs, from providers today, but  
22 it's really essential to the providers of nonprofits.  
23 It make sure that they can keep the lights on,  
24 literally. It means that they can pay accounting  
25 staff, invest and outcome measurements, computer



2 systems, phones, really essential services. Why does  
3 this really matter? 80 percent of the largest human  
4 services organizations are 90 percent government-  
5 funded. The largest five percent of those  
6 organizations provide almost 50 percent of city  
7 services. Which means how the city funds them  
8 matters. So, if the city is not investing its  
9 dollars appropriately, it means that those  
10 organizations are at risk of closure. 20 percent of  
11 New York City human services organizations are  
12 insolvent on their books, which means that they have  
13 less than three months cash reserve, which means  
14 anyone disaster can put them under. We really  
15 appreciate that the city Council acknowledges the  
16 need to invest in these services and in these  
17 organizations so that they are strong and can really  
18 deliver quality services to New York and we hope that  
19 the mayor will also see that and make this investment  
20 in the final budget. Thank you.

21 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

22 MARIA LIZARDO: Good afternoon. My name  
23 is Maria LizarDO. I am the executive director of a  
24 resettlement house called Nimic (sp?). We served  
25 14,000 community members that reside in upper

2 Manhattan and the Bronx and we do this through the  
3 provision of legal services, social services,  
4 weatherization assistance, education and career  
5 services, and legal. And I'm here today with a  
6 simple ask. Although, as an organization we  
7 definitely have different tasks before the Council, I  
8 am here today on behalf of the rest of the human  
9 services sector to ask for the 106 million dollars to  
10 go into indirect costs. Thank you for putting it in  
11 as a Council and the mayor saw it fit to cut it, but  
12 unless we have this investment in the human services  
13 sector, we will be forced to close our doors. We  
14 have contracts that, for the last 10 years have  
15 remained flat. We have contracts that are severely  
16 underfunded. We get paid 80 cents on the dollar and  
17 we have contracts that are registered extremely late  
18 causing us not to be able to pay our staff, to cover  
19 insurance costs, and to keep the lights on. Nimic  
20 alone has been threatened with eviction several  
21 times. It is unrealistic for us to continue as a  
22 sector to serve New York's most honorable under these  
23 conditions. Nimic, along with many other  
24 organizations, will be forced to take a really good  
25 luck at our contracts and decide whether or not we

2 will continue to do business with the city. And this  
3 will hurt our communities. We refuse to be one of  
4 the nonprofits that closes its stores or merges with  
5 another organization because the city refuses to pay  
6 for our services and pay for it in full. Thank you  
7 so much.

8 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you, Maria.

9 NORA MORAN: Thank you. My name is Nora  
10 Moran. I'm the director of policy and advocacy at  
11 United Neighborhood Houses. We are New York City's  
12 federation of 42 settlement houses. You have my  
13 written testimony. It covers a whole host of issues.  
14 I'm just going emphasize a few. The first is the  
15 ongoing issues with the DOE's birth to five RFP and  
16 the urgent need for salary parity for the early  
17 childhood education workforce in this year's budget.  
18 Our teachers can't wait another year. We are  
19 grateful for the Council's support on this issue as  
20 we continue to move this forward. The second is  
21 senior meals. We hear all the time from settlement  
22 houses about the challenges maintaining current  
23 levels in senior center meals and home delivered meal  
24 programs and we also know that New York City spends  
25 20 percent below the national average for its

2 congregation and home delivered meal programs. So,  
3 we are calling on the city to invest 20 million  
4 dollars in congregant meals and 15 million dollars in  
5 home delivered meals so that these services can  
6 continue and, frankly, so that seniors can continue  
7 to eat. Third, just about NYCHA community spaces and  
8 community centers. Many settlement houses and other  
9 nonprofits are running programs in NYCHA community  
10 spaces. That means-- the capital needs in these  
11 spaces are often great. Things like HVAC repairs,  
12 security needs, lighting, painting, all that sort of  
13 stuff. There was some funding in the mayor's  
14 executive budget for NYCHA community spaces, but we  
15 know it's not a not somewhere hoping that the city  
16 Council can invest 5 million dollars and a citywide  
17 initiative that would address day-to-day repairs in  
18 NYCHA community spaces. And, finally, echoing the  
19 calls of my colleagues on this panel, for the need to  
20 invest in indirect costs for the nonprofit sector.  
21 Really, sorely needed. Were grateful to the Council  
22 for putting in that 106 million dollars for indirect  
23 and we hope the mayor steps up and does the same.  
24 Thank you.

25 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

2                   LAURA MASCUCH:     Thank you for allowing  
3 me to testify today. My name is Laura Mascuch. I'm  
4 the executive director of the Supportive Housing  
5 network of New York. I want to thank the Speaker and  
6 the Chairman and all of the councilmembers for their  
7 continued support of supportive housing, the answer  
8 to chronic homelessness. I am here today to focus on  
9 two issues. One is the urgent need for the  
10 Department of Health and mental hygiene to receive an  
11 additional 20 million dollars for the supportive  
12 housing scattered site program. We currently have  
13 1800 vulnerable households who are at risk of losing  
14 their homes and returning to homelessness, which  
15 would cost the city 70 million dollars. I presented  
16 similar testimony before. We were so grateful for  
17 the Council and their budget responds adding the 20  
18 million and, unfortunately, it was not reflected in  
19 the executive budget. We are also here to echo the  
20 call of my colleagues in much of what you have heard  
21 today for the addition of the 106 million to fill the  
22 gap between the providers indirect costs and the  
23 contract reimbursement rate. Just quickly, regarding  
24 the 20 million, we currently are focusing on news  
25 supportive housing, but it is imperative that we not

2 abandoned the existing housing stock. We have 14,000  
3 formerly homeless individuals and families residing  
4 in scattered site housing programs. The use  
5 contracts have been stagnant for a number of years  
6 with rates between 11,000 and 16,000 for both  
7 services and rental and the fair market rate right  
8 now for a studio apartment is over 18,000. So you  
9 can see in the math does not work. In contrast, a  
10 new program is funded at 26,000 dollars per unit.  
11 The human services sector is in a crisis and the  
12 providers of scattered site housing are no exception.  
13 The boards of directors are really questioning why  
14 these contracts continue to be renewed and we  
15 currently have 400 units that are threatened with  
16 nonrenewal because, really, the private fundraising  
17 and not borrowing from Peter to pay Paul to keep the  
18 lights on is no longer working. So, the addition of  
19 this 20 million is crucial to stem this tide. I also  
20 want to just echo that we are at a crisis as a sector  
21 and would appreciate the Council's support on the 106  
22 million. As we know, we are paying 80 cents on the  
23 dollar on services and nonprofits are floating the  
24 city hundreds of millions of dollars to care for New  
25 Yorkers. It's an untenable situation and one that

2 the private sector would never tolerate. Thank you  
3 so much.

4 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you, Laura.

5 FAITH BEYHAM: Good afternoon, Speaker  
6 Johnson, Chairperson Dromm, members of the Committee  
7 on Finance. My name is Faith Beyham. I am an  
8 advocacy and policy advisor at UJA Federation of New  
9 York. On behalf of the UJA, our network of nonprofit  
10 partners and those we serve, thank you for the  
11 opportunity to testify on the fiscal 20 budget. To  
12 echo my colleagues on this panel, we greatly  
13 appreciate the support the Council has shown the  
14 human services sector in the past. Specifically, we  
15 are thankful for the 106 million the Council included  
16 in their preliminary budget responds to fill the gap  
17 between providers indirect costs and contract  
18 reimbursement rates from the city. We urge the  
19 administration to include that 106 million in the  
20 adopted budget to support the nonprofit human  
21 services sector. We also appreciate the support this  
22 Council is shown in the early childhood education  
23 workforce and community-based organizations. I'm not  
24 going to restate the issues that you've been hearing  
25 all afternoon with the issues with the birth to five

2 and early head start Headstart RFPs. I am going to  
3 say that, despite this due to rapidly approaching for  
4 the RFPs, UJA stands with our colleagues in urging  
5 the DOE to please address these issues or withdraw  
6 the RFPs. We thank Council member Rose and countless  
7 other Council members for their tireless efforts for  
8 restoring the funding for sonic summer programs for  
9 middle school students. We ask the administration to  
10 include 20.35 million for sonic summer programs for  
11 34,000 middle school students in fiscal year 20. We  
12 applaud the leadership of the city Council and its  
13 continued investment in New York City's Holocaust  
14 survivors. New York City is home to roughly 45,000  
15 Holocaust survivors. Almost half of the total  
16 population of survivors living in the United States.  
17 Approximately 40 percent of Holocaust survivors live  
18 at or below 150 percent of the national poverty line.  
19 We request that the city Council increase funding for  
20 the Holocaust survivor initiative and invest 4  
21 million dollars in fiscal year 20. Also, one last  
22 plug is that was the Council to work with the  
23 administration to invest in an additional 20 million  
24 for congregant meals and 15 million for home  
25 delivered meals to account for unfunded costs of



2 running senior center kitchens and the increased need  
3 among this population. Thank you.

4 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Tell Eric that I said  
5 hello. UJA is so fantastic and the organizations  
6 that are represented here today and the organizations  
7 that a representative part of the federations or the  
8 networks that you represent are so incredibly crucial  
9 for the future of New York City. You really-- the  
10 groups that are here today take care of the most  
11 vulnerable, and the most marginalized, the most  
12 dispossessed, the folks that have been left behind.  
13 And every year your advocacy coming here and asking  
14 for the city to do more both just do the right thing  
15 for the groups that are providing these services, but  
16 also the direct services that you provide to the most  
17 honorable New Yorkers is so unbelievably important.  
18 And it really, of course, aligns with my values, the  
19 values of the Council members that are appear today,  
20 and I just really want to say thank you on behalf of  
21 the city of New York, for the work that you do day in  
22 and day out in providing services and care for the  
23 people who need it most. So thank you all very, very  
24 much for being here today.

25 PANEL: Thank you.

2 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Okay. I want to call up  
3 next Lauren Shapiro and Emma Ketteringham from  
4 Brooklyn Defender Services and Bronx Defender  
5 Services. Cristobal Gutierrez from Make the Road New  
6 York. Shane Correia from the Center for Court  
7 Innovation. Julia Davis from the Children's Defense  
8 Fund. Safia Chowdry from the New York City Alliance  
9 Against Sexual Assault. There may not be enough  
10 chairs, so just pull up some of the smaller chairs if  
11 there aren't enough chairs for the panel we call up.  
12 Alexandra Zeitz Moskin from the NYC Alliance Against  
13 Sexual Assault. Saswadi Sarcov or Sarcor from the  
14 New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault. And  
15 Mckayla Barbrow from the New York City Alliance  
16 Against Sexual Assault. Great. So let's start on  
17 this side and work her way down. You can begin.  
18 Just make sure that the mic is close to your mouth  
19 and that the red light is on.

20 LAUREN SHAPIRO: It's on. Okay. Good  
21 afternoon. Thank you so much for having us. My name  
22 is Lauren Shapiro. I'm the director of the Family  
23 Defense Practice at Brooklyn Defender Services. And  
24 first I want to just thank you for the support that  
25 the city Council has given to our programs. In

2 particular, I just wanted to mention our NYFA program  
3 which allows us to do really crucial, amazing work on  
4 behalf of detained immigrants facing deportation.  
5 Today I wanted to specifically talk about a new and  
6 innovative program that for family defender offices  
7 are proposing which is the right to family advocacy  
8 initiative. And there is two components to the  
9 program. The first is assisting parents are child  
10 welfare involvement when they are being investigated  
11 by ACS before they have a court case. And the second  
12 component is assisting parents will indicated cases  
13 on the state central registry with trying to get  
14 their names cleared so that they can get employment.  
15 So, first I wanted to talk about the perpetuation  
16 advocacy which is a really, really important program  
17 for low income parents who have child welfare  
18 involvement. The family defense offices are seeking  
19 funding for social workers and parent advocates to  
20 help parents who are being investigated by ACS before  
21 a court cases filed. We are currently doing this  
22 work on a very, very small scale, but we believe that  
23 with additional funding, that we can really make a  
24 difference in terms of reducing the number of  
25 children that are separated from their families

2 unnecessarily. And I should mention that the four  
3 offices are Brooklyn Defenders, Bronx Defenders. Emma  
4 Ketteringham from Bronx Defenders is with me and also  
5 the Center for Family Representation and the  
6 Neighborhood Defender Services. So, our offices are  
7 currently funded by the city to represent parents the  
8 first day that they appear in court, but that often  
9 happens months after an ACS investigation has  
10 started. We also find that parents are told about  
11 the first court date and so, by the time-- orders  
12 are interned at that time, so, by the time they come  
13 to court, their investigation may have been going on  
14 for months without the advice of an attorney. So, I  
15 know I'm running out of time, but I just quickly  
16 wanted to mention that we hear that the number of  
17 children in foster care is gone down to 8000  
18 children, but there are still so many children who  
19 are entering foster care unnecessarily. Many of the  
20 children are entering for very short periods of time.  
21 So, while the population looks like it's going down,  
22 kids are coming in and out of care. And those short-  
23 term family separations cause unnecessary trauma to  
24 children and their families. And this trauma can  
25 affect families for years.

2 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you. We-- Thank  
3 you so much. We have the proposal and I really  
4 appreciate and I want to tell you that--

5 LAUREN SHAPIRO: I waited all this time  
6 for--

7 SPEAKER JOHNSON: I know.

8 LAUREN SHAPIRO: That's okay.

9 SPEAKER JOHNSON: I really appreciate the  
10 work you guys do. I was so moved to be with Sarah  
11 Ashiro through NYFA on Barrack Street--

12 LAUREN SCHAPIRO: Yeah.

13 SPEAKER JOHNSON: to watch the work that  
14 the amazing-- and they were all young women, the  
15 attorneys who were representing detainees. Just  
16 incredible, incredible work. So, we believe in the  
17 work you do. We have the proposal. We will look at  
18 it. Our staff will be in time each. I'm really  
19 grateful that you are here and we are happy to hear  
20 from your co-panelists from the Bronx defenders who  
21 can, maybe, fill in some of the gaps.

22 EMMA KETTERINGHAM: Thank you. My name  
23 is Emma Ketteringham and I'm the managing director of  
24 the Family Defense Practice at the Bronx defenders  
25 and I will try to pick up where Lauren left off. You

2 know, we all watched with horror as children were  
3 separated from their parents on the border. We  
4 watched as Jasmine Healy's young son was taken from  
5 her arms. We know that forced abrupt family  
6 separation causes children short-term to stress and  
7 long-term emotional harm. And we know that when it  
8 happens as a result of a child welfare investigation,  
9 no matter the intent or reason, it is the same harm.  
10 This funding will ensure that those traumatic family  
11 separations that occur in the poorest neighborhoods  
12 of our city almost entirely to families of color, and  
13 to not needlessly occur when they can be avoided.  
14 Many child removals that occurred during an  
15 investigation and before a judge has reviewed the  
16 decision are, in fact, avoidable. They wouldn't  
17 occur if parents had access to attorneys and  
18 advocates to guide them through this stressful and  
19 terrifying process of an investigation. Right now,  
20 parents don't receive an attorney until they appear  
21 in court after the investigation, often after their  
22 children have already been removed and after a  
23 decision to even file a case has been made. This  
24 initiative would give parents access to the advice  
25 and counsel that they need during the investigation

2 to prevent those traumatic separations because, even  
3 though those removals are often reversed once the  
4 family is brought into court and a lawyer assigned,  
5 the family is already broken. The harm has already  
6 been done and the children are deeply wounded. And  
7 the parents are often then distrustful of the agency  
8 that is there to help. With this initiative, parents  
9 will get access to the advice of an attorney, advised  
10 that any parent of means would be able to access and  
11 would access if they were faced with the awful  
12 prospect of their child being taken from them. Just  
13 quickly. In fiscal year 2018, we funded a pilot to  
14 provide this same early representation we seek now to  
15 have funded. The results are astounding. We,  
16 basically, advised 378 parents. Of those, only 16 of  
17 those families were separated.

18 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Wow.

19 EMMA KETTERINGHAM: Only 16. And, in  
20 addition, I hope the city Council is aware that the  
21 Commission on Parent Representation, which studied  
22 the quality of parent representation in the state of  
23 New York and made recommendations, has this provision  
24 of attorneys during the child welfare investigation  
25 as its top recommendation.

2 SPEAKER JOHNSON: How much do you-- the 2  
3 million dollars that is being sought for the new  
4 initiative, how many families do you think would be  
5 served with that 2 million dollars?

6 EMMA KETTERINGHAM: hundreds and  
7 hundreds.

8 SPEAKER JOHNSON: But the 360 something--

9 EMMA KETTERINGHAM: That's--

10 SPEAKER JOHNSON: you mentioned--

11 EMMA KETTERINGHAM: That's what we were  
12 able to do with a small grant. We have no--

13 SPEAKER JOHNSON: With how much money?

14 EMMA KETTERINGHAM: We have no funding  
15 to do that now.

16 SPEAKER JOHNSON: But how much money was  
17 able to serve those 360--

18 EMMA KETTERINGHAM: Oh. It was about a  
19 quarter of what we are asking. But we are also  
20 asking for this initiative to cover SCR  
21 representation, which we haven't really been able to  
22 address. Those are the--

23 SPEAKER JOHNSON: One of you quickly  
24 address that.



2                   EMMA KETTERINGHAM:       So, the second part  
3 of the initiatives asks for funding to represent  
4 parents during the name clearing hearings before the  
5 state central registry. Any time a parent is  
6 investigated by ACS, there is an investigation and a  
7 determination. Whether that investigation is founded  
8 or unfounded. Many parents who have a founded  
9 investigation for child maltreatment against them  
10 don't ever even have a case filed against them in  
11 court. That means they never meet a lawyer who can  
12 advise them through this process and they remain on  
13 that state cent-- because the investigation is  
14 founded, they remain on the state central registry  
15 for up to 28 years, limiting them from many, many  
16 types of employment that would otherwise be available  
17 to them in New York City. So, they are unable to  
18 support their families and they don't have access to  
19 attorneys to assist them and represent them in these  
20 hearings to have their names removed. So this  
21 initiative would seek to provide parents with that  
22 much needed service, as well. And, as you know, I  
23 mean, it is mostly families of color, parents of  
24 color who are restricted in this way by having their  
25 names on the registry.

2 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Lauren, was there  
3 anything else that you wanted to say on this?

4 LAUREN SHAPIRO: Oh. Just to add to that  
5 in terms of the numbers. There are 21,000 indicated  
6 cases just in New York City alone and, as Emma  
7 mentioned, those come from-- most of the  
8 investigations that ACS does are from the community  
9 districts that are all black and Latino. Like 96  
10 percent.

11 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you. Thank you  
12 both for being here.

13 CRISTOBAL GUTIERREZ: My name is  
14 Cristobal Gutierrez and I'm a staff attorney at Make  
15 the Road New York. Thank you, Speaker Johnson and  
16 Chairperson Council member Dromm and the members of  
17 the city Council for the opportunity to testify today  
18 on behalf of Make the Road New York and our 23,000  
19 members. We would like to thank you for supporting  
20 important increases in funding for immigrant services  
21 over the past two years of unprecedented federal  
22 attacks on the immigrant community. That said,  
23 current funding levels still comes nowhere close to  
24 meeting demand for services and organizations like  
25 ours have to turn people away every day. First, we

2 ask that the city Council renew its commitment to the  
3 low-wage workers by ensuring 2.5 million low-wage  
4 workers initiative awarded last year and this year's  
5 budget. We deeply appreciate this funding which has  
6 allowed make the Road and many other groups to  
7 represent hundreds of workers on wage theft and  
8 discrimination claims. This initiative is just  
9 getting started and, without renewal, we will be  
10 forced to reduce our low-wage worker legal services  
11 and layoff hired staff with its funding last year.  
12 Second, we ask that the city Council allocate half 1  
13 million for the immigrant protection services  
14 program. 5.3 million for the jobs to build on  
15 program and 2.3 million for the workers service  
16 centers program. These programs enable Make the Road  
17 to run health training programs to connect people to  
18 jobs in healthcare and have resulted in tens of  
19 thousands of New Yorkers gaining meaningful family  
20 sustaining employment. Third, we request that the  
21 city Council maintain the funding for ending the  
22 epidemic at 7 million. Increases allocation to  
23 access health initiative to 2.5, and maintain 1.5  
24 allocation to the immigrant health initiative.  
25 Fourth and finally-- two seconds. 30. For them

2 finally, we ask that the city Council restore and  
3 baseline of 12 million out of literacy funding so  
4 that thousands of immigrants can continue to learn  
5 English and access economic opportunity. Without the  
6 restoration of this funding, 8500 adults, students,  
7 will lose classes this year. Thank you again for  
8 your time and your ongoing leadership.

9 SPEAKER JOHNSON: We agree with you on all  
10 that. Shane.

11 SHANE CORREIA: Good afternoon, Council.  
12 My name is Shane Correia. I'm the associate director  
13 of strategic partnerships at the Center for Court  
14 Innovation. At CCI, our mission is to create a more  
15 effective and humane justice system and to that we  
16 would like to thank the Council for their support  
17 over the past year of our bail alternatives for young  
18 people in Brooklyn, as well as supporting our core  
19 continuation ask. It's that continuation ask that  
20 funds programs such as the youth justice board, of  
21 which I was a member of 15 years ago as a truant  
22 highschooler with two siblings convicted of murder.  
23 It's thanks to this program that I have a different  
24 relationship with the justice system which made me  
25 through law school in here today asking for continued

2 support so that other youth of New York City can  
3 change their relationship with the justice system. I  
4 additionally would like to thank Council for allowing  
5 us to be a part of fixing the system by investing in  
6 a citywide expansion of project reset, which permits  
7 individuals who received off-line arrests to avoid  
8 the justice system entirely, including the collateral  
9 consequences in immigration and credit and employment  
10 that come with prosecution. It, additionally, is a  
11 program that is being funded by researchers to  
12 successfully decrease the amount of time that people  
13 spend in the justice system and increase the amount  
14 of time that they spend outside of police contact  
15 between incidents. Finally, though, with these  
16 investments, I would like to bring to counsel's  
17 attention the application packets that we have at the  
18 bottom of our testimony requesting additional  
19 investments in mental health, not just in the  
20 criminal justice system, but also in the family  
21 support systems and Family Court. Additionally, we  
22 have a pending proposal in the Far Rockaway that, due  
23 to the geography of Queens, makes it so that court  
24 mandated programs can require a two hour trip between  
25 the neighborhood that defendants live in and the

2 court that their jurisdiction requires them to report  
3 to. Thank you so much for your time, counsel, and  
4 the work that we've been able to do together, and  
5 hopefully in the work that we will be able to do  
6 together in the future.

7           SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you, Shane. We  
8 love CCI and we are grateful for the work in  
9 partnership that we have. And your story is  
10 incredibly inspirational and moving and I'm really  
11 grateful that you are here today.

12           JULIA DAVIS: Good afternoon. I'm Julia  
13 Davis with the Children's Defense Fund. Thank you so  
14 much, chair and Council members for this opportunity.  
15 I want to focus on for things and I'll be very quick  
16 about it. We work in healthcare in juvenile justice  
17 and child welfare and an education justice. There is  
18 an issue that is not come out today that I want to  
19 raise for you all which is that the city has been  
20 focused on a new lead free New York City roadmap.  
21 This is an incredibly important endeavor. Lead  
22 poisoning is a completely preventable and  
23 irreversible problem for children and families and,  
24 yet, the preliminary budget, as identified by the  
25 Independent budget office, notes a 108 million dollar

2 gap in actually the funds required to implement that  
3 roadmap. So, that's the first point of the testimony  
4 that I would love to draw your attention to. The  
5 second is, Council member Dromm, thank you so much  
6 for your dialogue yesterday with ACS around the youth  
7 justice work they are doing and raise the age. We  
8 completely support the budget that has been set forth  
9 for ACS, but agree with you that there needs to be  
10 more oversight and opportunities for data and  
11 information to watch as the law is implemented,  
12 especially around the young people that are in ACS'  
13 custody. I want to also talk about a couple of child  
14 welfare issues that you have heard about today. The  
15 first is that school communities are a critical  
16 source of stability and help for children in the  
17 foster care system. It is absolutely essential that  
18 transportation not become the motivation for moving  
19 children out of their home schools. And so, we urge  
20 the city Council to fund this transportation and  
21 Department of Education coordinating office to  
22 support children who are in foster care to ensure  
23 that they receive busing and to ensure that their  
24 care gets the right attention at the Department of  
25 Education, which all of these recommendations came

2 out of the task force that brought together ACS and  
3 DOE and others that are engaging in ACS reform. My  
4 final request is related to something that you,  
5 Council member Dromm, have great leadership around  
6 which is around restorative justice. And that's that  
7 we include in baseline 30 million for whole school  
8 restorative practices in 100 of the highest need  
9 schools in our city. Thank you very much for your  
10 leadership and for your engagement today.

11 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

12 ALEX ZEITZ-MOSKIN: Good afternoon and  
13 thank you for having us. My name is Alex Zeitz-  
14 Moskin at the New York City Alliance Against Sexual  
15 Assault. And I'm here on behalf of the sexual  
16 assault initiative, which is a group comprised of  
17 five organizations, including ours. The Kingsbridge  
18 Heights community center, Mount Sinai SAVI Sexual  
19 Assault and Violence Intervention program, the Crime  
20 Victims Treatment Center, and then newly added North  
21 Brooklyn Coalition Against Family Violence. Last  
22 year, we added the North Brooklyn coalition in order  
23 to provide much-needed rape crisis services  
24 throughout Brooklyn, which as the largest borough,  
25 has only two certified rape crisis response programs.



2 We have a long-term goal which is laid out in my  
3 written testimony of rectifying this disparity to  
4 bring services throughout Brooklyn and you can read  
5 more about that throughout that proposal. So, we are  
6 asking that you maintain our current level of funding  
7 in the next fiscal year. As you well know, in recent  
8 years, the rates of sexual assault in New York City  
9 have increased dramatically and we have experienced a  
10 six year long upward trend. With a total of 1795  
11 rapes reported to NYPD in 2018, which is a 22 point  
12 four percent increase from the previous year. Last  
13 year, the sexual assault initiative served over 3530  
14 survivors of sexual assault and conducted over 15,557  
15 free training or counseling sessions. And the  
16 statistics per group are detailed in the written  
17 testimony. In the upcoming fiscal year, we are  
18 committed to increasing rape crisis services and will  
19 continue to support the North Brooklyn coalition as  
20 well as increase our support to multiple hospitals  
21 throughout Brooklyn. And we want to, basically, just  
22 thank the city Council for-- and Speaker Johnson,  
23 Chairman Dromm, and the committee for the time and  
24 support. We look forward to continuing to work  
25 together.

2                   SPEAKER JOHNSON: I don't think there  
3 should be-- of course, I want everyone to speak, but  
4 I don't think there should be any fear on-- your  
5 current funding is safe and we're grateful for the  
6 work that you all do through the alliance and the  
7 different provider organizations. But I think we  
8 still want to hear about the work that you've done  
9 throughout the year and the state of current affairs  
10 and what we can be doing to further help survivors  
11 and victims. So, but yes. You guys are going to be  
12 fine with that 1.6 million dollars. Go ahead.

13                   MICHAELA BAUBROW: Thank you for the  
14 opportunity to speak. My name is Michaela Baubrow  
15 and I am the senior program coordinator at the New  
16 York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault. The New  
17 York City Council funding supports the alliance's  
18 Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner Training Institute,  
19 SAFETI, the largest New York State Department of  
20 Health certified training program for emergency  
21 department and medical professionals in New York  
22 State. SAFETI is the only training program in New  
23 York City that is open to all licensed doctors,  
24 registered nurses, nurse practitioners, and physician  
25 assistants. By providing high quality, trauma

2 focused training for medical professionals and sexual  
3 assault forensic examiners, it seeks to ensure best  
4 practices for victims and survivors post assault. As  
5 of January 2019, the alliances now qualified to offer  
6 certification through the International Association  
7 of Forensic Nurses, IFN. This allows healthcare  
8 providers who have taken our course to set for the  
9 IAFN exam-- IFN sane A examine which certifies them  
10 to practice as SAFEs internationally. SAFETI also  
11 trains staff of various organizations aiming to  
12 improve their services to survivors of sexual  
13 assault. In fiscal year 2018, we trained over 900  
14 health and human service professionals thanks to city  
15 Council support. And thus far in this fiscal year,  
16 we have trained over 580 health and human service  
17 professionals. We doubled our most labor-intensive  
18 course, the SAFE 40 hour training from two to four  
19 courses annually with the increase in city Council  
20 funding. We also redirected staff time and energy to  
21 some new programming that we were able to undertake  
22 with the increased city Council funding. Since our  
23 last report in March, we is completed for additional  
24 trainings and have our final SAFE 40 hour course  
25 scheduled for June. With the trainings we have

2 completed and scheduled, we have no doubt that we  
3 will succeed the number of health and human service  
4 professionals trained in fiscal year 18 for this  
5 fiscal year and will have offered this year's  
6 trainees more robust and substantial training than in  
7 years past thanks to city Council. Additionally, we  
8 are currently in the process of expanding our SAFE  
9 program to include a pediatric component, which we  
10 are really excited about and hoping to get started in  
11 the fall of this coming fall. In addition, the  
12 alliance was able to undertake a public engagement  
13 campaign and coordination with FDNY, TLC, and other  
14 public and private partners, in addition to our  
15 social media and optimized digital platforms in order  
16 to raise awareness of where survivors can receive  
17 optimal care and SAFE designated hospitals. We want  
18 to thank city Council so much for all of your  
19 support.

20 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

21 MICHAELA BAUBROW: So, thank you so much.

22 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

23 Thank you.

24 SASWATI SARKAR: Good afternoon, Chair  
25 Dromm, Speaker Johnson, and members of the Council.

2 I'm Saswati, the director of finance and program  
3 administration at New York City Alliance Against  
4 Sexual Assault. I'm here to testify for our funding  
5 request of 100,000 dollars which is a modest increase  
6 from last year to support our youth program that  
7 specifically works with communities of color,  
8 immigrant youth, gender nonconforming, and LGBTQI  
9 youth across New York City. You have our written  
10 testimony, as well as some sample work from the youth  
11 who have participated in this program. I'm here to  
12 emphasize some of the urgent needs that we are seeing  
13 around the city expressed by youth and the  
14 communities they, from. So, this past year with your  
15 support from the city Council, we have been able to  
16 reach eight different communities, including Muslim  
17 identified communities, communities of youth whose  
18 mothers and parents have been incarcerated or  
19 formerly incarcerated, as well as young people from  
20 low socioeconomic and nontraditional housing. These  
21 are really critical communities that are usually left  
22 out for most of the prevention efforts and what we  
23 have seen over the past year of doing this work and  
24 having spoken with many, many youth who have access  
25 to our services, that young people that are either

2 ready to date or are dating are out in the community  
3 and have no resources. Many of them who are new  
4 immigrants are reaching out to pornography to  
5 understand what consent is, what healthy  
6 relationships should look like. Turning to their  
7 peers who know as little as they do. And that is  
8 dangerous. So, in our program and through your  
9 support, we have been able to push so much of the  
10 conversation and we thank you for all the support you  
11 provided us in requesting this additional increase.  
12 Thank you very much.

13 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

14 SAFIA CHOWDRY: Good afternoon. My name  
15 is Safia Chowdry and I am a youth educator and a  
16 former project DOT participant at the New York City  
17 Alliance Against Sexual Assault. I joined the  
18 project DOT as a youth leader participating in the  
19 semester long project with a group of South Asian  
20 young men and women. Together, my peers and I  
21 learned about healthy relationships, the importance  
22 of consent, and how to be an active bystander. Now,  
23 I am a youth educator for project DOT where I co-  
24 facilitated group of 16 young Muslim women. I  
25 remember when I first joined project DOT is a senior

2 in high school. I felt very uncomfortable. I did  
3 not think that Muslim women should be talking about  
4 healthy relationships, sexual violence, or even  
5 consent. These were not conversations I ever had  
6 with my parents or with my peers. I was hesitant to  
7 even tell my parents about what I was doing in this  
8 project and the important discussions we were having.  
9 Project DOT broke down that stigma around sex and  
10 sexual violence and emphasized how important consent  
11 is in teen dating and did not shy away from any  
12 difficult conversations. Being a part of project DOT  
13 was about unlearning actions and toxic ways of  
14 thinking that I had begun to normalize. Working now  
15 with this group of young Muslim women made me realize  
16 how much Muslim women are left out of this  
17 conversation about sexual violence and relationship  
18 abuse, yet they are desperate for their voices to be  
19 heard. Preconceived stereotypes and biases have  
20 stopped them from speaking up, but once they are  
21 given a safe space, these young women have shown me  
22 that they, too, want to be part of this discussion  
23 and be part of the movement that ends sexual  
24 violence. While there are a vast number of resources  
25 and program for the youth, immigrant and minority

2 communities are still being left out. We need real  
3 people with real experiences that we can relate to.  
4 The most effective way to influence the youth is to  
5 be relatable and to create a comfortable environment.  
6 Project DOT creates a space where youth can have  
7 their voices be heard. Our curriculum is tents,  
8 educational, and engaging, while still having enough  
9 room to change the conversation to relate to each  
10 respective community. They youth from underserved  
11 communities deserve their support of the city Council  
12 and the committee of youth services. Their voices  
13 are crucial as they are leaders that can help to end  
14 sexual violence in our city. We hope that you will  
15 consider allocating the requested funding. Thank  
16 you.

17 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Safia, thank you for  
18 being here today. It's so wonderful to have you here  
19 and to have you particularly shed light on, of  
20 course, issues that focus on Muslim women in New York  
21 City. It's so important that we hear from all voices  
22 in our great city. So, I am super grateful that you  
23 all are here and I want to thank you so much for your  
24 testimony today.

25 SAFIA CHOWDRY: Thank you.



2 CRISTOBAL GUTIERREZ: Thank you.

3 SPEAKER JOHNSON: And if you have written  
4 testimony, please submit it if you didn't already.  
5 So, we have, I think, 18 more speakers today and I  
6 will call the next panel. I, unfortunately, cannot  
7 stay and I apologize for that. I tried to be here  
8 for the entire length of the hearing, but I review  
9 all the testimony. Danny and I speak multiple times  
10 a day, so do not feel like just because I may not be  
11 here for your testimony I'm not going to look at your  
12 testimony. I know. I'm so sorry. But there is an  
13 event that I can't get out of. So, I'm going to call  
14 up the next panel. Rachel Sabella who I think the  
15 world of from No Kid Hungry NY. Jerome from City  
16 Harvest. Liz from Community Food Advocates, Lunch  
17 for Learning. Mikola De Roo from the Food Bank for  
18 New York City. Celia Greene. Diane Drozek. And  
19 that is the next panel. Is everyone here that I  
20 called? Oh, great. They are coming down. Take your  
21 time. Don't rush. Take your time. Don't trip.  
22 Don't rush.

23 [Background comments]

24 RACHEL SABELLA: Absolutely. Okay.

25 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you.

2 RACHEL SABELLA: Sure.

3 SPEAKER JOHNSON: I just want to say  
4 before this-- before I depart and while the other  
5 folks are coming down-- before it apart and as this  
6 very important panel is about to testify, I, of  
7 course, and incredibly, incredibly proud of the  
8 advocacy and work the Council did with all of you  
9 last year on significantly increasing the EFAT (sic)  
10 program to serve and help more hungry New Yorkers in  
11 a variety of ways. Your partnership, all of you, has  
12 been incredibly crucial in the work we have done for  
13 providing more food for children in our school  
14 system, whether it be breakfast or lunch. And so I  
15 am extraordinarily grateful for your advocacy and  
16 hard work. We know that there is a proposed cut on  
17 the table for breakfast in the classroom. That is  
18 not something that the Council supports in any way  
19 whatsoever. We are fighting that in a very, very big  
20 way and we want to continue to build on the success  
21 and support that we've had in the past with all of  
22 you. So, just want to thank you for that. Food  
23 insecurity, as you all know better than anyone else,  
24 is a major, major problem in our city. It's one that  
25 we at the Council are focused on tremendously. I'm

2 really proud that the-- I think the busiest pantry  
3 and kitchen on the East Coast of the United States is  
4 in my district, Holy Apostles Church, and I work with  
5 them very regularly and hear about the issues that  
6 are endemic about the sector that serves people  
7 throughout the city with food insecurity. So, I have  
8 to go, but, as you can tell, I'm pretty well versed  
9 on these issues and I look forward to reviewing the  
10 testimony, hearing from what you had to say today.  
11 Working with Chair Dromm and the other colleagues  
12 that are here on the issues that are important. To  
13 the other panelists that are here that I haven't been  
14 able to hear from today, I am going to review all the  
15 testimony, as I said, work with the staff, talk to  
16 the staff, talk to Chair Dromm. So, just because I  
17 didn't hear you directly doesn't mean we are not  
18 paying attention and I want to really thank you for  
19 being here today. Thank you for taking time out of  
20 your busy schedule. I see folks from the community  
21 land trust initiative who are here. I know  
22 opportunities for a better tomorrow are here. I know  
23 folks from the different job programs and workforce  
24 training programs are here that haven't had a chance  
25 to testify. There are [inaudible 06:48:49] arts and

2 culture folks that are here today that haven't  
3 testified yet. All of you, I know you're here, I'm  
4 grateful you're here. I look forward to reviewing  
5 your testimony. Don't have your feelings be hurt  
6 because I have to leave and I want to thank you very  
7 much and turn the meeting back over to Chair Dromm.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
9 much. Okay. Did you want to start right away? Your  
10 mic.

11 DIANE DROZEK: Before he leave, if I  
12 call your office, will you speak to me personally on  
13 the phone?

14 SPEAKER JOHNSON: it depends on what the  
15 issue is about something else.

16 DIANE DROZEK: This is about DOT. You  
17 need to assign monies for inspectors to inspect each  
18 borough for the crosswalks. I was crossing. Had two  
19 broken feet from a pothole. I'm told by DOT-- is  
20 that me? No. Oh, I'll hang up. Okay. I'm crossing  
21 the street. Pothole. Two broken feet. Surgery.  
22 Everything. According to DOT being it wasn't  
23 reported, they're not liable. They didn't even pay  
24 for my medical expenses. The point is, as far as DOT  
25 and inspecting the roads, they don't inspect until

2 after a citizen reports it and they're not liable  
3 until 311 gets a call. Okay. I didn't know-- I  
4 was-- I didn't know I worked for DOT. You should  
5 have inspectors. Every borough. Let's say two.  
6 Just drive around and look. It will decrease the  
7 number of people of getting hurt. One year I was  
8 biking. Had a broken arm. Pothole. Someone cut me  
9 off. Now a few years ago, two broken feet. They had  
10 to take a piece of my hip and remake it. Forget it  
11 with that because I couldn't walk or bike like I did  
12 every day for the diabetes, from one year to the  
13 next, my eye went back and woke up practically blind  
14 in one eye. And I have to hear from people like DOT,  
15 well, that's not our fault. There was no 311  
16 notification. I found out two months before there  
17 was a permit to do work in that area. Well, that's a  
18 permit. That's not a notification to 311. The point  
19 is, have inspectors to thank and prevent people from  
20 getting hurt. They go-- I called the DOT  
21 Commissioner. Why don't they have it? Well, we can  
22 afford that. We can't afford inspectors to do that.  
23 They're going to wait until someone is hurt. I  
24 called maintenance. They do not have inspections  
25 until someone gets hurt or 311 call. They may see

2 it, but why wait. Have inspectors before someone  
3 gets hurt? And it will cost to pay for two people in  
4 each borough. They could give the mayor's wife all  
5 that money. They could pay for inspectors to inspect  
6 it to make sure it is safe. There is also a law of  
7 the sociability. ADA law of the sociability.  
8 According to that, crosswalks are supposed to be  
9 accessible for the disabled. How can you have that  
10 will save you are responsible in the notification law  
11 saying you're not responsible until a citizen reports  
12 it? I'm confused. I've been asking my city  
13 councilman what law overrides it? They refuse to  
14 talk to me. So, if you have a litigation in court,  
15 you're not allowed to even call the city up and ask a  
16 question. I don't understand that one. But my  
17 point, I'm asking you for each borough two  
18 inspectors. Either one DOT and one DEP in a car at  
19 the main thoroughfares where the roads are worn out  
20 quicker. It doesn't have to be a very single  
21 straight, but just driving a car and make a  
22 notification. Listen, maybe this is a little bad.  
23 There's a lot of people walking down here. I was on  
24 34th and--

25 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Diane--

2 DIANE DROZEK: and Broadway--

3 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Diane, we have to-- I  
4 have to go, but I--

5 DIANE DROZEK: Oh. Well, thank you for  
6 listening to me.

7 SPEAKER JOHNSON: I didn't want to walk  
8 out on you giving--

9 DIANE DROZEK: I know. Well, I've got  
10 to go. I'm a diabetic. Thank you for letting me go.

11 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Let--

12 DIANE DROZEK: I didn't know I'd be  
13 this long and I take assess-a-ride and if I miss it,  
14 it will be another three hours.

15 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Okay. Well, thank you  
16 for coming. I'm really sorry that that happened to  
17 you. I'm glad you stuck around to--

18 DIANE DROZEK: My point is--

19 SPEAKER JOHNSON: Let-- Can I finish?

20 DIANE DROZEK: Sorry. Habit.

21 SPEAKER JOHNSON: So, I'm really sorry  
22 that you had to go through that horrendous  
23 experience. I'm grateful that you can to testify  
24 today. I don't know enough about the issue. I say  
25 that candidly and transparently.

2 DIANE DROZEK: I contacted your office.

3 SPEAKER JOHNSON: And so, if you could  
4 submit-- You don't have testimony, I see. If you  
5 could submit testimony, if you could write something  
6 out on what you said today and other information and  
7 give it to the staff here, we're happy to look at it.  
8 Thank you for coming. I have to run. I apologize.

9 DIANE DROZEK: No prob-- and as I  
10 said, fix it so no one else gets hurt.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you.

12 DIANE DROZEK: Oh, okay. Sorry.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: No. Thank you.

14 DIANE DROZEK: I get-- I talk a lot.  
15 I'm disabled, so the law-- I want to know which law  
16 overrides the other.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. We'll follow  
18 up if you get that in to the Speaker.

19 RACHEL SABELLA: Good evening. My name  
20 is Rachel Sabella and I'm the director of No Kid  
21 Hungry New York. I want to thank you, Chair Dromm,  
22 for being here all day. We know how long these  
23 hearings are. I want to thank the finance staff who  
24 have worked really hard on his and I don't know if  
25 they always get the appreciation from the advocates,



2 so thanks to them, as well. No Kid Hungry New York  
3 is a campaign of Scherer strength. We are a national  
4 organization focused on ending childhood hunger and I  
5 have the honor and privilege of leaving that work in  
6 New York. It saddens need to be here today. We have  
7 worked together for a long time on the issue of  
8 hunger. We have worked together on universal school  
9 meals, and funding for food pantries and implementing  
10 breakfast in the classroom. And, unfortunately, this  
11 executive budget proposal takes a step back in that  
12 battle. There is a 6 million dollar cut propose to  
13 breakfast in the classroom. We are asking the  
14 Council to fight to have the administration restore  
15 this funding, not only put the money back in, but to  
16 continue expansion of this critical program. Since  
17 the program rolled out in 2015, more than 79,000  
18 additional children are eating breakfast in all five  
19 boroughs. We know, you especially know as a former  
20 teacher, when kids have that nutrition they need,  
21 they are able to have more success. They learn.  
22 They pay attention. To take this program away, to  
23 put it back in the cafeteria where there is stigma,  
24 where you have to arrive on time, is going to have  
25 less kids eating and less families have access to

2 this program. My last two quick points on this is,  
3 number one, we have heard this administration speak  
4 so much about equity in education. Breakfast in the  
5 classroom actually leads to equity because every  
6 child is starting the day the same way. Taking this  
7 away takes away from that equity principle. The  
8 other thing I want to make sure I say is because I  
9 know it's a priority of this Council, we know the  
10 challenges and the great families are facing right  
11 now. We know the threats coming from the federal  
12 level. I testified in this room about the potential  
13 of the public charge rule. If those changes are to  
14 happen, school meals are one of the only supports  
15 that people will be able to rely on. So, what we  
16 should do is be expanding those programs right now,  
17 not weakening them. So, thank you. We know we have  
18 faith. We know you believe in this. And thank you  
19 for the opportunity today.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. And you know  
21 it's a priority for us. Yeah. Why don't we go to  
22 this woman over here and then we will go down the  
23 row, if you don't mind.

24 CELIA GREEN: Thank you. Thank you for--  
25 Thank you to Mr. Dromm. To Council member Dromm and

2 to Council member Johnson for having this hearing.

3 In my name is Celia Green. I am the cochair for the

4 Chancellor's parent advisory Council, as well as the

5 cochair for the citywide counsel on high schools.

6 And I'm here to talk about putting 175 million into--

7 having the board of Ed putting 175 million into

8 school foods for the cafeteria redesigns. We've

9 found that with high schools, especially, it is made

10 a big difference in school foods. 31 percent more

11 kids are actually eating food in the places that have

12 had the-- in the schools that have managed to have

13 this cafeteria redesign. We are hoping that 175

14 million would do a large sizable portion of high

15 schools that request it. And, just having kids have

16 that food, we've already taken away the stigma

17 because food is free, you know, for lunch, but I'm

18 hoping that having more kids be able to have food--

19 because there are a lot of kids-- there is still a

20 lot of housing insufficiency and that comes with food

21 insufficiency. So I'm hoping that more kids will be

22 able to eat and, when you are fed them when you have

23 fuel, you'll do better in school. And I think

24 outcomes and graduation rates directly are affected

25 by whether or not children have services and food in

2 the support they need. So, I'm asking that 175  
3 million be in the budget for school-- for feeding  
4 our kids.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And that wasn't all  
6 one year. That was over a number of years, if I'm  
7 not mistaken? Right?

8 CELIA GREEN: Uh-hm.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah. And I've  
10 actually seen the program work because we have a  
11 junior high school in my district where they have  
12 done it, you know, a revision to the cafeteria, and  
13 the kids seemed to really enjoy it. So, yeah.

14 CELIA GREEN: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All right. Let's  
16 go to this young man over here.

17 JEROME NATHANIEL: Good evening, Chairman  
18 Dromm and distinguished members of the city Council.  
19 I want to thank you for holding this hearing today.  
20 My name is Jerome Nathaniel. I'm the senior program  
21 manager at City Harvest and City Harvest stands here  
22 today with the coalition of antihunger organizations  
23 that are fighting to protect breakfast in the  
24 classroom. At City Harvest, we rescue and distribute  
25 some 61 million pounds of food to emergency food

2 programs. Many of those service young children.  
3 Some 350,000 children who don't know how or where  
4 they are going to get their next meal. And what the  
5 city should be able to guarantee is that the children  
6 can rely on having a healthy meal at school.  
7 Breakfast in the classroom has been an effective  
8 program and being able to provide that. Echoing what  
9 Rachel said, that it's been effective in the last  
10 five years and increasing breakfast consumption by  
11 some 80,000 more youth that are eating breakfast in  
12 the classroom and that's important for them to be  
13 able to focus in school. It's also important  
14 majestically if you are coming from Far Rockaway to  
15 go to school in Long Island city like where we teach  
16 nutrition education, that you don't have to wake up  
17 at 3 AM to beat the opening bell and be able to have  
18 breakfast or you don't have to sacrifice having  
19 breakfast in order to make it to school on time. So,  
20 just from the humane side of it, it's very important  
21 to protect breakfast in the classroom. Now, also  
22 from the financial side, the city is saying that they  
23 are saving money, so 24 million dollars over four  
24 years, but really that's also sacrificing federal  
25 reimbursements. 44 million dollars in federal

2 reimbursements that they would be able to access by  
3 implementing the program. So, not even just, the  
4 main component, that also for the economics it really  
5 wouldn't make sense to make cuts to this program.  
6 And also considering the timing, as the federal  
7 government is finally going to make a real effort to  
8 pass a child nutrition reauthorization after some  
9 four or five years of being overdue, it's important  
10 for the city to set an example by strengthening these  
11 effective programs and focus on expanding it as  
12 opposed to cutting it entirely unprovoked by the  
13 federal government.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. To be  
15 honest with you, I have questioned the Chancellor on  
16 this and I don't really understand his response and  
17 his response was that, you know, they are saving the  
18 money, the 6 million, by not having as many people to  
19 clean up and stuff like that. Well, I don't really  
20 get it because those people are still going to have  
21 to be there in that school to clean up. I think it  
22 really comes down to either teachers and/or  
23 principals who just don't want to do it for just  
24 whatever reason they don't want to do it. But, the  
25 benefits outweigh the negative stuff that they are

2 talking about. So, the Council stands behind the  
3 advocates on this.

4                   MIKOLA DE ROO:     It's great to hear you  
5 say that. Thank you. Good evening, Chair Dromm and  
6 member of the New York City Council. My name is Mika  
7 De Roo and I'm the vice president of public affairs  
8 at Food Bank for New York City. Thank you for this  
9 opportunity to testify here today. Food bank has  
10 submitted extensive written testimony, so I'm just  
11 going to cover a handful of highlights here. I'd  
12 like to briefly say thank you to the Council and the  
13 Speaker for fighting to baseline food funding for New  
14 York City's food pantries and soup kitchens through  
15 the Emergency Food Assistance Program or EFAP. Also,  
16 on behalf of the 1.4 million hungry New Yorkers that  
17 our network of food pantries and soup kitchen serifs,  
18 I'd like to take a moment to recognize the initiative  
19 investments that the Council has made to support  
20 capacity development within the emergency food  
21 network, as well as other essential life-saving  
22 programs for low income New Yorkers to combat hunger,  
23 including pantries in our schools, benefits outreach  
24 and access, and free tax assistance. We urge the  
25 Council to continue investment in these critical

2 initiatives, which not only enable New Yorkers in  
3 need to put food on the table, but also aim to  
4 alleviate the poverty that striven them to seek out a  
5 food pantry or a soup kitchen to begin with. I'm  
6 going to echo my colleagues here. Food bank is also  
7 very disappointed and concerned by the executive  
8 budget proposal to cut funding for breakfast in the  
9 classroom. Children of families who visit the  
10 emergency food network also rely on free meals in  
11 school to learn and grow. Plain and simple, our kids  
12 can't focus or pay attention, much less learn and  
13 grow, when they are hungry. The schools that provide  
14 breakfast in the classroom, as Rachel noted, note a  
15 wealth of visible positive benefits. Increased  
16 equity, better student behavior and school culture,  
17 fewer disciplinary issues, higher test scores. We  
18 urge the city Council to reject the funding cuts and,  
19 instead, work with the mayor and the Department of  
20 Education to expand this final program. Finally,  
21 food bank will continue to stand with the Council to  
22 combat ongoing attacks to food insecurity, including  
23 the recent White House proposal that would lower the  
24 poverty line, disqualifying hundreds of thousands of  
25 households across the nation for needed services,



1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

337

2 including medical and nutrition assistance. Above  
3 all, these ongoing federal threats just underscore  
4 the need for further advocacy and the need to shore  
5 up the crucial New York City programs that serve as  
6 the safety nets for our neediest. Thank you for your  
7 time.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah. Quick  
9 question. You said you are still doing the tax  
10 preparation?

11 MIKOLA DE ROO: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Where are you doing  
13 it?

14 MIKOLA DE ROO: We do it across the five  
15 boroughs. I can get you particulars, if that's--

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Because they close  
17 the office in Jackson Heights.

18 MIKOLA DE ROO: I can look into the  
19 details.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah. I just be  
21 curious to know because it does,--

22 MIKOLA DE ROO: Sure. I can follow up  
23 with some detailed information on that.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

25 MIKOLA DE ROO: You're welcome.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Liz.

3 LIZ ACCLES: Good evening--

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Good evening.

5 LIZ ACCLES: Chair Dromm, Councilwoman  
6 Chin. Thanks for the opportunity to testify today.  
7 My name is Liz Accles. I'm the executive director of  
8 Community Food Advocates and I am here all along with  
9 my colleague, Celia Green, from representing the  
10 lunch for learning campaign. To just quick start, I  
11 think, to say of course we strongly oppose the cut in  
12 breakfast for the classroom. I think that is  
13 needless to say, but I want to be on the record  
14 saying that. And I'm here to talk to supplement what  
15 Celia was talking about about the cafeteria redesign  
16 model. As you know, we love this cafeteria redesign  
17 model. It modernizes the cafeterias. It has a food  
18 court style serving. As Celia mentioned, and high  
19 schools with both universal and the cafeteria  
20 redesign, 31 percent-- there is a 31 percent  
21 increase in participation and, in addition, I just  
22 have strong testimony there, but there is a two pager  
23 in there that has some graphics. Vegetable and fruit  
24 consumption and those schools have multiplied five  
25 fourfold. So, there are more kids eating and in high

2 schools, 31 percent increase is pretty amazing. We  
3 think this is the next big thing to build upon the  
4 foundation of universal free school lunch. 175  
5 million dollars in the Chancellor's capital five year  
6 capital plan would either cover all high schools in  
7 five years or have high schools and have middle  
8 schools. And that would be quite a thing to be able  
9 to accomplish within that timeframe. And we think  
10 that the-- you know, more kids eating always means  
11 more federal dollars coming into the city and  
12 creating the cafeterias a social hub. Thank you.  
13 And I want-- if I didn't thank you for for include--  
14 did I say-- thanking you including it in the  
15 response to preliminary budget and we hope that you  
16 will carry that forward.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Absolutely. So,  
18 4.9 times more broccoli.

19 LIZ ACCLES: Yeah. How's that? Right?

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Make a lot of  
21 mothers happy.

22 LIZ ACCLES: Yeah. Yeah.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you for this  
24 panel for coming in and giving--

25 LIZ ACCLES: I think that--

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE 340

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: testimony.

3 LIZ ACCLES: those pictures say it all.

4 Don't they?

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah. Thank you.

6 LIZ ACCLES: Thank you.

7 PANEL: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All right. Evelyn  
9 Ortiz. Is she here? Okay. Yessie Layman. Or  
10 Jesse. I'm sorry.

11 JESSIE LAYMAN: It's the way I wrote it.  
12 I apologize.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, that's okay. I  
14 used to have an employee names Yessie. So--

15 [background comments]

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Garrett Shove. No?  
17 Oh, okay. Caroline Iosso. Rachel Castillo.

18 Jodesser Ranier or Ramer. And Thomas Hunt. Is  
19 Thomas Hunt here? Okay. Is Joel Cufferman here?

20 JOEL CUFFERMAN: Yes, I am.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

22 UNIDENTIFIED: All right, Joel.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So we have Joel, we  
24 have Rachel.

25 CAROLINE ISO: I'm Caroline.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Is Rachel  
3 here?

4 [background comments]

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Sorry. We  
6 have Caroline. Garrett? Okay. Jessie? Did I name  
7 everybody? Okay. Why don't you start?

8 GARRETT SHORE: Hello. Is this on? All  
9 right. Cool. Sorry. First of all, thank you very  
10 much for having us today. We appreciate the  
11 opportunity to comment on the 2019 executive budget.  
12 My name is Garrett Shore. I'm the policy and  
13 communications associate at Jobs First NYC. We are  
14 an organization whose mission is to reduce the  
15 population of out of school, out of work and the  
16 adults in New York City. I'm joined today by my  
17 colleagues Evelyn Ortiz from NIATEP (sp?) and Jessie  
18 Layman from NYCETC and we're all here representing  
19 the Invest in Skills New York City Coalition. In a  
20 citywide coalition that understands the economic  
21 imperatives of investing in a skilled workforce in  
22 New York state and New York City. We aim to make  
23 workforce development and economic priority and  
24 achieve policy change that streamlines the workforce  
25 development system through sustained and significant

2 state and local investment. We appreciate this  
3 opportunity, once again, and we are here to call and  
4 thank you for your assistance in calling for an  
5 investment in bridge programming, which is high.  
6 Educational programming with a career focus that will  
7 help empower New Yorkers to access bridges to better  
8 jobs. So, New York City's economy is growing with a  
9 3.0 percent GPC growth in the first quarter of 2019.  
10 It's making our neighborhoods more expensive than the  
11 labor market more competitive. Unfortunately, we  
12 don't have equity of access to that growth. There  
13 are 1.5 million New York City homes making less than  
14 the federal poverty level and less than the basic  
15 cost of living for the state at a time when our  
16 city's unemployment rate is near a record low of 4.2  
17 percent. The economic security of our city is  
18 threatened when there are millions of struggling  
19 unsustainably employed people. It's time that we  
20 build bridges to better jobs for all New Yorkers.  
21 And if we want to make our economy accessible and  
22 empower New Yorkers to enter better jobs, we need to  
23 provide training programs that are responsive to the  
24 job market. A high school diploma is frequently not  
25 enough to access sustainable employment anymore and

2 that trend isn't slowing down. The Georgetown Center  
3 on education in the workforce-- sorry-- has  
4 predicted that 65 percent of all jobs, by 2020, will  
5 require some form of postsecondary degree or  
6 credential. Conversely, 43 percent of New Yorkers  
7 either have less than a high school equivalency, or  
8 low levels of literacy and numeracy. 2.5 million New  
9 Yorkers have basic skills needs that prevent them  
10 from accessing good paying jobs. Therefore, we need  
11 the city to make its investment of 70 million dollars  
12 in two bridge program as it promised in 2014.

13 EVELYN ORTIZ: Good evening. It is a  
14 pleasure to be here and we are finally here. My name  
15 is Evelyn Ortiz. I'm the deputy director of the New  
16 York Association of Training and Employment  
17 Professionals. For over 40 years, our association  
18 has represented every county in the state and it  
19 includes local workforce boards, providers of  
20 economic development, union training funds, colleges,  
21 literacy, education, job training and employment  
22 service providers. Collectively, our members serve  
23 over 1 million New Yorkers each day. Today, I am  
24 also here to testify on behalf of the Invest in  
25 Skills New York City Coalition to highlight the need

2 for bridge programs in the impact that these programs  
3 have on the lives of New York City's most vulnerable  
4 populations. As my colleague stated, 43 percent of  
5 New Yorkers have a high school diploma or less. Over  
6 220,000 of them have less than a ninth grade reading  
7 level. For those who lack these basic skills and  
8 educational credentials, prosperity appears to be  
9 growing more distant. Unfortunately, many of the  
10 workforce training programs that offer advanced  
11 training into good paying jobs require a tenth grade  
12 reading level, leaving behind many without access to  
13 a viable career pathway. A recent voluntary survey  
14 conducted by the Invest in Skills New York City  
15 campaign found that within last year, 18 workforce  
16 training organizations reported that they had to turn  
17 away a total of 8880 potential clients from the  
18 desired programs due to low reading and math scores.  
19 Many of these potential clients also face additional  
20 barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment,  
21 which include homelessness, involvement with the  
22 criminal justice system, mental health challenges,  
23 substance abuse issues, and lack of child care.  
24 Bridge programs are designed to provide individuals  
25 with wraparound services to combat these challenges,



2 while at the same time, helping with basic skills  
3 deficiencies, reach the level of literacy and  
4 numeracy they need in order to enter the next level  
5 of training, obtain employment, or go to college.  
6 Unlike traditional adult literacy programs, bridge  
7 programs are contextualized to a specific sector of  
8 the job market. One phenomenal example is Tech  
9 Bridge. Offered in partnership with The Door and  
10 Perscolas (sic). And just overall I just wanted to  
11 give you the highlight of that. 70 percent of Tech  
12 Bridge clients went on to advanced IT training and 80  
13 percent of those clients found employment in the  
14 sector.

15 JESSIE LAYMAN: Hello and good evening  
16 and thank you for managing this marathon, once again.  
17 I'm Jessie Layman, the director of policy and  
18 advocacy for the New York City Employment and  
19 Training Coalition. The coalition is the umbrella  
20 organization that represents over 150 workforce  
21 service providers across the five boroughs,  
22 neighborhood focused CBO's, community colleges,  
23 vocational training programs, and labor management  
24 organizations. As an advocate for this broad  
25 workforce sector, there is a lot of the city budget

2 that I could focus on today, but my colleagues are  
3 giving you an idea of why we have chosen to focus in  
4 this year's budget on bridge programs. As Garrett  
5 made clear, we know that reading and math deficits  
6 stand as barriers for tens of thousands of New  
7 Yorkers seeking careers in higher education and, as  
8 Evelyn laid out, we know that the bridge model of  
9 contextualized education is the best pathway to guide  
10 New Yorkers pass those barriers. The need is great.  
11 The DeBlasio administration has identified it itself  
12 and its career pathways blueprint, promising to  
13 allocate 16 million dollars per year to bridge  
14 programs starting in 2020. Now that fiscal 2020 is  
15 upon us, it is critical that the administration keep  
16 this promise and the Council unflinchingly insist on  
17 the promise being kept. But the proposed budget is  
18 40 million dollars short. That means the promises  
19 not being kept. The need is nowhere near being met.  
20 To take one population example, the mayor's proposed  
21 budget would leave adults, such as those served by  
22 HRA, entirely unserved by these sorts of  
23 contextualized programs. What makes that even more  
24 galling is the fact that investments in bridge  
25 programs are fiscally responsible for the city's

2 budget. Serving those HRA adult clients might cost  
3 us 30 million dollars or more, but keeping them on  
4 public assistance is already costing us tens of  
5 millions of dollars more than that. The Council can  
6 make sure that the adopted budget closes this gap  
7 between the promise and the reality. We want to  
8 thank the Speaker, the BLEC, the progressive Caucus,  
9 and the full Council for their public support. The  
10 Council response to the proposed budget called for  
11 not only the promised 16 million dollars, but an  
12 additional 10 million dollars to highlight the need  
13 and importance of bridge programs and we ask that you  
14 keep up this focus in the final negotiations around  
15 the adopted budget and do not settle for a budget  
16 that leaves so many New Yorkers behind. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, I'm just a  
18 little confused. In this testimony--

19 JESSIE LAYMAN: Yep. It's three of us.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right. The three  
21 of you together. It asks for 53 million.

22 JESSIE LAYMAN: Yeah. We've identified  
23 a specific program that could be launched for that  
24 amount of money that serves an exact number of  
25 clients. The promise from the administration was 60

2 million dollars and we want to help them get close to  
3 that and we wanted to be exact in our ask of what  
4 could actually be funded realistically and launched  
5 in this year's budget.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I see. So you're  
7 saying-- so what Garrett was saying was he wanted  
8 the 60 million promised and then 10 million on top of  
9 that?

10 JESSIE LAYMAN: The Council put that in  
11 the budget response and we're--

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right. Okay.

13 JESSIE LAYMAN: very thankful for that.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm following you  
15 now. Okay. Thank you.

16 JESSIE LAYMAN: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All right. Next  
18 please.

19 CAROLINE IOSSO: Hi. Good afternoon. My  
20 name is Caroline Iosso and I am the director of  
21 community and government affairs at Opportunities for  
22 a Better Tomorrow, OBT. Thank you, Chair Dromm, and  
23 Council member Chin for the opportunity to testify  
24 this afternoon. Founded in 1983, OBT is one of New  
25 York City's largest providers of workforce

2 development and education services for opportunity  
3 youth and adults who are disconnected from education  
4 and employment. We serve over 4000 youth and adults  
5 every year across six sites in Brooklyn and Queens  
6 and our programs have an 87 percent completion rate.  
7 For fiscal 2020, we are seeking funding from city  
8 Council to strengthen our core programs and build out  
9 several exciting initiatives. There are lots of  
10 details about these programs and the testimony that  
11 I've submitted, but briefly first is our youth  
12 education and job training program, which is OBT's  
13 signature program that provides HSE classes for youth  
14 in a simulated work environment with one-on-one  
15 counseling, case management, and a community of  
16 support. We are also seeking funding for adult  
17 literacy classes, immigration services, our college  
18 access program, our transfers school partnership, and  
19 our sector specific trainings: Tech Start, medical  
20 administrative assistant training, and our pre-  
21 apprenticeship in masonry. Additionally, OBT is a  
22 proud partner of Invest in Skills New York City and  
23 the 70 million dollar investment in bridge program  
24 being proposed by the Council would better enable us  
25 to ensure that there is equitable access to economic

2 opportunity in New York City. Both our work and our  
3 advocacy seek to address the evolving needs of  
4 opportunity youth and disconnected adults. Our  
5 priorities reflect the reality is that they face,  
6 which are an increased need for basic skills support,  
7 increased barriers, and a disconnection from new  
8 opportunities that stem from New York City's economic  
9 development initiatives. We are deeply grateful for  
10 the support that the city Council has shown us over  
11 the years and our requests for fiscal 2020 represent  
12 the appropriate next steps for our programming.  
13 Supporting those seeking higher education, reaching  
14 transfers school students before they graduate,  
15 safeguarding our immigrant communities, preparing our  
16 participants for the future of work, and meeting our  
17 participants where they are at with the supports they  
18 need. We couldn't do it without you and we look  
19 forward to working together in the coming year and  
20 beyond.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
22 much.

23 CAROLINE IOSSO: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next please.

25 JOEL CUFFERMAN: Joel Cufferman.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yep.

3 JOEL CUFFERMAN: New York Environmental  
4 Law and Justice Project and the Emergency Taskforce  
5 for the Prohibition of Round Up. I think I am the  
6 first organization to ask for a reduction in funds.  
7 We are asking the city not to spend and not another  
8 dollar on Round Up and glyphosate. Two days ago, Los  
9 Angeles prohibited the use of that. There's scores  
10 of states and municipalities across the country that  
11 have said no and New York City continues to use it.  
12 The paper I handed in is a picture of the notice of  
13 the restaurant up that is in your, Council member  
14 Chin's, district. Part of the problem is that we  
15 have kids that are exposed to high levels of lead in  
16 the soil and also now it's being used in playgrounds  
17 and parks. It's carcinogenic. There's three cases  
18 recently in California. The last cases 1 billion  
19 dollars' worth of findings. Although if they're  
20 going to get the billion dollars, but lawyers are  
21 lining up now. There's over 13,000 cases and New  
22 York City is probably going to be one of those people  
23 on the list that is going to be sued. We can't  
24 understand why New York City continues to put people  
25 in passive danger. It's a cosmetic pesticide. It

2 doesn't have to be used and also it's hurting the  
3 workers, the environment, and especially our kids.  
4 New York City health Department-- we've used it over  
5 13,000 times in the last two years, okay, in places  
6 where it should not even be used, but also the city  
7 health department pointed out that when this hit soil  
8 that has led her heavy metals, causes kidney failure.  
9 So we've been on notice. The city health department  
10 has been telling this. It admits it and we are still  
11 using it. Okay? I urge you to ask for a moratorium.  
12 Six councilmembers of asked for that. That we do  
13 that in that we actually ban it. But there is no  
14 reason why we have to keep on spending to use it.  
15 The city parks department has told us it's cheaper  
16 than just pulling the stuff out, but I think it's  
17 really, really-- I think the largest chemical  
18 assault that the city is not just looking the other  
19 way, but is actually paying for this to continue.  
20 And we brought this up at the park's hearing  
21 yesterday and they didn't mention it at all. It's  
22 the health department that's using it. They're using  
23 it, you know, in different areas--

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But I told--



2 JOEL CUFFERMAN: but it doesn't have to  
3 be used.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I did tell you  
5 yesterday I would look into it.

6 JOEL CUFFERMAN: Okay.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And I did give it  
8 to my legislative director because that's the first  
9 I've heard of it. I've never heard of Round Up  
10 before. So I'm looking into it and we'll follow up  
11 with you.

12 JOEL CUFFERMAN: Okay. But I just want  
13 to say this could be just the law costs alone of  
14 defending the city--

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Uh-hm.

16 JOEL CUFFERMAN: it's going to be  
17 millions of dollars and I think New York has played a  
18 role-- if all the environmental talk that the city  
19 has done, this is virtually a step backwards and I  
20 think New York City has got to come back to the  
21 forefront to do this.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. All right.  
23 Thank you very much. Last but definitely not lease.  
24 Alejandro Aduce Se Fuentes. Jennifer Wright Cook.

2 Fran Garber. Julia Durante Martinez. John Krinsky  
3 and Tito Sunja.

4 [background comments]

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Who's that?  
6 Did you fill out a form?

7 LEGAL COUNSEL: [inaudible 07:21:26]

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, okay. Come on  
9 up. Yep. We had thought you already testified, so  
10 I'm sorry.

11 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Chair, want me to have  
12 them fill out one right quick?

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I think we got it.  
14 Yeah. And nobody else-- is there anybody else here  
15 who wants to testify? Okay. All right. All right.  
16 Let's start right over here.

17 ALEJANDRA ADUCE SI FUENTES: Good  
18 afternoon. My name is Alejandra Aduce Si Fuentes  
19 and I am the executive director of Dance NYC, a dance  
20 service organization for New York City. On behalf of  
21 more than 5000 dance makers and 1200 dance companies  
22 based in the New York City area, the service and to  
23 teen dance NYC joins New Yorkers for culture and arts  
24 and colleague advocates to request, one, that the  
25 city reconsider the proposed 6 million cut in funding

2 in fiscal year 2020, and, two, the city maintained  
3 the 25 million increase in funding from fiscal year  
4 2019. The need an opportunity for funding is urgent.  
5 This is a moment when our presidential administration  
6 is threatening the rights to creativity and free  
7 expression and New York City's increased investment  
8 in culture and the arts now will have both symbolic,  
9 systemic, and tangible significance. The current  
10 affordability crisis in New York City stems from  
11 long-standing systems of oppression and continues to  
12 high end inefficiencies that result from one time or  
13 short term commitments to funding arts and culture.  
14 Healthy ecosystems require sustained intentional  
15 support at every level. In the case of dance, this  
16 ecosystem is culture and the way in which culture  
17 defines us and advances us as a city, nation, and  
18 civilization. It is for this reason that we must  
19 commit to continued support for the arts. In doing  
20 so, we will strengthen the city as a beacon for  
21 artists and audiences around the globe and insured  
22 New York artists and cultural groups have the  
23 resources they need to advance the role of artistry  
24 and justice, equity, and inclusion in a changing  
25 United States. I have provided in testimony a couple

2 of urgent-- several urgent priorities for the dance  
3 community and how they relate to arts and culture.  
4 Ultimately, for dance NYC, the ongoing implementation  
5 of the cultural plan is a critical time for  
6 strengthened and new advocacy. With the city's  
7 vision for a sustainable, inclusive, and equitable  
8 sector in place, it is incumbent on the city to  
9 operationalize that vision, fund it at adequate  
10 levels, and measure progress over time. As the city  
11 establishes its evaluation framework, Dance NYC  
12 strongly advocates for tracking the success of each  
13 planning strategy by creative discipline to ensure  
14 that the art form of dance, as well as all other peer  
15 disciplines at equitably served. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
17 much. Were you involved in the dance parade and all?

18 ALEJANDRA ADUCE SI FUENTES: Yes. Yes. We  
19 were one of the partners that help to promote it and  
20 we were present.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How was it?

22 ALEJANDRA ADUCE SI FUENTES: It was  
23 incredible.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Really?  
25

2 ALEJANDRA ADUCE SI FUENTES: Over 10,000  
3 dancers. Over 100 different dance forms across the  
4 entire city were represented.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I heard-- I only  
6 heard of it the first time this year, some all have  
7 to make sure I get out there at some point.

8 ALEJANDRA ADUCE SI FUENTES: Every May.  
9 Next year will be the 14th year.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Wow. Okay. I've  
11 been in the Council too long.

12 [laughter]

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next, please.

14 FRAN GARBER: Hi. I'm Fran Garber from  
15 Regina Opera Company. We don't dance, but we sing.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

17 FRAN GARBER: For 49 years, Regina Opera  
18 has offered year-round fully staged operas and  
19 ticketed and free concerts in Southwest Brooklyn. We  
20 will be starting our 50th season shortly. Our  
21 performances are places where thousands of Brooklyn  
22 residents, many of them retirees, come to meet their  
23 friends, stimulating their minds, and getting them  
24 out of their home. Attending our performances  
25 distracts them from their troubles. We have also

2 been told that our performances are very high  
3 quality. We provide affordable entertainment for our  
4 audiences who may not otherwise attend live opera  
5 performances. Some are on fixed income and some just  
6 can't travel. Some people who love music are  
7 intimidated by the major opera houses or if not been  
8 exposed to opera previously. The venues that we  
9 perform in our all handicapped accessible. We offer  
10 matinee performances, reducing travel after dark.  
11 4000 people attend performances during fiscal year  
12 2019, taking advantage of low-cost and free tickets.  
13 Many tickets are also donated to senior centers. We  
14 are you can Brooklyn. There are other people who  
15 perform operas, but only we have been doing it for 49  
16 years in Brooklyn year round. We're well-known in  
17 the music world for training musical artists of all  
18 backgrounds and we reflect the makeup of New York  
19 City. We help the entire community. We purchase  
20 local good, rent storage units right near out  
21 theater, which is in Sunset Park. We depend on the  
22 support of audience members. Our Council members,  
23 Menchaca and Brannon, and on the New York City  
24 Department of Cultural Affairs.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do you have an ask  
3 for money from the Council at large other than the  
4 discretionary funding you're getting?

5 FRAN GARBER: We get money from-- No. We  
6 just get money from Mr. Brannon and Mr. Menchaca and  
7 we get money from the Department of Cultural Affairs,  
8 Brooklyn Arts Council, and several other foundations  
9 and cultural institutions.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, you're asking  
11 for a continuation of that funding?

12 FRAN GARBER: Yes. We request that there  
13 is no cut. That it be baselined and not cut the  
14 funding cuts for the arts.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Good. I  
16 didn't see this paper before. Now I have your  
17 testimony. Thank you. Did you come last year?

18 FRAN GARBER: Yes. I did.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah. I remember.  
20 Okay. Thank you. Thank you for being here. Next,  
21 please.

22 EMANA BERRY: Hi. My name is Emana Berry  
23 and I am the development associate at The Field and I  
24 will be entering testimony on behalf of myself, as  
25 well as the executive director, Jennifer Wright Cook.

2 On behalf of Jennifer Wright Cook, the organization  
3 The Field is a 33-year-old art service organization  
4 based in lower Manhattan and we serve over 1600  
5 ambitious artists citywide. She is also the cochair  
6 of New York's for Culture and Arts, the city's arts  
7 and culture advocacy organization. On behalf of  
8 Jennifer, we urge the city not to cut the arts and  
9 culture budget and to request a total of 25 million  
10 in cultural funding. We ask that this funding be  
11 divided evenly as it has in the past and that any  
12 additional funding also be shared equally. Jennifer  
13 Wright Cook has testified every year and this is the  
14 first year she has been unable to do so just because  
15 of conflicts in her schedule, but she's been in her  
16 role at the The Field for 14 years and every year she  
17 has seen-- Oh, I'm messing up. She testifies every  
18 year here for increases and this is the first time  
19 she's had to give a testimony against cuts in the art  
20 budget. On behalf of myself, so in addition to my  
21 work as a development associate at the field, am also  
22 a writer, producer, actor, and stand-up comedian in  
23 New York City and I know one of those things does not  
24 sound like the other, but I am here asking that these  
25 cuts, while they affect my work at The Field, they



2 also affect my passion, which is creating work and  
3 opportunities. I create new work in the theater  
4 profession as a practitioner surrounding the need to  
5 movement, as well as to demystify the stereotypes we  
6 have around diseases, specifically multiple  
7 sclerosis. So it affects my ability to create work  
8 as an artist and to also bring these important public  
9 health issues to my community. And so I urge the  
10 Council to fight and advocate for not only  
11 organizations like The Field, but for the artists  
12 that are out there doing the groundwork and who have  
13 families to feed, as well as, you know, we seek  
14 affordable healthcare. So, thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you  
16 also for coming in and for giving us the testimony.

17 JOHN KRINSKY: Distinguished members of  
18 the committee, committee Chair Dromm, my name is John  
19 Krinsky. I'm a professor of political science at  
20 City College and I lead the minor there and community  
21 change studies. I'm pleased to offer my testimony in  
22 support of the citywide community land trust  
23 initiative, sponsored by Council members Carlina  
24 Rivera and Donovan Richards which would provide  
25 critical 2020 discretionary funding of 850,000

2 dollars to 15 organizations working to create and  
3 expand community land trusts or CLTs in all five  
4 boroughs of New York City. Thanks to years of  
5 community education, organizing and coalition  
6 advocacy, interest in community land trust has  
7 blossomed across the city. Community land trusts are  
8 nonprofit organizations designed to own and steward  
9 land over the long term in the interests of their  
10 communities. They have a history going back to the  
11 civil rights movement and have had notable success in  
12 cities across the country and here in New York City  
13 in preserving and creating affordable housing, of  
14 aiding gentrification and displacement pressures in  
15 neighborhoods, and supporting affordable commercial  
16 space, art space, and green space. The common  
17 denominator is through a 99 year renewable ground  
18 lease to the users of the land. Community land  
19 trusts enforce affordability and use restrictions,  
20 according to a balance of interest in the community.  
21 Community land trust boards have representatives from  
22 residents or leaseholders of CLT land to ensure the  
23 demand for good management. Members of the broader  
24 community to ensure the demand for expansion of  
25 decommodified (sic) land, and advocates and technical

2 assistance providers who can help steer the ship and  
3 link to other resources. This model of long-term  
4 land stewardship depends on organized communities and  
5 it depends on setting up CLT's with organizing at  
6 their core. Community-based organizations that in  
7 the proposed initiative have been working closely  
8 together since 2017 through CLT learning exchange or  
9 capacity building series coordinated by the new  
10 economy project and for which I and colleagues at  
11 city College's community change studies programs have  
12 developed a curriculum. Through this collaborative  
13 work, groups have deepened their CLT knowledge and  
14 planning and are now poised to undertake intensive  
15 organizing work required to set up their CLTs with  
16 support from technical assistance groups. So, the  
17 proposed initiative would be-- it comes at crucial  
18 time in their development. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You have strong  
20 advocates in both Council member Richards and with  
21 Carlina Rivera. So--

22 JOHN KRINSKY: Yes, we do.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah.

24 JOHN KRINSKY: Great. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah.

2                   JULIA DURANTE MARTINEZ:        Good evening,  
3 Committee Chair Dromm, Council members Chin and  
4 Gibson. My name is Julia Durante Martinez and I'm  
5 the community land trust coordinator at New Economy  
6 Project. For more than 20 years, New Economy Project  
7 has been working with groups citywide to advance  
8 financial and economic justice and equitable  
9 community development and we are the coordinating  
10 organization for the proposed community land trust  
11 initiative, along with 14 partner organizations which  
12 include City College and Community Development  
13 Project and the Brownsville Partnership who are three  
14 of the groups that are here today supporting the  
15 initiative. Community land trusts are a proven  
16 mechanism to preserve affordable housing stock and  
17 prevent the extraction of public subsidies. And the  
18 long-standing Cooper Square community land trust here  
19 on the lower East side is an excellent example of  
20 that. Cooper Square has developed and stewarded  
21 nearly 400 units of deeply permanently affordable  
22 housing that rents on average from 300 to 1000  
23 dollars a month. And this has enabled hundreds of  
24 extremely low income tenants to stay on the lower  
25 East side in the face of gentrification pressures

2 nearby. The other thing that I want to highlight in  
3 my testimony is that, after years of organizing and  
4 advocacy and coalition building led by the groups  
5 that are part of the citywide initiative, community  
6 land trusts have made tremendous gains in New York in  
7 the last several years and this includes the first  
8 local law to finding and entering CLT's into the  
9 administrative code, increase support from HPD,  
10 expanded training and technical support networks and  
11 investment of New York State Attorney General  
12 settlement funds in new and existing CLTs. And this  
13 was the investment but also supported the learning  
14 exchange that John mentioned, and intensive two-year  
15 capacity building process that most of the groups  
16 participating in the initiative were also a part of.  
17 So, now building on this intensive training and  
18 ongoing community organizing, groups from the south  
19 and northwest Bronx, to East Harlem, to Brownsville,  
20 are pursuing CLT's. And the proposed initiative  
21 would jump start this progress at a really critical  
22 moment of opportunity by providing direct support to  
23 groups as they carry out the organizing and planning  
24 work needed to launch their CLTs. New York needs  
25 CLTs. They are the essential tool in providing

2 permanently deeply affordable housing in community  
3 space, stabilizing neighborhoods, and building  
4 healthy, resilient communities. And we ask that you  
5 support the city's first major investment in  
6 community land trusts by funding the CLT initiative  
7 for 2020. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you.  
9 It's good to see Cachia (sp?) is involved with it, as  
10 well, from my district.

11 JULIA DURANTE MARTINEZ: Yes. They  
12 are.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah. Thank you.

14 TITO SENJA: Good evening. My name is  
15 Tito Senja. I'm from the Community Development  
16 Project at the Urban Justice Center. I'm the  
17 supervising attorney of the workers' rights team and  
18 I am here to advocate for renewal and expansion of  
19 the low wage worker initiative. In this time of  
20 federal retrenchment of civil liberties and workers'  
21 rights, fighting for workers' rights at the city and  
22 state level remain a vital avenue for fighting for  
23 social justice. As you know, when people assert and  
24 protect their rights at the workplace, that sense of  
25 mobilization, empowerment, and consciousness they

2 gained carries into every aspect of their lives.

3 People become change agents. CDP leads the citywide

4 immigrant legal empowerment collaborative, known as

5 CILEC, which is comprised of several legal services

6 organizations and CBO's. In FY 19, the city Council

7 importantly provided granted 2 million dollars for

8 civil legal services for low-wage workers in an

9 additional 500,000 for outreach efforts, of which

10 CILEC received 671,486. In the first nine months of

11 FY 19 alone, our consortium handled 270 new

12 employment matters, including representing more than

13 200 workers in court or administered proceedings.

14 The majority of these claims are not going to be

15 resolved in one year and our organizations have made

16 hires to represent these people and so, to not renew

17 the funding would essentially leave these people

18 without representation or with representation, you

19 know, by folks who are beyond capacity. So, since

20 the mayor's office and city Council, you know,

21 importantly and we're so grateful, provided this

22 funding in FY 19, I believe it is our responsibility

23 to renew and expand the low wage worker initiative to

24 continue to promote and advance workers' rights.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Are you working  
3 with those who have been-- who have not been paid?

4 TITO SENJA: Yes. I mean, we represent  
5 those with minimum wage claims, overtime claims,  
6 discrimination, retaliation. We also work with  
7 trafficking victims. So, I mean, all types of  
8 workplace issues and, as you can imagine, the most  
9 vulnerable of us, you know, suffer the most in those  
10 situations.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Uh-hm. Okay.  
12 Thank you.

13 TITO SENJA: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And last, but  
15 definitely not least, as I said before.

16 AIDA LYNN: Good afternoon. My name is  
17 Aida Lynn and I'm a counselor advocate at the program  
18 at CPC. Thank you, Chair Dromm and the members of  
19 City Council for the opportunity to testify on youth  
20 service today. I will start with my family story  
21 with CPC. A few years ago, when my little sister was  
22 going to elementary school, my mom purposefully  
23 looked for a school where CPC provided after school  
24 program. Unfortunately, my younger cousin had to be  
25 home playing video games for all five years of his



2 elementary school because my aunt cannot find an  
3 after school program and summer program for him,  
4 although he is on the waiting list every year. While  
5 both my sister and my cousin are the same age,  
6 however, not only are my little sister's grades are  
7 higher, but she also knows her interests. She knows  
8 how to resolve conflicts and she knows when to speak  
9 up for herself. Because CPC after school program  
10 focuses on academic with development of the social  
11 emotional skills and the competency that are equally  
12 essential for youth to succeed in school, career and  
13 life. This is why afterschool programs like compass,  
14 sonic, summer youth improvement program, and work  
15 learning [inaudible 07:39:09] are so important and  
16 why we urge the city to baseline these programs and  
17 expand funding for them. Compass is critical to  
18 ensure that children are safe while their parents  
19 work. Additionally, after school programs provides  
20 many positive benefits to social emotional growth and  
21 economic support for youth. However, especially in  
22 high needs areas of the city, providers often have  
23 lines of parents waiting to register their children  
24 for programs and many carry significant waiting list.  
25 We urge the city to expand after school programs for

2 elementary school students so that every family who  
3 needs a program can find one. Summer programs like  
4 sonic ensure that this important care continues over  
5 the summer, but it takes CBOs like CPC time to  
6 recruit and train staff, enroll participants, and  
7 plan programming, which is why baselining funding is  
8 so critical. We urge the city to baseline 20.35  
9 million dollars for 34,000 sonic summer slots.  
10 Through [inaudible 07:40:09] CPC, nearly 3000 young  
11 people gain skills and experience and many of them  
12 find long term work through their participation at  
13 CPC. At SYP, often at CPC. We urge the city to  
14 baseline funding and increase rates for this program.  
15 Work, learn, grow provides career readiness training  
16 and pay enrollment for opportunity-- for youth for  
17 enrolled in school. We urge the city to baseline  
18 19.9 million dollars in funding and expand the  
19 program to serve larger proportions for high school  
20 students. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Were you here with  
22 the other CPC people?

23 AIDA LYNN: Yeah. I was sitting there.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And we didn't call  
25 you?

2 AIDA LYNN: Well, I was waiting for my  
3 name to be called.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Awe. Next time,  
5 you have to come and see that man over there, okay,  
6 and let him know or come to one of us so that you  
7 could stay with your group. I apologize to you for  
8 that.

9 AIDA LYNN: That's okay.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But you did an  
11 excellent job in your testimony and you'll get extra  
12 credit for that.

13 AIDA LYNN: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And all the issues  
15 that you brought up, the summer youth program,  
16 compass, sonic, are major, major topics for the  
17 council that we're going to fight for. So, you know,  
18 we go through the negotiations, we're going to really  
19 fight for those things. So, you can be assured of  
20 that.

21 AIDA LYNN: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And thank you for  
23 staying to be the last one. All right. I have to  
24 read a statement which I'm really happy to do after a  
25 month of hearing. Let's see. This concludes the

2 city councils hearings on the mayor's fiscal 2020  
3 executive budget. Thank you for to all my colleagues  
4 for being active and engaged in these hearings over  
5 the past three weeks and thank you to all the members  
6 of the public who took time out of their busy  
7 schedules to be here today to have their voices  
8 heard. We hear you and we appreciate you. As one  
9 final reminder to the public, if you wish to submit  
10 testimony for the official record, you can email your  
11 testimony to the finance division at  
12 [financetestimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:financetestimony@council.nyc.gov) and the staff will  
13 make it a part of the official record. We will  
14 accept testimony through 5 PM on Thursday, May 30th.  
15 Thank you everyone for being a part of this year's  
16 budget process. This hearing is now adjourned.

17 [applause]

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yay.  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date June 28, 2019