

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE JOINTLY WITH
COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

----- X

December 18, 2018
Start: 1:11 p.m.
Recess: 5:10 p.m.

HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: KEITH POWERS
Chairperson

JAMES G. VAN BRAMER
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Alicka Ampry-Samuel
Robert F. Holden
Rory I. Lancman
Carlina Rivera
Joseph C. Borelli
Laurie A. Cumbo
Karen Koslowitz
Francisco P. Moya

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

Ana Bermudez, Commissioner, NYC Department of Probation

Katrina Prioleau, Director, Neighborhood Opportunity Network

David Fruedenthal, Government Relations Director
Carney Hall

James C. Horton, Director of Social Impact Programs
Carnegie Hall

Jasmine Lancaster, Writer, Poet, Filmmaker

Dylan, NeON Participant

Daniel Cross, Founder of Project Fame(sic)

Tamara C. Williams, Founder, Music Beyond Measure

Lyndon Sylvester, Recruiter, Animation Project

Kenneth Swindle, NeON Participant

Brian Austin, Founder and Executive Director of
The Animation Project, TAP

Andre Whitehead, NeON Photographer

Taquan Spencer, Mentor for Arches of East New York
and Bedford-Stuyvesant

George Warwich, Free Verse Participant

Sherry Good, Probation Officer, NeON, Staten Island

Kalief Williams, NeON Arts Participant, Bedford-Stuyvesant

Electra Weston, Founding Director International Child Program

Julie Desena, Senior Director, Youth Justice Programs Community Mediation Services, Jamaica, Queens and Chairperson of Jamaica NeON Stakeholders Committee

Susanne Harnett, Metis Associates

Laura Satkowski, Metis Associates

Shalanda Miller, Co-Chair of Brownsville Stakeholders NeON

Carl McIntosh, Free Verse & NeON Photography participant

Monsora Kanan, Program Teacher, Young New Yorkers
Appearing for: Rachel Barnard, Executive Director, Young New Yorkers & Public Artist in Residents the Department of Probation, DOP

Frank Dody, Program Manager for Education and Training, Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration & Co-Chair Bed-Stuy NeON

Sarina Chandler, Co-Chair, Harlem NeON

Dave Johnson, Poet Residence, Department of Probation, Founder/Creator of Free Verse

Sarah Ogger, Executive Director, Humanities New York

COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

5

[sound check] [pause] [gavel]

CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Good afternoon. My name is Keith Powers. I'm the Chair of the Committee on Criminal Justice. We actually before we get to the testimony, we have to do a quick vote in our Committee on two bills that are from a previous that we had I think two months. As part of the-to-to start, we're going to be voting on two bills today. The first is Intro 933, which was introduced by Majority Leader Cumbo, which requires the Department of Correction to report on incidents of sexual abuse and harassment to our incarcerated individuals in city jails. The second is Proposed Intro 1090 by Council Member Dromm, which will require the Department of Correction to report instances of sexual abuse, harassment and force to visitors in city jails. These bills were heard on September 6, 2018 in hearing that we had with the women and Justice system on sexual abuse in jails. I want to thank both of those chairs, and those committees for joining us. In the past few years we've seen victim advocates at the Department of Justice, Board of Correction in media speak publicly and report on the culture of abuse in the New York City jails.

COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE
ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL
INTERGROUP RELATIONS 6

1
2 According to the September 2018 report from the Board
3 of Correction between 2016 and 2017 the number of
4 sexual abuses and harassment complaints by people in
5 custody increased by 40% from 823 to 1,151. It's not
6 just incarcerated individuals who are being abused.
7 As of November, 2017 over 45 women filed or in the
8 process of filing lawsuits that accuse the DOC of
9 unlawful strip searches. That being said, we are
10 very proud of the work we did to do oversight on
11 these issues and also, of course, thankful for the
12 members who are putting forward bills. That will
13 help have a better understanding of what is happening
14 when we have somebody in custody or they've visiting
15 a loved one. I believe we may be joined by Majority
16 Leader Cumbo who wants to say a few words about her
17 bill, and we'll offer that opportunity when she gets
18 here. We're going to call a roll on that vote, and I
19 think we'll leave it open since we have two more
20 members here from the committee who have to join us.
21 So, we'll leave it open for them as well. So, I'm
22 going to ask the clerk to call the roll on those
23 bills.

24
25

COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE
ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL
INTERGROUP RELATIONS 7

CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk,
roll call vote Committee on Criminal Justice. The
items are coupled. Chair Powers.

CHAIRPERSON POWERS: I vote aye.

CLERK: Lancman.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: Aye.

CLERK: Holden.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Aye.

CLERK: By a vote of 3 in the affirmative,
0 in the negative and no abstentions, both items have
been adopted by the Committee.

CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Then we'll leave it
open. Thanks. Okay, now for the issue at hand. So,
Good afternoon. Once again I am still Keith Powers
the chair of the Criminal Justice Committee. I-I
want to thank, and we're joined by Council Member Van
Bramer who's the Chair of the Committee on Cultural
Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup
Relations. I want to thank him because early on when
I took over the chair as this, and he's been 12 years
on the—as the Chair?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: No.

CHAIRPERSON POWERS: We—no, no, no. We—
we have like 12 maybe. [laughter] We—we had—we had

COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE
ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL
INTERGROUP RELATIONS 8

1 talked about working together on-on some specific
2 overlap and he was—he was had a couple of ideas and
3 this is one of them. So, with that being said, and
4 independent report came out last Tuesday on NeON
5 Arts, a program with the New York City Department of
6 Probation in partnership with Carnegie Hall's Music
7 Institute, which integrates arts programming into
8 seven Neighborhood Opportunity Networks across the
9 city. The report was clear that the programs have
10 clear benefits. The study showed that NeON had
11 succeeded in identifying untapped talents, building
12 relationships and increasing participant confidence
13 in expressing thoughts and emotions. Further,
14 engaging a program such NeON assists with developing
15 social and critical thinking skills. I commend the
16 Department of Probation for providing a means of
17 expression for participants and look forward today to
18 hearing more about the lessons we can learn from the
19 program's success. I also look forward to hearing
20 more about the work of the Public Artists in
21 Residence or PAIR Program at the DOP, and how we can
22 encourage more folks to participated in the NeON
23 programs. I want to thank my staff for helping to
24 put together this hearing and the department and
25

COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE
ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL
INTERGROUP RELATIONS 9

1 Carnegie Hall for being here to testify as well as
2 many others. I want to note that we were joined on
3 my committee by Council Member Lancman who is also
4 the chair of the Justice System Committee. We're
5 also joined by Council Member Holden from the great
6 borough of Queens, and the great neighborhood of Mill
7 Village, and--and now we will hear from another
8 members of Queens and the Chair Jimmy Van Bramer.

9
10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

11 First of all, let me just say every committee hearing
12 should begin with praise of the great Borough of
13 Queens, and it's neighborhoods. [laughter] So, I
14 want to applaud my Co-Chair--Chair and Council Member
15 Powers for recognizing the greatness of the Borough
16 of Queens, and--

17 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: [off mic] It is
18 obviously.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [laughter], the
20 greatness of your village and all of our
21 neighborhood. So, it's great to be here. It's great
22 to be the Chair of the Committee on Cultural Affairs,
23 Libraries and International Intergroup Relations, and
24 part of the work that we do is highlighting programs
25 and--and scrutinizing things when they don't work, but

1
2 it's also equally important and highlight things that
3 are working that are making a difference in the lives
4 of real New Yorkers and this is one those things. I
5 was at a luncheon right before I came here, and I was
6 telling my seat mate about where I was going, and the
7 hearing and what it was about, and he asked me the
8 question that I asked Commissioner Bermudez a weeks
9 ago when I visited the Jamaica NeON Art Center, which
10 is—what is the track record on reducing recidivism
11 and I said, you know, the data is—is still not
12 completely in on that, but he answered the question
13 before I said it back to him when I said it's not
14 just about recidivism. He said, It's human. It's
15 very human what this is about. And I said that's
16 exactly the point. That's exactly what this is about
17 because in a Democratic society access to the arts is
18 a fundamental human right. We should see it as such.
19 The arts for everyone. It builds confidence. It
20 builds empathy. It educates and prepares people for
21 future leadership opportunities, leadership
22 opportunities that may be they were denied in the
23 past, but through experiencing the power of the arts
24 and unleashing the power in the goodness within
25 themselves, we can change lives. We spend so much

1 money on incarcerating people in our society. The
2 city itself \$1.3 billion per year. Wouldn't it be
3 great if we spent an equal or greater amount of money
4 on the arts and arts programming, and arts and
5 education, and certainly more programs Like NeON
6 Arts, and everyone is entitled to experience and
7 practice the arts, and particularly those leaving our
8 Criminal Justice System, we know that this is
9 important. The skills that come with being an
10 artist, and practicing your art, however you feel
11 that. I know that it may not look like it, but
12 Council Member Powers and I are excellent dancers.
13 [laughter] I don't even know if that's true.
14 [laughter] I was just guessing maybe, but when I
15 dance, I feel really good, and it's-it's great, but
16 you, too, Council Member Powers. But everybody
17 should feel confident. Everybody should feel good,
18 everybody should know that there is goodness and joy
19 and power within them, and that when they create and
20 they share that with the rest of the world, it not
21 only enriches their own lives, it enriches everyone
22 around them, and we know that that we have a long way
23 to go in our society with simply recognizing our own
24 collective humanity and appreciating everybody
25

1 else's. So, I look forward to hearing more from
2 those who are here. Maybe some of those who are—have
3 been in the program and benefitted from it, maybe
4 even seen some art better than the dancing of
5 Chairman Powers, and—and I want to say this,
6 Commissioner Bermuda, and I said this last week. I
7 say this every time. I am so impressed with your
8 dedication to all of your clients and your belief in
9 this program. Carnegie Hall I was chatting you up at
10 that—at the luncheon that I was just at, and saying,
11 you know, this is such a great program for so many
12 reasons. Carnegie Hall is one of the most august
13 cultural institutions in the city of New York, and we
14 know that are mazing programs, and the historic
15 performances that have taken place on their stages.
16 Sometimes it gets a bad rap, right that it's—it's
17 just for the elite and it's just an elitist
18 institution. If they only knew—if people only knew
19 the work that Carnegie Hall is doing, and the joy of
20 going to Carnegie Hall. For folks who maybe thought
21 it would be hard to ever see themselves getting to
22 Carnegie Hall. It's not just practice, practice,
23 practice, right. It is also being a part of NeON
24 Arts, and that's how you get to Carnegie Hall, and
25

1 that's powerful in and of itself just to simply be
2 there, right, to know that I am of this place, and I,
3 too, can take part in the joys and the wonders of all
4 of this. So, anxious to hear more from everyone, but
5 also to amplify what's going on here, and make sure
6 that we're sharing the good news, and making sure
7 that everyone else knows what's happening. So, with
8 that, thank you all for being here, and thank you to
9 my co-chair. [background comments/pause]

11 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: I made no comment on
12 my dancing skills. [laughter] I'm more of an effort
13 than a talent. So, with that being said, we're going
14 to I think swear all the folks in. I think Carnegie
15 Hall you don't have to technically swear in, but for
16 the Administration as well, and then we'll offer you
17 the opportunity to testify. Thank you. We've also
18 been joined by Council Member Borelli.

19 LEGAL COUNSEL: If everyone could raise
20 your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth,
21 the whole truth and nothing but the truth in your
22 testimony before this committee, and to respond
23 honestly to Council Member questions?

24 ANA BERMUDEZ: [on mic] Yes we do.
25

COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE
ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL
INTERGROUP RELATIONS 14

2 KATRINA PRIOLEAU: [off mic] Yes we do.

3 Katrina Prioleau

4 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Great. Thank you.

5 We'll start with the Administration to open and then

6 we'll ask Carnegie Hall to go next. Thank you, and

7 just you don't mind—don't mind stating your name and

8 your title. Thanks.

9 ANA BERMUDEZ: Good morning everybody.

10 Good Morning Chair Powers. Chair Van Bramer, and

11 members of the Criminal Justice and Cultural Affairs,

12 Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

13 Committees. I am Ana Bermudez, Commissioner of the

14 New York City Department of Probation and sitting

15 with me is Katrina Prioleau, Neighborhood Opportunity

16 Network Director. In addition to the incredible

17 Probation staff here with me today, I am joined by

18 Carnegie Hall our phenomenal partner in this work,

19 who will also be speaking about this unique

20 partnership, and not to mention—I've got to mention

21 this now, the amazing number of people from the

22 community who will be talking to you later. So, I

23 want to thank you for the opportunity to testify

24 about this important work. So, one cannot truly

25 explain the genesis of NeON Arts without—and the

1 shifting community corrections work without focusing
2 on the Neighborhood Opportunity Networks themselves,
3 the NeONs as a model. So, NeON are neighborhood
4 probations offices that are co-located with community
5 based organizations and service providers, which
6 created a one-stop shop for wraparounds of wraparound
7 service for people on probation, their families and
8 their communities, which is a big piece of-of the
9 model. And to do this effectively we had to embed
10 Probation and the resources we bring in the seven New
11 York City neighborhoods that most people on probation
12 call home: The South Bronx, Harlem, Jamaica, Bed-
13 Stuy, Brownsville, East New York and Norther Staten
14 Island. Neighborhoods that too often have been
15 defined in some settings by their worst statistics.
16 Through the NeON model in general and NeON Arts
17 specifically, we create an opportunity for residents
18 of the NeON neighborhoods to redefine themselves
19 publicly by their talents, potential skills and
20 creativity. For those of you who haven't yet visited
21 NeON, this excerpt-excerpt from a book called *Justice*
22 *Reinvestment: Winding Back Imprisonment* by lead
23 author David Browns, paints a pretty vivid picture of
24 now internationally recognized probation model and
25

1 let the authors describe as an inspiring example of
2 how a traditional government criminal justice agency
3 might be transformed to a vibrant local community
4 center exuding a sense of activity and hope. The
5 quote reads: A visit to the South Bronx NeON will
6 really give you a very different feel for what a
7 local justice investment initiative might look like.
8 In the colorful and radically redesigned office, it
9 is not immediately apparent exactly who are the
10 staff, probationers, local citizens, community and
11 health workers, friends, family and others. The
12 process of people reading examples of their poetry
13 included all these and indeed the Commissioner of
14 Probation—and that was me at the time—reading a poem
15 by her then—then 11-year-old child because I didn't
16 have the confidence quite yet to do it. People were
17 being assisted with healthcare registrations,
18 employment applications and educational programs, and
19 the taxi driver who dropped us off at the NeON office
20 told us that it was an excellence place doing great
21 work. Only in New York. The essence of the NeON
22 model moved probation away from doing things to
23 people and towards collaborating with them. To walk
24 that walk, we had to provide and opportunity for
25

1 those communities to sit at the table with us and
2 have a voice in how we did this work. So, we reached
3 out to the community to establish a NeON stakeholder
4 group for each NeON comprised of individuals from
5 local businesses, community and faith based
6 organizations, residents, probation staff, clients
7 and community leaders like yourselves. In fact, each
8 council member with a NeON in their district is an ex
9 officio member of their local NeON stakeholder group.
10 NeON stakeholders generously give their time and
11 energy to ensure that each NeON has what it needs to
12 best serve all of its' residents including those on
13 probation, as they inherently know what their
14 community needs most. Part of what makes the NeON
15 Arts model so innovates the role that NeON
16 stakeholder groups play, as the trustees of the
17 collective decision power to determine which arts and
18 cultural experiences the communities need, and which
19 artists and organizations are best suited to provide
20 them. You will have the opportunity to hear from a
21 lot of these meeting-amazing folks today as many of
22 them are here with us and will be testifying. NeON
23 Arts began in 2013 as a small pilot project after the
24 department repurposed some funding from the Young
25

1 Men's Initiative. Five years later, public-private
2 partnership with the uniquely qualified Carnegie Hall
3 Weill Music Institute has invested \$1.9 million grant
4 dollars of arts and cultural programming in under-
5 served neighborhoods across the city. Thank you,
6 Council Members Ampry-Samuel, who is not here, but
7 she—she and Council Member Gibson have supported NeON
8 Arts with funds and that has allowed for increased
9 art opportunities in Brownsville and the South Bronx
10 respectively. In the 14 rounds of arts programming
11 to date, NeON Arts has awarded 130 grants and 35% of
12 the local art organizations and artists that have
13 been awarded funding, had annual operating budgets of
14 less than \$250,000. Chair Powers, you even saw some
15 of the many different arts and cultural opportunities
16 provided through NeON Arts at the culmination event
17 this past September at Carnegie Hall. Though the
18 arts and criminal justice may seem as unlikely—as
19 unlikely of a pairing as a the Department of
20 Probation and Carnegie Hall, helping to build and
21 expand NeON Arts for the past five years has taught
22 us that they are natural and necessary complements to
23 one another. The arts are about creativity and
24 posting self-expression. Opportunities that many in
25

1 the Criminal Justice System their families and their
2 communities do not have access to or opportunities to
3 engage in, but NeON Arts is changing that. Since the
4 program's inception, NeON Arts has reached over
5 10,000 people citywide through participating in,
6 planning and being connected to this initiative we
7 started to notice a change not only in the
8 participants, whether on probation or not, but in our
9 staff and the broader community as well. We knew we
10 were on to something big as did some of the funders
11 who commissioned an evaluation of the program. The
12 NeON Arts Evaluation builds on the 2017 social impact
13 of the Art Study at the University of Pennsylvania,
14 which examined the impact that access to arts in
15 cultural institutions and opportunities had on
16 underserved neighborhoods in New York City, which
17 were, you guessed it, all or our NeON neighborhoods.
18 The Penn Study found that increased access to arts
19 and culture in these communities using a network
20 approach—and these are their words not mine—had many
21 positive outcomes such as 5% reduction in obesity,
22 14% reduction in child abuse and neglect cases and an
23 18% increase in kids' educational attainment. More
24 striking of all, was the finding that communities
25

1
2 with access to arts and cultural opportunities had an
3 18% decrease in the serious crime rate compared to
4 communities that did not. While not a direct causal
5 relationship, this showed that the connection between
6 arts and criminal justice is there, and that a
7 holistic view of the—of community corrections work
8 must include increased access to the arts. In order
9 to move the needle in our field, as host of the
10 American Probation and Parole Association Summer
11 Training Institute in New York City last year, we
12 took the opportunity to showcase NeON Arts, the NeON
13 Arts Initiative as our host event at Carnegie Hall.
14 Community Corrections professionals from around the
15 country were amazed at the talent of the artists and
16 the diversity of art forms, but especially that this
17 initiative was a part of our probation continuum.
18 That led to the department receiving the American
19 Probation and Parole Association 2017 Excellence in
20 community crime prevention award for the cutting edge
21 use of arts and community corrections. Before
22 getting into some of the findings of the NeON Arts
23 evaluation, I want to again thank you, Chair Powers
24 and Chair Van Bramer as well as Council Member
25 Vanessa Gibson for joining us at the evaluation

1 announcement last week. I can honestly say that was
2 the most fund and joyful breast conference I've ever
3 been to and the young talent of the Renaissance Youth
4 Choir always blows me away. Conducting and
5 evaluation of an initiative like NeON Arts
6 essentially trying to quantify human interaction is
7 not typical. In fact, one of the unique facets of
8 the evaluation was the way in which the young people
9 were engaged to play such a crucial part in the
10 evaluation process by helping to shape the survey
11 questions and serving as a bridge to the focus
12 groups. Even the evaluators reported self-
13 transformation from conducting this evaluation.
14 Though it was not or intention to have such a strong
15 impact on the people conducting the evaluation, I
16 think it is worth noting in regards to not only the
17 power of this program, but the unique model as well.
18 A few statistics from the evaluation that really
19 resonated with what we are trying to in providing
20 these opportunities for people on probation and their
21 communities are: That 80% of participants look
22 forward a lot to taking part in the daily NeON Arts
23 event and 91% of the time it was an event they had
24 never before experienced. Participating in NeON Arts
25

1 resulted in all of the young people feeling that they
2 know more adults who care about them, and we know the
3 importance of that for growing up and being
4 successful adults. All participants learned a new
5 skill, most participants felt more hopeful about
6 their future from being a part of NeON Arts, and
7 participating in NeON Arts resulted in the young
8 people getting along better with others. The great
9 success of NeON Arts has created additional
10 opportunities for us to expand and grow a number of
11 other arts experiences, which greatly benefit people
12 on probation and communities throughout the city.
13 I'm going to start calling NeON Arts the gift that
14 keeps on giving. [laughter] This afternoon I will
15 briefly walk you through those opportunities—those
16 other opportunities: Free Verse, our Public Artists
17 in Residence, the Made in New York Animation Project,
18 NeON Photography and NeON Inspires. Free Verse is a
19 poetry workshop offered in NeON waiting rooms that
20 turn wait time into creative time. Born and bred in
21 the South Bronx NeON waiting room five years ago,
22 Free Verse invites community members, professional
23 writers and probation staff to read, write, sing and
24 perform during a weekly open mic. Free Verse also
25

1 produces an annual magazine, provides jobs for
2 writing apprentices and publishes books the latest of
3 which we have provided for each of you today. One of
4 our greatest champions of Free Verse Tahara was on
5 probation and struggling to pass her high school
6 equivalency exam. It was through participating in
7 Free Verse that she built the confidence to persevere
8 and pass the HSC on her fifth try. Tahara has since
9 gone onto college and published her own book of
10 poetry. Part of the Department of Cultural Affairs
11 Municipal Residency Program, the Public Artists in
12 Residence is based on the premise that artist are
13 creative problem solvers and therefore embeds
14 socially engaged artists in New York City municipal
15 agencies in order to use creative, collaborative art
16 practices to propose and implement creative solutions
17 to pressing civic challenges. The department is
18 thrilled to have Rachel Barnard, Executive Director
19 and Founder of Young New Yorkers, which provides arts
20 based diversion programs to court involved young
21 people as our Public Artists in Residence. Rachel's
22 work has helped over 600 young people sentenced to
23 make art with young New Yorkers instead of jail or
24 other adult sanctions. The department first got to
25

1 work with the young New Yorkers in a formal capacity
2 as part of the NeON Arts—as part of NeON Arts where
3 she was instrumental in our love letters to
4 Brownsville events a couple of years ago when New
5 York City First Lady Chirlane McCray visited the
6 Bronxville NeON. This evolution from NEON Arts
7 grantee to Public Artists in Residence is emblematic
8 of how this model and initiative allows government to
9 collaborate with local organizations on the ground to
10 be effective in this work. Another great arts
11 experience that incubated through NeON Arts is the
12 Made in New York Animation Project, a partnership
13 between the New York City Mayor’s Office of Media and
14 Entertainment, NeONS and the animation project, the
15 Made in New York Animation Project provides youth
16 across New York City the opportunity to engage in
17 story telling, the technical 3-D computer animation
18 skills and qualify for paid internships in this
19 evolving field. In its first year, the program
20 created and screened 72 animated films across 15
21 sites either a local NeON or school and connected
22 over 1,800 youth ages 12 to 24 to this important
23 skill. As workforce development is the major
24 component of this opportunity, in the first year Made
25

1
2 in New York Animation Project was able to promote 99
3 interns to paid teaching assistants working alongside
4 professional animators. Our latest expanded arts
5 experience is NeOn Photography, which provides
6 professional photography training in the history of
7 photography, technical skills and the art of visual
8 story telling. This paid opportunity launched in
9 Brooklyn in March and will expand to all seven NeONs
10 across the five boroughs next cycle. Four mentors
11 from our Arches Transformative Mentoring Program who
12 graduated from the initial workshop now have paid
13 positions teaching the Bed-Stuy workshops, an
14 incredible synergy between two successful programs.
15 And yes, Council Members, they are available to take
16 pictures for your events. [laughter] Fourteen of
17 these amazing talented photographers are here with us
18 today. Some of you may recognize from last week's
19 events and Arts Evaluation Press Conference and are
20 looking forward to testifying about the impact that
21 this opportunity has had on their lives. And just
22 even organically today they've connected with your
23 photographer, in fact, to share tips, et cetera. You
24 actually may have seen—already seen the work the NeOn
25 Photographers because they're done commercial photo

1 shoots for Park Avenue Pianos, photography for the
2 John McEnroe Foundation's Annual Fundraising Gala in
3 the Hamptons, and even provided the Mayor's Office,
4 DOP, Carnegie Hall, NeON Sports, NeON Arts and the
5 Marcy's Thanksgiving Day Parade with event
6 photography. One of the most powerful outcomes of
7 the NeON Photography program has been the
8 intergenerational connections in the community. Two
9 of the workshop participants are father and son and
10 their relationship has significantly grown and been
11 strengthened through participating in this
12 opportunity. In our Bed-Stuy Workshop most of the
13 participants are between the ages of 18 to 24, but
14 there is one community participant in his early 80s
15 who joined the class as an opportunity to grow and
16 evolve because he believes that everyone should
17 continue to reinvest themselves throughout their
18 lives. By creating an environment for clients in
19 the community to come together around the arts, it
20 organically created a new mentor for these young
21 people a new purpose for community elder. Finally,
22 NeOn inspires, aims to bring about interactive youth
23 led conversations with cultural icons that inspire
24 ideas, foster learning and provoke change. Hosted at
25

1 Carnegie Hall these opportunities provide young
2 people with the chance to interview, and engage with
3 some of the top talent in their field. We would like
4 to invite you to our next NeON Inspires on Monday,
5 January 7th, featuring Michael K. Williams from HBO's
6 the Wire and Boardwalk Empire in a discussion and
7 screening of Raised in the System, a documentary
8 about youth in the Criminal and Juvenile Justice
9 Systems. It is sure to be a truly powerful
10 conversation, one you won't want to miss. I
11 sometimes say that if I could remain in my
12 department, I would change it to the Department of
13 Humanity, and this is where our connection continues.
14 Because as you have heard from my testimony, the arts
15 provides a necessary vehicle for individuals and
16 communities to tap into and express their humanity.
17 Chair Van Bramer, you put it perfectly at the
18 evaluation announcement. So I'm going to quote you
19 because was—I'm—I'm taking this with me for—for—for
20 my life. "Every human being regardless of where
21 they're born, what income level their family has or
22 whether or not they've been involved in the Criminal
23 Justice System, every human being has beauty and
24 power inside of them. What we do as a society is we
25

1
2 push people down and we prevent that power and that
3 beauty from coming out of their mouths, out of their
4 hands and out of their minds. The NeON Arts Program
5 is all about making sure that everyone's beauty and
6 power has the ability to express and manifest itself
7 as that makes us—all of us better people. And you
8 don't hear that being said about people in the
9 Criminal Justice System everyday, and it's so
10 important to keep that front and center of what we're
11 doing. So thank you again, Chair Powers and Chair
12 Van Bramer and the members of these two committees
13 for the opportunity to testify about the important
14 and innovative art programs and partnerships at the
15 Department of Probation. We will be happy to answer
16 any questions that you may have after hearing from
17 our great partner in this work, Carnegie Hall.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
19 much. I just want to interrupt the proceedings for a
20 second, and say whoever thought to put this in our
21 packets, deserves a promotion. [laughter] I used to
22 do [laughter] I used to do intergovernmental affairs
23 before I got elected for a non-profit, and we would
24 stress over what you put in the packet for the
25 elected officials, and sometimes you think oh,

1 they're never going to look at any of that, right,
2 but I looked at this. It is remarkable. It is a
3 remarkable document, and there's great power in
4 producing something like this. So, that--those people
5 who have been counted out get to see themselves,
6 their work, their needs, right? There's actually
7 great power in seeing your name in this publication,
8 and then to be able to share it with other people,
9 it's beautiful. It's remarkable. So, kudos to
10 everyone for putting that together and sharing with
11 us. [pause]

12
13 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: We're going to--we're
14 going to--

15 MALE SPEAKER: [off mic] Whose turn is
16 it?

17 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Oh, sorry. We're
18 going to ask Carnegie Hall to testify, and then we're
19 going to take--we're going to re-open the vote to
20 finish the vote we did. I just want to note 'cause--
21 'cause actually Council Member Van Bramer wrote this
22 to me before you said it, which is I our wonderful
23 photographer Bill Alatraste (sp?) who's here and I-I
24 noticed as well he's working with the folks who are
25 part of the NeON Photography Program, and he's taking

1 pictures. He's not even listening to me giving him a
2 big shout-out, but thank you—to Bill Alatraste for-
3 for [laughter/cheers/applause] He really believes in
4 the power of the work he does, and you can see that
5 because as he mentors the other people here. So, we
6 give him a lot of credit for that as well.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Bill—Bill
9 photographs all of our committees, but I know there's
10 a little part of his soul that loves my Cultural
11 Affairs Committee an awful lot [laughter] because he
12 really fees the arts and the power of the arts, and
13 I—I think that's emblematic of who he is and what
14 he's doing right now in this hearing. [pause]

15 DAVID FRUEDENTHAL: David—I'm David
16 Fruedenthal. I'm the Government Relations Director
17 at Carney Hall and you—you—you've heard from the—from
18 the Commissioner of the—about the work and you're
19 going to hear from my great colleague and brother
20 James Horton in a minute who runs this program at
21 Carnegie Hall, the Director of our Social Impact
22 Portfolio and I really just wanted to take a quick
23 moment to say a shout-out to our Chairs Keith Powers
24 and Jim—Jimmy Van Bramer for shining a light on this
25 work. The work has been happening and it's like if a

1
2 tree falls in the forest it makes a difference for-
3 for this work to be-for-fore awareness to be raised,
4 and folks to know it, and we're so grateful to
5 Council Member Rivera for being here, to Council
6 Member Holden and Council Member Ampry-Samuel and
7 thank you very much for the support that you provided
8 to the program. We couldn't do this work without
9 you. We are grateful for. We-we believe-we-we get
10 that you understand that arts, there's a role for
11 arts in-in the city's efforts to develop holistic
12 responses to-to reform the justice system and-and-and
13 we are proud to partner with this fantastic agency,
14 and doing the-doing this work, and with that, I turn
15 it over to James Horton.

16 JAMES HORTON: Thank you so much David.
17 Like David said, I'm James C. Horton, Director of
18 Social Impact Programs for Carnegie Hall, and since
19 2013 the Hall has worked with Probation to deliver
20 the NeON Arts programs. Our work together brought
21 together young people, community leaders, local
22 artists and arts organizations and others to help
23 seven of the highest needs neighborhoods in New York
24 City. We are proud of the many successes, the many
25 stories that have come out of NeON Arts over the

1 years. They illustrate the transformative power of
2 the arts in community to create creative potential
3 that exists in every young person if given the
4 opportunity to be involved in this type of
5 programming. I just want to give you one example.
6 Kyle, one of our participants in the spring of 2018
7 Staten Island Productivity Workshop, is now employed
8 as a program assistant at the Weill Music Institute
9 at Carnegie Hall. We are always thinking about
10 building employment pathways for participants to
11 experience the program differently, to experience a
12 career and a pathway to a career differently. To
13 date, Carnegie Hall and NeON Arts partner
14 organizations and agencies have employed 37 NeON Arts
15 participants as interns and apprentices. Carnegie
16 Hall also provides NeON Arts participants with the
17 chance to enhance their artistry and gain exposure to
18 cultural experiences. These opportunities have
19 included attendances, attendance at Carnegie Hall
20 performances in Stern Auditorium, NeON Arts showcases
21 and the Hall's Resnick Education Wing, and group
22 field trips to other cultural organizations. One of
23 the most recent examples of this was a concert a time
24 like this: Music for Social Change. As a part of
25

1
2 Carnegie Hall's 60th-60s Festival, poets from the
3 program perform on the main stage of Carnegie Hall
4 and Stern Auditorium reciting an original poem with
5 the show's host Lemon Anderson. Everyone involved in
6 this project has changed, everyone, Carnegie Hall
7 included. The deep dive into this space over the
8 last decade has educated the organization, the board,
9 staff on the justice system in ways that the Hall can
10 serve as the critical component to help shape what
11 this landscape might look like. If we're able to use
12 arts and imagine a little more, imagine a little
13 greater and use that to change humanity and
14 individuals in the system, NeON Arts has also helped
15 forged a unique relationship between law enforcement
16 agencies and cultural institution. It's one of the
17 great joys of this work to be able to collaborate
18 with Commissioner Bermudez and her team and Katrina
19 and Kate. He Hall's staff enjoys such a collegial
20 and constructive relationship with Probation and the
21 Probation team is invested in this work, and it's
22 evident through the strong relationships we've built
23 with the NeON. This program is a primate example of
24 the robust public/private endeavor that is taking a
25 new approach to addressing some of our city's most

1 pressing issues. We are grateful for the
2 Administration's supports of the partnership through
3 the Mayor's Grant for Cultural Impact and Initiative
4 of the Department of Cultural Affairs. The supports
5 partnership between New York City's municipal
6 agencies and cultural organizations to use and
7 culture to reach underserved and vulnerable New
8 Yorkers. Based on the success we have seen here in
9 New York City, it is our hope that this model of NeON
10 Arts can serve as the model for law enforcement
11 agencies across the country. We thank the committee
12 for their interest in this program, and we encourage
13 the Council to support NeON Arts and other programs
14 by our cultural colleagues across the city. We urge
15 your continued investment in programs that build on
16 strengths, build on technology and transparency, and
17 invest in youth development. These programs invest
18 in the future. This program invests in helping young
19 people shape a vision and create a vision for their
20 lives that I have not seen many other programs do.
21 Thank you and thanks to Probation, grantees and
22 organizations, stakeholders and, of course, then
23 amazingly talented and gifted young people who
24 participate in the NeON Arts programming, and for
25

1
2 being a part of these transformational changes that
3 we've seen. Thank you so much.

4 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. Thank
5 you for that great testimony and thank you for all
6 of-all of you for being here today. I wanted to
7 first recognize that we have been joined by—I think
8 David got some of it, but Council Member Rose,
9 Council Member Ampry-Samuel and Council Member
10 Rivera. I believe Council Member Ampry-Samuel and
11 maybe Council Member Rose as well have programs in
12 their districts, and as I noted we're going to just
13 reopen the vote for the members of the committee—the
14 Criminal Justice Committee to take a vote on the two
15 bills that are before us today, and then one other
16 programming note: Both myself and Council Member Van
17 Bramer are members of the Finance Committee, which is
18 next door. So, if you see us get up and take a
19 break, it's just to go and—and to get our attendance
20 at the Department of Finance. I mean the Finance
21 Committee. With that being said, we'll take the roll
22 call on the two bills.

23 CLERK: [coughs] Excuse me. Continuation
24 roll call Committee on Criminal Justice,
25

COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE
ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL
INTERGROUP RELATIONS 36

1
2 Introductions 1090-A and 933-B, Council Member Ampry-
3 Samuel.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL I vote aye
5 on all, but can I just say one little thing because I
6 do have to leave. I have a meeting downstairs with
7 the Police Commissioner and the Speaker. I-I-for me
8 it was a no-brainer when I was elected to the City
9 Council to be supportive of the NeON like space and
10 program, but would it be even more of a supported is
11 being able to participate in the different programs
12 and events that are held at 444, and it will just
13 warm your heart to see just the level of engagement
14 and excitement and not just with the Department of
15 Probation, but the space itself, and I just want
16 everyone to know that you will continue to receive my
17 support above and beyond, and we are now in
18 conversations to increase and enhance what your space
19 look like outside of your actual office, the entire
20 building at 444 and so, I just look forward to even
21 more programs and initiatives and projects and
22 opportunities in Brownsville, and you have your-you
23 have my support. Thank you.

24 CLERK: Council Member River.
25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: I proudly vote aye
3 on all.

4 CLERK: Both items are adopted by a final
5 vote of 5 in the affirmative 0 in the negative and no
6 abstentions.

7 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Great. Thank you.
8 Now, we'll resume our programming. So, thank you. I
9 want to start off with some questions for—for both—
10 for both groups. The starting is you mentioned the
11 seven neighborhoods that you're in today. Have I two—
12 I have two questions. One is have you been to those
13 neighborhoods since the inception or have you
14 expanded and second, are there other places or
15 neighborhoods or opportunities that you're looking at
16 in terms of—in terms of expansion and growth?

17 KATRINA PRIOLEAU: Well, yes, we have
18 been in those communities since we—since we began and
19 we, in fact have 15 sites across the city, which
20 includes NeON Satellites in some of the neighborhoods
21 where there are not as many residents who are under
22 probation supervision. For instance, we have three
23 satellites in Staten Island and have to, one in East
24 Harlem and one in West Harlem, two in the Northern
25 Bronx as well.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Got and are there
3 other opportunities you're looking at in terms of
4 expansion or more satellites or other growth?

5 KATRINA PRIOLEAU: Yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: And maybe can you
7 tell us how you identified those locations?

8 KATRINA PRIOLEAU: laughs] Yeah, we sort
9 of really just went block-to-block to look and see
10 what was happening in those communities and look at
11 different spaces and talk to the residents of those
12 communities. We are looking to expand in the
13 Edenwald section of the Bronx as well.

14 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Got it.

15 ANA BERMUDEZ: It's-it's-it's mostly
16 decided by a concentration of people who are on
17 probation who call those locations home, and the-so
18 with the satellites are still places where there's a
19 fair amount of people on probation, but the-the
20 critical mass is not there to have people, I mean
21 probation officers full time, dedicated full time to
22 those area. So, I think the reach of the programs
23 goes beyond the NeON neighborhoods, but in terms of
24 location where we are located, other than Edenwald I
25 think we're-we're pretty much where we need to be.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Got it. Thanks and
3 the other—and to a follow-up question on that is do—
4 can you just maybe walk us through some of the
5 challenges or—or—or obstacles you have in terms of
6 opening and operating any of the sites that you have?

7 ANA BERMUDEZ: You know, the usual
8 suspects of issues of, you know, not—you know, people
9 don't always know what we do at Probation. You know,
10 sometimes it—it seen initially as—as not something
11 that folks might want in—in a community, but that is
12 quickly thankfully turned around by our meeting with
13 folks and—and citing examples of—of what we do having
14 programs like this because it's very important. When
15 you're doing a NeON, it's really a joint—it has to be
16 a joint partnership. It can't be government waltzing
17 in and saying okay our way or the highway, right.
18 That doesn't work. That—that has—had been tried
19 before. In fact, that was a—an earlier iteration and
20 many years before me of probation moving into the
21 community, and so we purposely formed the NeOn
22 Stakeholder groups for the NeOns so that there would
23 be—it's almost like participatory budgeting, but it's
24 participatory decision making around what needs are
25 in the community, what things can—need to happen our

1 of the NeONs not just in arts, but we have nutrition
2 kitchens in each of the NeONs. We have clothing
3 closets, we have other service that are open not just
4 for people on probation, but for the communities as
5 well.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: And can you talk
8 about any predecessor? You sort of mentioned some
9 earlier programs. Can you mention--what--what years
10 did NeON start?

11 ANA BERMUDEZ: The NeON started in 2012--

12 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: [interposing] Okay.

13 ANA BERMUDEZ: -- in 2011 and 2012 under
14 my predecessor Commissioner Saraldi (sp?) and what I
15 was talking about just now, though, was eons ago of
16 when Community Corrections went into the community
17 was sometimes just moving in office without a change
18 of culture, if you will, but that's--since 2011 we've
19 been moving into a much more engaging form of
20 probation not just with the people on probation, but
21 with communities, and that's when it started.

22 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Got it, and can you
23 tell us when--at the end of your--I guess I don't know
24 if you were there, but when it starts--when--at the
25 inception of the program what was the thinking around

1 why this was necessary versus what was in place? I
2 mean you mentioned a little bit of it. What—the need
3 for restructuring and a new program.
4

5 ANA BERMUDEZ: You know, it was—it was
6 from listening to the communities we had or
7 leadership at that time was very committed to
8 bringing back community into community corrections,
9 and so we did a lot of, you know, meetings with
10 communities to hear and with our—our own clients to
11 hear what would help people be more successful on
12 probation and communities be more of a support system
13 as well around the people on probation, and so and
14 then the emerging research that this—what's helpful,
15 a little—this is a little something, but—but it plays
16 huge somebody who needs to go to Probation after work
17 and they work near their home or in their communities
18 can just show—can just walk over to the Probation
19 officer. When we have the probation officers be able
20 to, you know, go walking around the neighborhood with
21 someone to assess what are the challenges for this
22 person to succeed? Families can drop by, right and
23 come in and either avail themselves of services or
24 speak to a probation officer, you know, about their—
25 their—their young person on probation. Things like

1 that just—it just made a lot of sense, and then also
2 be able to—to do case planning in a way that took
3 into account the daily life of a person instead of
4 being tucked away in a—in an office building near
5 the—near the court—near the courts or in the courts.

7 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Got it and how do
8 you—how do you measure success in terms of the
9 program?

10 ANA BERMUDEZ: So, the evaluation is a
11 big measure of—of the success. You know, it has to—
12 the—the NeON Arts is about connecting people. Chair
13 Van Bramer mentioned it before. This is about
14 creating opportunity right? That's where we're—what
15 we're looking at. Part of having people be able to
16 desist from crime let's say or never into it in the
17 first place is that web of opportunities and the
18 ability to envision a future, right, and so this
19 provides a vehicle on many levels to be able to
20 achieve that and the evaluation shows that that the
21 connection to—to others, the young people connecting
22 to adults that is huge both in the youth development
23 field as—as James mentioned before and in best
24 practices, right around people becoming successful in
25 life. It's about wellness. You can't always just

1
2 be—Like in Youth Development the big thing is absence
3 of problems. It doesn't mean success of the ability
4 to—to be able to manage you life, right? So, we have
5 to able to provide skills. So, in the evaluation it
6 says most of the people who—if not all of the people
7 were trying something new, 91% I think it was had an
8 experience that they had never had before. They had
9 developed particular skills, that they had hope for
10 the future. Our young people, I can't tell you how
11 many young people are on probation who don't think
12 they're going to be alive next week. So, the ability
13 to think beyond, and have the ability to—to dream up
14 a future often from a skill they didn't even know
15 they had to have their name in book to be, you know,
16 to go from anything you say can and will be used
17 against you to anything you say can provide with a
18 better future I mean that's huge, and so—so that's—
19 that's all of—of the findings in the evaluation to us
20 are the success markers of this program.

21 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Alright thanks, and
22 did—how did community organizations get selected and
23 become part of your network?

24 KATRINA PRIOLEAU: So, the—the way that
25 they get selected is they have an opportunity to come

1 in and meet the stakeholder groups to talk about the
2 projects that they would like to proposed for those
3 communities, and then they actually submit an
4 application to the stakeholders. The stakeholders
5 review those applications. They select the three and
6 then usually they put those top three before young
7 people to allow them to choose and participate in
8 which projects come to the NeON.
9

10 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: And how do they find
11 you in the first place? How do they—how do you make
12 yourself aware—how do you make people aware that you
13 are a potential—that they have the opportunity to
14 work with you.

15 JAMES HORTON: Sure. So a lot of that is
16 done by Carnegie Hall's Marketing Department as well
17 those who are involved NeON Programming being able to
18 get out and spread the word about the program to
19 other fellow artists, other community based arts
20 organizations. So, a lot of it I think the most
21 effective recruitment of local artist to be service
22 providers is by word of mouth.

23 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Got it and can I ask
24 you just a follow-up on that? So for Carnegie Hall
25 particularly, can you tell us how you got involved

1 originally and--and what was the motivation for being
2 involved. Obviously, a lot of opportunities for
3 Carnegie Hall in the cities. What drove you to this
4 and how you got involved and may talk more about your
5 relationship in--?

7 JAMES HORTON: [interposing] Sure. Sure
8 so Carnegie Hall had been justice work for a number of
9 years through several other programs. Musical
10 Connections is our longest standing justice program
11 working men a Sing-Sing, and the program's inception
12 pre-dates my involvement with the organization, but
13 from my understanding it was a conversation that
14 happened pretty quickly, but actually over time being
15 able to cultivate this relationship with the
16 Department of Probation and looking at alternative
17 strategies for engaging young people who are in
18 difficult circumstances, and noticing that arts has
19 been a primary tool for engaging that particular set
20 of young people. So, conversations sparked with
21 Katrina with the Commissioner and with several other
22 of my colleagues who are in the room who could
23 probably speak to that a little bit more, and then
24 one thing led to another, and we ended up putting
25 together the pilot program in 2013 working with

1 Carnegie, and then it's expanded ever since to
2 involve different of the program. I think finding
3 ways to engage young people more and more in the
4 internship and apprenticeship opportunities. So, it's
5 taken on sort of the infancy form of being community
6 based working with the community and—and doing that
7 same rigor of soliciting the organizations that
8 Katrina spoke about, but then expanding more and more
9 as the years have progressed, and we found out that
10 the program needs more to move forward, and the young
11 people are engaged in different ways to the
12 apprenticeships and look at this actually as a career
13 pathway.
14

15 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: And which programs
16 are most attended?

17 JAMES HORTON: In terms of the NeONs?

18 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Yes.

19 JAMES HORTON: It—it varies borough to
20 borough, and depending on the art project that has
21 been introduced through each one of the stakeholders
22 in each one of the boroughs, the seven NeON Sites.

23 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Can you give us some
24 examples of ones that are in most demand the most
25 attended?

1
2 JAMES HORTON: So-

3 KATRINA PRIOLEAU: So, I'll give an
4 example. One of the programs that the young people
5 tend to gravitate towards is call Sand Project and
6 it's the ones that created those amazing shirts that
7 you all have, and the reason I believe that they
8 really enjoy is because of the entrepreneurial
9 portion of it that really allows them to learn a new
10 skill, and to do-to create income for themselves
11 through the arts.

12 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Got it. Okay. More
13 of a picture of it. (sic) The-just a couple more
14 questions and I'll hand it to-and then we'll add
15 numbers and Council Member Van Bramer take over and
16 then ask questions. Just can you talk about we are
17 funding, how much money is in-is funded for NeON?
18 What are the sources of it? We'll start with those
19 two questions.

20 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: So this is the-
21 part of the beauty of this model is that it's a
22 public private venture, right. So, there is money
23 that we put in from government in the form of, you
24 know, from probation to city Council, you know,
25 funding as well as then, you know, CLA, YMI and then

1 there's foundation money. There is also mostly
2 foundation, the Carnegie Hall is not a funding agent.
3 They're our project, essentially TA Project Manager
4 of it but they also then provide between in-kind and
5 other direct funds as well, and so-sot there's not an
6 actual budget in the-for the projects. It's very
7 nimble in terms of, you know, growing it and kind of
8 shrinking it depending on how much money there is,
9 but all of the-and it can be targeted for the
10 different-for different locations, right? So,
11 there's funding that can go, you know, for a
12 particular project in a particular location or it can
13 go to NeON Arts in general to be divided up, you
14 know, through-throughout the city. We also have some
15 federal dollars as well.

17 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: What is the-what is
18 the total-how much of this money does the city put
19 into it-from the city?

20 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: Oh, sorry. So,
21 annually about-you would see about-of direct funds
22 again there's in-kind, there's all sorts of other
23 stuff about \$550,000 a year.

24 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Got it and has that
25 grown over the years? Has it stayed?

2 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: About the same.

3 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: About the same and
4 are you--?

5 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: [interposing]
6 About the same because there's a--just it's worked out
7 that way in a strange way, but there's a different
8 composition of the funding every fiscal year.

9 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Got it, and have you
10 guys--you have requested more money. If so, how much
11 and is there other--we're heading into budget season.
12 So, are there opportunities to expand that you would
13 be asking for more money for?

14 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: Well, we--we are
15 always raising money. You know, private dollars in
16 terms of, you know, we're pretty secure in the--in the
17 money that we have coming from--from within and the
18 City Council is free to, you know, certainly, you
19 know, and we'll never say no to, you know,
20 individuals grants from--from the City Council for
21 your--for your particular districts or generally, and
22 as Council Member Gibson and Ampry--Samuel have--have
23 done in the past that can increase also the projects
24 that happen in their--in their communities.

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Don't be so shy to
3 ask for it.

4 DAVID FRUEDENTHAL: [interposing] And let
5 us reiterate to that that, you know, that we are—
6 everything that the Commissioner said is true. We
7 are—we are as—as the Council Member said, Carnegie
8 Hall is delivering the program. We are working very
9 hard constantly to seek both public and private money
10 for this program, and we could do more if we had more
11 help from the Council.

12 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: He's a good
13 representative for it. I'm going to stop there so
14 members ask questions. I know—I know the Chair had
15 some questions as well. Thank you. I have a couple
16 more but I'll come back to you. Van Bramer, okay.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Alright. While
18 the Chair goes to check in at Finance, which I just
19 did myself, we'll follow up on some of the questions.
20 So, just to point of clarification David you just
21 said you would do more if the Council was able to
22 come up with some more. I assume you also mean if
23 the Mayor's Office and the Administration came up
24 with more funding, you'd be able to do more as well?

1
2 DAVID FRUEDENTHAL: Absolutely. The-the-
3 the--

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
5 Correct.

6 DAVID FRUEDENTHAL: this has--this has
7 been a real partnership between the--between the
8 agency--the agency and the Administration at Carnegie
9 Hall and--and we--none of us could do it with--without--
10 without the others and I'm--and to that note, I just
11 kind of like turn around and look at all the other
12 people in this room that it couldn't happen without.
13 They are key to it.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's right.
15 So, let me just go back to Commissioner Bermudez. So
16 the funding aspect of this, and then I'm going to
17 talk a little bit more about the human aspect of it,
18 right, but the funding is important because you can't
19 do the work without the money. So, we have worked
20 very hard both Commissioner Finkelpearl and I for the
21 last couple of years obviously with the support of
22 both speakers that we've served under, and--and this
23 Council to increase funding for the Department of
24 Cultural Affairs rather significantly over the last
25 couple of years. So, even though we were successful

1
2 in doing that, this program's budget from Department
3 of Cultural Affairs has essentially remained flat or-
4 or the same? Would that be your assessment of it?

5 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: I mean, you know,
6 I-I can't quantify all of it, but it's-it's been-
7 yeah, it's been the same.

8 DAVID FRUEDENTHAL: Okay, so I think part
9 of our work then is-as we've increased funding for
10 the Department of Cultural Affairs rather
11 significantly, and-and the Mayor's Office and
12 Commissioner Finkelparl have been instrumental in
13 that working with the Council, I think it's incumbent
14 upon all of us to make sure that a little bit of
15 extra goes to this program as part of that creative
16 funding.

17 DAVID FRUEDENTHAL: [interposing] Just to
18 give-just to give credit where it's due, the-as was
19 noted earlier in testimony, the Mayor's for Cultural
20 Impact has twice made \$50,000 awards to support this
21 work, and I--

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
23 Yeah, you need a lot more than that, though, David.
24 You need a lot more than \$50,000. Thank you. Do I
25 hear any men in the room for that? [background

1 comments] So, so I just want to also say we've
2 never had this many photographers [laughter] in a
3 Committee on Cultural Affairs hearing, which is both
4 very exciting for elected officials, but also I want
5 to say to the point of the program because I assume
6 other than Bill all the other folks who are
7 photographing us are in the program, right? So,
8 someone walked me through the photography program
9 and—and how do folks get these great beautiful
10 cameras, and—and are they theirs to use at any time
11 to practice their craft? Is there at home in their
12 neighborhoods and—and—and photographing their worlds,
13 and where do we see the—the photos? Because we
14 certainly want to see all the photos from this
15 hearing, and—and—and what does that look like, right?
16 I mean because it's an exciting thing. I-I love
17 photography. Obviously, we're not as skilled as
18 bill, and all of these terrific young people, but
19 it's a great way to see the world, right, and the—the
20 lens and the perspectives that you see through it,
21 and it—it's-it's I think empowering also. So, walk
22 me through what all these young people are doing here
23 and how it's working, and I think it's fascinating.

2 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: So, so this
3 project was modeled after the NYCHA Photography
4 Workshop that gave—gave residents of public housing
5 an opportunity to document their lives, right and
6 express themselves through photography and that—that
7 culminated in a—in a book published by Power House
8 Book Publication called *Project Lives*, and so we—we
9 partnered with Seeing for Ourselves, which is also
10 the organization that—that co-created Project Lives,
11 and we have an NA Grant, Men's SIGMA Photography—the
12 SIGMA cameras have been donated. So SIGMA is also—has
13 been a partner here. Then from—from the—from
14 government there were Progress Program that is from
15 NYC Opportunity and HRA pays the stipends. So, the—
16 again, it's—it's all the same kind of idea of really
17 bringing people together, different entities together
18 to create something. We don't know what the project
19 is going to look at the end, but at the end there
20 will be a book much like Project Lives about the—the
21 trajectory of the young people and not so young
22 people who participated in—

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

24 Yes.

1
2 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: --in the young
3 photography, and it's become much more than that,
4 too. It's been a vehicle for, you know, work
5 advancement, opportunities, a future. It's fantastic
6 so--

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well, I hope
8 whether--whether this hearing makes the cut or not in
9 the books that you share them with all of the--

10 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: [interposing]
11 Right.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --members of the
13 City Council as a way of amplifying the work and make
14 sure that we see what was produced, and--and so are
15 the cameras--the participants to keep? Is that
16 something they're able to leave the program with or--

17 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: So, yes, they
18 are--they take home and use throughout the--well, I'm
19 sorry. No, they--I'm not sure they keep the cameras.
20 Somebody can correct me, but they can use them
21 through--they will use them throughout the program--

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
23 Right.

24 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: --and can take
25 them home. They're not in a--in a box somewhere--

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
3 Right.

4 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: --and then they
5 take them out every time.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's great,
7 and does the program, and maybe I'm-I'm asking you a
8 level of detail that-that-the program managers would
9 have, but do you work to create like Instagram
10 accounts and other ways to amplify and show the work
11 Right, which is very powerful?

12 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: I believe that is
13 true. We have-actually, I forgot to say that we have
14 one person on staff, Chelsey Davis is fantastic who's
15 championing this project, but yeah. [applause] As
16 you can see, yeah and--

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Isn't this a
18 ridiculously happy group of people? [laughter] Like
19 every time you say something, everyone behind-I wish
20 you could see behind you. Everyone is smiling
21 [laughter] everyone is clapping, everyone is happy.

22 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: [interposing]
23 They're the one getting-yeah.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: This is so not
25 where the world is right now, and it's so good to

1 see, and I mean this seriously because, you know, as
2 elected officials we see so many folks come in
3 whether they're non-profits or-or city agencies, and
4 I've said this to a few people that I met, every once
5 in a while you--there's an executive director or a CEO
6 or a commissioner comes in and they're so wildly
7 passionate about their work, right, that they excite
8 you about the work that they're doing, and--and you
9 are that, right, and this program and this group is
10 that because how could you leave this room and not be
11 inspired not feel good about this program, not want
12 to invest more money in this program. I don't know
13 if you hired all these people nor actors behind you
14 [laughter] but they're doing a great job.

16 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: I probably do
17 know.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: They're doing a
19 great job in--

20 MALE SPEAKER: We're in the Arts Section.
21 (sic)

22 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: Yeah, I get it.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [laughs] I'm
24 sure there is an acting portion of this? No, or is
25 there a performing arts?

1
2 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: Well, there's
3 been--yes. No, there has been.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right.

5 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: Some of the
6 grantees have been, you know, theater companies.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, let me ask
8 this, and I mean they're all serious questions, but--
9 so folks come in and--and obviously wants as many of
10 your participants--you clients as possible to
11 participate in the program, right, and to experience
12 all of this, but not everyone is going to want to,
13 right. Maybe not everyone is in a position to. How--
14 how do you do that work of encouraging folks who are
15 coming into the system or into contact with their POs
16 and then--and then get them in and then if they're not
17 responsive at first how you--how you keep saying
18 there's this great opportunity and if you just saw
19 it, you know, through it, you would--you would be able
20 to experience all of this?

21 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: So, this--it's an
22 art form in and of itself--

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah.

24 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: --to get people
25 to participate but it's--it's very tied to the work

1 that we're doing at a case management if you will at
2 probation. Probation Officers match the people they
3 supervise to opportunities to grow through the—
4 through what was called the Individual Action Plan,
5 and the beauty of this is also that it's not just
6 once a year that NeON Arts takes place. There's four
7 cycles a year. So, what it requires is a probation
8 officer never to give up, which is sometimes hard,
9 but even, you know, the incremental steps of trying
10 something as you said, is a victory, right, and so
11 it— Some people take to it right away, and some
12 people don't necessarily. Some of the programs that
13 we've had like Free Verse and now that it's
14 expanding, it's based in our waiting area so nobody
15 can escape it because the poets go around saying okay
16 give me a few words, you know, give me a few,
17 whatever and whatever is happening that day they
18 really encourage people. And sometimes, you know,
19 like you said before and we share this view it's also
20 like it's such a basic human need to express yourself
21 that once—I think once our officers were also very
22 involved in it. They can—they can talk about it in a
23 way that resonates with the person. You know this is
24 about your—your ability to express yourself to out
25

1 from-out from under some of the-the thinking that go
2 you in trouble, right and-and that transformation
3 starts happening.
4

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well and-and so
6 many people have experienced great trauma in their
7 lives, right, even if it's not thought of as such or-
8 or, you know, diagnosed as such, and if you hold all
9 of that trauma inside, right

10 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: [interposing] Uh-
11 hm.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --it can do
13 very, very bad things to your mind, body and soul,
14 right? So, it's important to-to express yourself.
15 So, I told you all one of my happiest stories in my
16 career as the Chair of Cultural Affairs and
17 Libraries, and I'll repeat it here because most folks
18 here didn't hear it, but then I want to hear some of
19 yours, right where the power of the arts to change
20 lives, right? We-we know it, we see it and every
21 once in awhile we experience it, and so when I got
22 elected and I represent PS 111, which is a school
23 that serves primarily the Queensbridge Houses, and
24 when I first went in to PS 111, as the Council
25 Member, the principal showed me their brand new dance

1 studio, which had been refurbished, but she told me
2 that it wasn't used because there was no money for a
3 dance teacher, and I thought that was an absolute
4 disgrace. So, we brought in Alvin Ailey and created
5 a program and now Alvin Ailey operates at PS 111, and
6 when I went to the end of school year performance,
7 all of the young people performed all of these great
8 dances, and at the end there was a freestyle
9 performance where all the young people were
10 encouraged to just sort of go out there and dance and
11 they were all very shy, but ultimately an 8th grader
12 Stacey went out and performed and did an amazing
13 freestyle dance, and afterwards I went up to the
14 stage and I told her you were amazing and
15 inspirational and the principal pulled me aside and
16 she said, When she started this school year, she was
17 non-communicative. And it was a very, very bad time
18 for her in her life, but this program and her ability
19 to dance with these dancers from Alvin Ailey has like
20 changed her life. We have now followed her through
21 high school. So, I know that that \$20,000 Council
22 grant bringing Alvin Ailey into PS 111 changed
23 Stacey's life, and I know your program is doing the
24 same thing for your clients. So, maybe you can share
25

1 some of those powerful stories that you're aware of
2 and all of you have experienced?

3
4 COMMISSIONER BERMUDEZ: You will hear
5 them yourself--personally from the people themselves.
6 I think that's a better, you know, vehicle for that.
7 Certainly I've seen plenty, but we have them in
8 person--in--in the flesh today. So, so I'm going to
9 take a pass on that one, and ask maybe--

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
11 That is the best non-response to a question
12 [laughter] that I have ever heard from an
13 Administration in a fish bowl. [laughter] Thank you.
14 So, I want to recognize Council Member Moya has
15 joined us from the Cultural Affairs Committee, and I
16 know that we all have more questions, but I want to
17 get to our colleagues, and I believe Council Member
18 Bob Holden from the great Borough of Queens is first.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you very
20 much. Thank you. This is such a great and
21 entertaining committee, isn't it? [laughter] I want
22 to echo, by the way, this--this mag--this magazine or
23 book is--is wonderful, and I want to echo Council
24 Member Van Bramer's praise. It's amazing and I just
25 want to while we're on stories, I want to tell you

1 one personal story. The arts saved my life actually,
2 and it changed my life. I was 14 or 15 in high
3 school feeling lost, and I loved the art class, and
4 did a drawing a couple of drawings actually and they
5 got published in the--in the magazine the school
6 magazine and all of a sudden, I became elevated as a
7 person--

9 ANN BERMUDEZ: Uh-hm.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: --and it's so
11 important. Just you realize that this can change
12 lives. I guess you do realize that, but it changed
13 mine. Once I got in that magazine, I started to walk
14 down the hallways of the school and everybody started
15 to notice me--

16 ANN BERMUDEZ: [interposing] Uh-hm.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: --and before I
18 was alone and now I had people, Oh, great drawing. It
19 was a hockey player, a couple drawings of hockey
20 players in--in the charcoal, and I love the arts,
21 always did and my art teacher suggested a college
22 that, you know, well I want to pursue the arts. I
23 like that. I got noticed and went on for a career in
24 the visual arts, graphic design, got into photography
25 so I--I loved how these students are, you know, going

1
2 around taking pictures, and—and it's just amazing how
3 I became a college professor, and a photographer
4 later on, went into graphic design. So, it actually—
5 it really raises your self-worth because you are—you
6 find out you have talents and people react to the
7 talents, and it's a tremendous—this is such
8 tremendous—I was reading some of the poems. It was
9 just amazing, and whatever we can do, we should
10 double the budget for this, and [cheers/applause] you
11 know, I—like I've been through some committees. This
12 is—this is such a great committee, such an inspiring
13 hearing. I want to thank both chairs, but when you
14 taught—when they see their names in here, when they
15 see their poems, what kind of reactions do you get?
16 Do the people say I want to, you know, pursue this as
17 a career or I want to go into college? Tell me what
18 some of the great stories you're hearing?

19 ANN BERMUDEZ: Well, there's a young man
20 actually who I don't think is here today. So, I
21 guess I'll tell his story through—he—he was very down
22 on probation. Nobody ever wants to be on probation,
23 and then through NeON Arts, he discovered poetry,
24 and—and was part of Free Verse, and then started
25 thinking much like your situation, Oh, maybe I can be

1 a poetry teacher? And what, you know—and so it—it
2 starts expanding and—and when people, you know, see
3 their names it just—it's a topic of conversation of
4 pride. Often times the young people that participate
5 that are on probation have never had family members
6 be able to celebrate anything because they haven't
7 graduated from the 8th grade or from high school or
8 whatever. When we have these events it's like that's
9 when the families come and reconnect and—and you see
10 that as—as—as such an amazing and inspiring
11 experience. So, so yes, it's quite intense when we
12 have a publishing party, if you will, at the—at the
13 various NeONs.

14
15 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Keep it up. It's
16 great. Is there—there's magazines for photographers
17 and the visual arts?

18 ANN BERMUDEZ: So, that has been just
19 the—the written word. The Photographer Project will
20 come out with a book, but I—I guess we're going to
21 have to think of other publications that we're going
22 to have to, you know, create from their photography,
23 which has been fantastic.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Well, I'd like to
25 help with it. If not--

COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE
ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL
INTERGROUP RELATIONS 66

2 ANN BERMUDEZ: [interposing] thank you.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: --consult with it
4 or design--help you design it, I'd like to--

5 ANN BERMUDEZ: Oh, yes. [cheers/applause]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Alright, thank
7 you.

8 ANN BERMUDEZ: You're--you're on.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: First of all, do
10 we not all love Bob Holden? I mean honestly.
11 [laughter] You're just crushing it here, Bob. Also,
12 I just want to say thank you for saying that this is
13 a really entertaining committee. I do think the
14 Cultural Affairs Committee is like--like right up
15 there, right. One of the best. So, I--I know we
16 really want to hear from the participants in the
17 program as well. Luckily we have some great Council
18 Members who would like to say a few words as well,
19 and Council Member Rose is the first.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you, and I'm
21 not on such fun committees. [laughter] Well, I'm--
22 I'm enjoying this. I--I think that, you know, NeON
23 really should be called Opportunity. It--it provides--
24 it opens up a vast array of opportunities for--for
25 people who otherwise have not had them. You know,

1 and the fact that young people, former offenders
2 become published authors, published authors. Not a
3 lot of people can say that in their life that they
4 are published authors and, you know, the value of
5 participating in the arts we know transcends all the
6 boundaries that's imposed by society. You're giving
7 them marketable skills, a viable outlet for all of
8 the energies, you know, structured reinforced
9 positive activities, and I think the most important
10 thing is that it helps to build self-esteem, and we
11 know that often times self-esteem is really sort of
12 what's—is the impetus for how people sort of wind up
13 going down sort of like a divergent path. So, I am—
14 really, I'm a big supporter. I love this program,
15 you know and I think it also helps to address the
16 very issues that lead to recidivism.

18 ANN BERMUDEZ: Uh-hm.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, I'm—I'm pretty
20 smart, and I know that everybody got an applause that
21 said this program should be not only expanded but
22 funding should be increased. So, I'm saying funding
23 should be increased. [cheers/applause/laughter] I'm
24 really not one of those council members that have to
25 get applause, but I—I want to know do you have a wait

1 list and, you know, do you have people who are like -
2 who would really like to participate, can you
3 accommodate all of the people who want to participate
4 in the program, and is there—are you planning to
5 expand the program and have you factored that into
6 your budget request?
7

8 JAMES HORTON: Let's do a two-parter.
9 We'll start over at Carnegie. So, some of the
10 programs have had a slight wait list, but we've done
11 also with some participants who want to participate
12 in the NeON program, but they're not able to do it
13 for—for scheduling reasons or what have you, the
14 great thing is about being Carnegie is that we have
15 programs on site that they can also be involved in.
16 They don't have to be system involved at all, and
17 they can be in that age range. So, just being able
18 to connect them with like you said other
19 opportunities in that space.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Great and I think
21 the important question is have you—are you planning
22 to expand, and if so, have you factored that into
23 your budget request?

24 ANN BERMUDEZ: Well, the-the—we're always
25 wanting to do more. So, basically the way it works

1 the more money there is the more we do. Unless my-
2 the structure remains, you know, but right the-it's-
3 it's all depend-it's scalable up depending on the
4 funds that come in, right?

5
6 DAVID FRUEDENTHAL: That's exactly right.
7 That's because-

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: You can-you can
9 demonstrate need for more funding. That's really
10 like my question.

11 ANN BERMUDEZ: Demonstrate need. There's-
12 the thing is that there's always the need, right.
13 It's-the--the issue is at what scale do we-do we meet
14 that need? Right, so--

15 DAVID FRUEDENTHAL: I mean I would also
16 add that the, you know, the individual member support
17 is helping us direct specific projects in those
18 Council Members communities and broadly with more
19 funding we're able to-to have more of the invited
20 opportunities of more of these competitions where
21 those local stakeholders are picking artists and arts
22 organizations from their communities to do these
23 projects with their-with their local residents. It's
24 kind of-it's that simple, and it's -and-and it is
25 year-by-year. We are, you know, we are aggressively

1 hitting foundations trying to get support for this,
2 and the Administration's been, you know, a great
3 partner in setting it up and, you know, we had that
4 early money from the Soros money, you know, and the
5 Open Society money, and—and so we are, you know,
6 this—this does not exists without the—the ongoing
7 support, but it is a—it is a fraction of—of—in its
8 spending to make these NeONs effective, and—and it's
9 a very effective use of public dollars.
10

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, I—I want to say
12 thank you for what you're doing, and it's really
13 great that you have staff that have insight and
14 vision, you know, and that they make it not only a
15 very good and viable program, but they make it fun,
16 and, you know, that everybody developing marketable
17 skills. I mean it's a—it's a win-win, and I want to
18 say thank you to all that are participating in the
19 program, and I love my program on Staten Island.
20 [laughter] Sal Lynn (sic) is Sal Lynn in the house?
21 [applause] Okay.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: We've also now
23 broken the record for open breakouts of applause
24 [laughter] in a hearing and the pressure is on, but
25 she will deliver because Council Member Rivera is

1 rock start in the Council. I just wanted to add one
2 other thing, Council Member Rivera. First of all,
3 Bill Alatrise (sp?) is taking this all so seriously.
4 He has broken out the light. [laughter] [applause]
5 So, game on, and [laughs] with the—I just wanted to
6 say one thing, with the funding right, let's take
7 this energy and this real positive spirit. I spoke
8 with Commissioner Finkelppearl yesterday. He loves
9 this program, too. Right, who doesn't love this
10 program? Everybody loves this program, but let's
11 take the energy and the positivity and—and get some
12 increase in funding for the programs.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: But—but don't
15 step on my lines.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [laughs] Even
17 if you like what I just said, only clap when Council
18 Member Rivera says it.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: But—but
21 seriously right we can all together I think
22 collectively agree that this is something that
23 deserves more support. So with that, I want to call
24 on Council Member Rivera.

25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Thank you, Chair
3 Van Bramer and yes I think that funding for this
4 program should be increased. [cheers/applause] Okay.
5 So, I—I just want to say how important I think
6 criminal justice reform and alternatives to
7 incarceration and probation and how important this
8 is. This is—you clear have successes and you have
9 built this comprehensive arts program that I think is
10 absolutely incredible, and I think when we talk about
11 the arts and how it touches our lives, case in point
12 you can become a Council Member okay.

13 AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Okay.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: So, with-with
15 that I want to ask, you know, when you have you have
16 your first interaction with the Criminal Justice
17 System and particularly if you're a person of color.
18 As success as you might get through a certain
19 program, you also do have, you know, kind of pre-
20 conceived notions and experiences that are going to
21 inform kind of your perception of the entire system
22 most like for the rest of your life, and so when we
23 talk about arts, I think that arts and activism goes
24 so-so hand-in-hand, and I wonder whether there's a-a
25 component of the program that maybe I missed or

1 whether through the development you'll be talking
2 about how to link some of the program participants to
3 like social justice campaigns or even working with
4 local elected officials because I would love an
5 artist in my office who is participating in this
6 program but who also wants to do things like, you
7 know, funky stuff on Instagram and take cool pictures
8 and think about campaigns on something on a hyper
9 local level. Is that something that you all have
10 considered?
11

12 ANN BERMUDEZ: I think you just gave NeON
13 Arts a 2.0 for us. We have not officially done that,
14 but that that's exactly a growth path for all of
15 this. A lot of the—the projects—some of the projects
16 do have an activism component to it. Certainly a lot
17 of the projects that are community focused, let's say
18 when they have done mural projects or, you know,
19 different things those absolutely have a process, but
20 then we haven't yet, you know, thought about it and
21 it's definitely worth doing, a particular strand of
22 projects around social justice and—and other things.
23 So, so I think our animation projects, the Animation
24 project which you'll be hearing from they've done a
25 lot of PSAs for example, and they do a lot—a lot of

1 the work they do is to influence peer thinking
2 towards a more positive, you know, to—to be more
3 positive and—and deal with a lot of the things that
4 the teen-agers deal with like peer pressure and, you
5 know, a couple of other things. So—so you'll hear
6 from them but—but it may be worthwhile just naming
7 it, you know, as opposed to just letting it happen
8 organically. I appreciate that. Thank you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Yeah, I—I--

11 DAVID FRUEDENTHAL: A quick add-on to
12 that, that one of the points that—one of the places
13 where Carnegie Hall was directly in that space in
14 partnership with—with DOP was our '60s Festival last
15 year, which really focused on—on the protest
16 movements of the period and empowerment of—of—the
17 period and we did a—a major project in Stern
18 Auditorium on our main stage: A Time Like This:
19 Music for Change as part of the—of the 60s Festival
20 and NeON Arts participants as well as participants in
21 a number of our—of our youth—youth and Youth Justice
22 Programs with ACS kind of a number of the
23 participants composed their own renditions, their own
24 music, their own original music on the theme of
25 protest and social change and performed it on our

1 stage. So, it's—kind of was a way that we have
2 thought about in, you know, in last year's season.
3 We spoke—the issue that you spoke to, but that said,
4 we love the idea of, you know, how do we engage these
5 young people and how—how are these arts projects a
6 pathway to civic engagement and, in fact, our NeON
7 inspires projects, which is associated with—with NeON
8 Arts. It's where the—the young participants have a
9 chance to meet inspirational young leaders, and see
10 other paths—pathways forward. So—so, the work
11 together has provided some—some of that work but we—
12 we'd love to think about how we could do more
13 together. Thank you.

14
15 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: And I think in
16 order to be supportive, I think, right informed
17 experiences are the way you change something for—for
18 the better and, you know, hopefully we'll—they'll be
19 City Council Members one day as well. So, I would
20 love to help and—and I think it's a great program
21 and—and thank you. Thank you for your testimony.
22 Thank you for being here.

23 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. I will
24 forego the rest of my questions because I think we
25 have a lot of folks here who want to also share their

1 experiences with us. We want to get them up. Well,
2 actually the next panel—we have a number of panels.
3 We're going to have the next one come up, but
4 actually, we're going to ask participants to—from the
5 folks that signed up who—who I think are participants
6 to come up and tell their stories as well. We wanted
7 to get them up so that we could hear from people are
8 directly affected by it, and so we'll do that, and
9 because we have lot of panels and we are going to ask
10 for two minutes, and are going to probably hold tight
11 on the two minutes, and if we have questions we'll
12 ask them. So, I'm sorry if you have three minutes or
13 four minutes of material, but we're going to try to
14 keep it so we can hear as many stories as we can.
15 So, thank you to the panelists here, and thank you
16 for the work you're doing. [applause] Yes. Thank
17 you. So, our first panel is going to be Yasmine
18 Lancaster, Dylan Henry, Danny Cross and Tamara
19 Williams, if you can come on up. [background
20 comments/pause] Thank you all. Thank you for being
21 here and thank you for your patience. We'll get—
22 we'll start, which I guess we can start from over
23 here and go this way. We'll—as I said, we do want to
24 keep it a two minutes because we have a lot of folks
25

1 who are here who want to tell their stories as well.
2
3 So, you can give us written testimony, and we'll read
4 through it if it's longer than two minutes, but
5 otherwise you will hear—you'll hear the clock and you
6 finish—obviously finish your thought, but we'd love
7 to be able to answer—ask some questions and get to
8 folks as well. So thank you for being here, and we
9 have a number of panels that we'll be calling up
10 afterwards. So thank you. You can—you can—are you
11 ready? Okay, but just make sure you turn on the
12 microphone. Thanks.

13 JASMINE LANCASTER: Good afternoon. Hi.
14 My name is Jasmine Lancaster, and this is my
15 testimony. What is our common humanity is our
16 birthright. It's a universal language that connects
17 all of us to one another. I'm a writer, poet and
18 filmmaker and became involved with Free Verse as an
19 intern with a community-based organization SoBRO in
20 the Bronx. I was in a probation center on 151st
21 Street helping our organization recruit youth to get
22 their GEDs and again their academic life. However,
23 writing was a passion of mine. I've been writing
24 since I was child. So when I was asked if I would
25 like to participate in a writing group that meets at

1 probation center every Thursday, I was not only
2 intrigued by this novel concept, but I welcomed it
3 because one thing that is true of all writers besides
4 have a fetish for pens is we are forever in search
5 for the one that writes smoothest without hesitation
6 so our thoughts will not be interrupted by a leaky
7 pen, we are also looking for a community to belong to
8 and Free Verse provided that for me and has continued
9 to for six years. I can speak about how because at
10 Free Verse my poetry has been published in Bronx
11 Heights newspaper. I have been asked to be a guest
12 at the Open Program, a traveling theater group
13 located in a Piece of Italy this past summer,
14 heralded to me the true value of Free Verse is the
15 community that helps to foster, create and maintain
16 through the art of poetry in the midst of a probation
17 center. The rarest individuals that I would never
18 meet in the state have yet to be born and probation
19 is a physical location where you get the individual
20 support you need to mend your life and take a
21 critical look at your choice. And that being said,
22 probation is focused on the individual, however,
23 human beings we are communal by nature. We are born
24 into families and we are part of the community. We
25

1 do live in isolation and when we die, but that's when
2 we are connected. Free Verse' achievement it that I
3 allows individuals to stay connected to the held
4 accountable by those who see them not only as someone
5 who has made a mistake, but also a budding artist, a
6 poet, a writer, someone who has something to say, and
7 whose voices will not only be heard but affirmed by
8 community. The open might ask that the space is to
9 share old hurts, your triumphs, and victories of the
10 spirit as a testament [bell] to Free Verse and
11 community that is fostered.
12

13 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: That was very good.

14 JASMINE LANCASTER: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: [off mic]

16 JASMINE LANCASTER: Oh, okay. Alright.

17 But the community that is fostered that both come
18 back after no longer being on probation. They come
19 back to help someone else find their voice to
20 encourage them, to give them a microphone and be
21 affirmed. In America that's increasingly become more
22 divided in America which folks are more engaged with
23 their Smart Phones than the person who is sitting
24 across to you during dinner. Free Verse acts as
25 beacon in society to remind us all that the value of

1 community is one that should preserved and that
2 artists forever reaffirming our humanity wherever
3 that art may be found. Free Verse should be funded.
4 It needs to be funded so that the art can maintain
5 itself whether it be a Broadway show or a probation
6 center. Thank you so much for listening.

8 DYLAN: [coughs] Hello, everybody. I'm
9 Dylan and I'm one of the NeON participants, and I
10 first started as doing airbush with Danny and I just
11 wanted to say that it was a great experience on being
12 an entrepreneurship. First it was a hobby and then
13 Danny taught me how to make it into a job, and after
14 I did that, I started photography with Josie, but,
15 which also was also was a great experience. First, I
16 started as a student. Now, I'm a teacher at 510
17 Gates Avenue. [cheers/applause] We—we are approved
18 (sic) on running the program for 4:00 to 6:00 and I
19 just wanted to say that we need more people, which
20 means more than just New York. So, it's a great
21 opportunity not only people that's on probation, but
22 people that's like—I can't remember (sic) [background
23 comments] Not only people that's on probably, but
24 people that's in the community who—who is like—who's
25 scared to come outside of their neighborhood because

1 they're not able to fit in with their peers. So this
2 is like a new beginning or you could reinvent
3 yourself on what you're trying to do next. We need—
4 we need this because [pause] I'm trying to find the
5 right word. [background comments] Yeah, we need
6 this opportunity because—because—dang. [laughter]
7 [bell] It's—it's hard to get it out. [bell] Let me
8 say it in a different way. So, we need this
9 opportunity because we don't need no more kids on
10 probation. You know what I mean. No more kids due
11 to [applause] police brutality. We don't need no
12 more. We need help with—with parents helping their
13 kids find something instead to the streets and
14 looking for help. We—we like a Neighborhood Watch
15 so, yeah, and that's it. [cheers/applause]

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, it's always
18 the people who say they're a little bit nervous who
19 give the best testimony. [laughs] That was great.
20 It was really powerful what you said,

21 DYLAN: Thank you. I appreciate it.

22 DANIEL CROSS: Good afternoon. My name
23 is Daniel Cross and I'm the founder of Project Fame.
24 I met NeON Arts and started doing workshops in
25 Jamaica, Queens in 2014 and I quickly spread through

1 every borough in Brooklyn, Staten Island, Harlem and
2 the Bronx. We teach entrepreneurial workshops as far
3 as visual arts where we teach students that you could
4 take your creative ideas and put them onto a T-Shirt
5 and actually sell it and make a profit. Art saved my
6 life growing up. I had no direction. I really
7 didn't know what I wanted to do and I started
8 creating T-Shirt for myself and through me on arts I
9 was actually able to take my teaching career to a
10 whole other level. It's like a trades—like a
11 creative trade school across the New York City where
12 if one of my students like cooking, he can go to
13 Harlem. If he want to make beets he could go to
14 Queens. It's just a total networking opportunity for
15 anybody. So, if you walk through the door, we have a
16 program that you have to be interested because we
17 have so much to offer and it's good to see somebody
18 that can make a living off of something that they
19 have a passion about. So, I never thought I could
20 make a living being an artist. It was a struggle I
21 never gave up, and it's been over a decade, and I'm
22 just here to show young people that if you have a
23 passion for anything in life, you could do it. The
24 sky is the limit. So whatever your dream is, you

1 goal is we're here to encourage them to pursue it.
2 Our workshops are really hands-on entrepreneurship
3 programs where we're showing you how to market
4 yourself, how to use social media, how to set up on
5 the weekends, how to come up with a business plan,
6 and we coach students along the way and very proud of
7 everybody so far.

8
9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Did you guys
10 make our T-Shirts?

11 DANIEL CROSS: Yes, we did.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Those are
13 awesome. [laughter] The best T-Shirts ever.

14 [laughter]

15 DANIEL CROSS: You ain't got one?

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Carlina Rivera,
17 R-I-V-E-R-A.

18 DANIEL CROSS: Small or medium?

19 [laughter] [background comments]

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Did you say,
21 medium. [bell] Medium.

22 DANIEL CROSS: I've got it.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And because
24 Council Member Gibson, Vanessa Gibson who just joined
25 us is a big supporter of the program and has one of

1 those amazing T-shirts as well as Council Member
2 Power and I. So, you may have to make a few more T-
3 shirts to keep the Council Members happy but--
4

5 DANIEL CROSS: [interposing] Just let me
6 know.

7 TAMARA C. WILLIAMS: Hi, Good afternoon.
8 My name is Tamara C. Williams, and I'm the founder
9 of-of Music Beyond Measure, and like Danny, we-we
10 started in 2014 with-with the NeON Arts, and at the
11 time that my organization had started, we--NeON Arts
12 was-I consider a home base because my project was
13 theoretical at that point because I had just founded
14 the-the organization in 2013. So, we were able to-to
15 do a live music project through-through-through-
16 through a NeON Arts in the South Bronx, and it was
17 great being selected in that first round because I
18 feel like there was a-a standard that was that was
19 set that continues to be met and-and exceeded as-as
20 each project goes forward. What my organization does
21 is we-we create art recovering programs for trauma
22 survivors. Long story short, we -we try to get-get
23 to the root of the reasons why people end up in the-
24 the justice system. We-we-we have those
25 conversations about trauma. We-we have those

1 conversations about, you know, domestic violence,
2 sexual assault, abuse, gang violence, everything,
3 but-but those conversations happen through song
4 writing, and-and-and we partner the participants with
5 professional musicians to give them number 1, to
6 remind them that they have voice, and-and-and they
7 create the most amazing art because it is from the
8 soul and-and it's from the heart. One thing I can
9 say, you know, like-like Danny and, you know, and
10 also like-like some of the testimony here, the
11 reasons why I started this organization was because I
12 went through so much trauma as a child, and once I
13 found my way out, which took 25 years of my life, it
14 was necessary. It-it was imperative for me to share
15 that with-with other people and the value that NeON
16 Arts brings to [bell]-wow, the two minutes already.
17 [laughs] TH e value that-that-that a NeON Arts
18 brings to-to probation clients I mean I-I-I actually
19 have an ides for-for NeON Arts 2.0, and it kind of
20 goes off of what-you know, what this young man was
21 saying here, we need to get to children before they
22 get in probation. And, as powerful as these programs
23 are, we need to use them to get into the
24 neighborhoods and the schools so that we can start
25

1
2 these conversations prior to anything happening, and-
3 and really equip these-these schools and equip these
4 students, equip parents. They need tools that are
5 going to actively engage them and-and that teach them
6 what trauma is how to prevent it, and-and how to
7 connect to resources within their communities and all
8 of these conversations can take place through the
9 arts. It-it makes it easier to have those talks.
10 Alright, so thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. I want to
12 say thank you to all of you for being here, being
13 patient with us and telling [applause] you our
14 stories. We-we're going to call another panel up,
15 but and-and-and to-and to hear from more folks who
16 have been involved in it, and I just want to say
17 thank you. Your stories are really important and you
18 guys tell the human part of this story that we're
19 getting so-so much of us are very interested in
20 hearing. Yeah, and I-I wanted to just-I know Council
21 Member Gibson who I I'd say a very, very big
22 supporter and one of your best supporters in the
23 Council for NeON. I know you wanted to say a couple
24 of words as well.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Hi, everyone.
3 Thank you so much for coming today. Thank you to
4 Chair Keith Powers and our Chair Jimmy Van Bramer. I
5 am just really excited. I'm chairing a hearing next
6 door so that's why I'm late. Apologies, but I heard
7 all this clapping and I'm like what's going on across
8 the hall? Let me come over and—and just really
9 thank all of you and our Commissioner of the
10 Department of Probation Ana Bermudez has been
11 phenomenal, Carnegie Hall has been phenomenal, the
12 Young Men's Initiative. Just so many incredible
13 partners that really get it, and we at the City
14 Council often say we use arts as a catalyst for
15 change. We want to make sure that we transform the
16 lives of young people, whether they're involved with
17 the Criminal Justice System or not, but obviously we
18 want to get them as you said before they enter the
19 system and representing a district in the South and
20 the West Bronx, I know all too well how important
21 arts is. I often say our young people need a first
22 chance because they've never been given a first
23 chance. We say second chance. They need a first
24 chance, and using art as a form of expression, as a
25 safe haven for many of our young people as a place to

1
2 go and be themselves without any judgment without
3 anyone telling them anything negative. Positivity
4 loves support. That's exactly what for me South
5 Bronx NeON has done, and I've watched this program
6 grow. I have been a part of it's, you know,
7 evolvment in the community, and I am so proud when I
8 see these young people in action when I hear their
9 stories, we all have a story. We all have a
10 testimony, but I often tell my young people in the
11 Bronx that your circumstance should not define who
12 you are, and it's not who you are unless you allow it
13 to be who you are, and that's where we all come in
14 because so many young people are crying out for
15 guidance and direction and love and they don't know
16 where. And often times we don't get them until
17 they're in Central Booking, right? Until they're
18 before a judge, and I get a call from a mom, I need
19 help. My son at Central Booking and that happens far
20 too often, and so I agree and what his program for me
21 means is that it means looking at it from a different
22 perspective, from ad different lens. So, not just
23 the traditional organizations, and not just the
24 traditional, conventional way of thinking. We have
25 to meet young people where they are, talk to them in

1 the streets because a lot of times, you know, they're
2 just as afraid of us, right as we sometimes are
3 afraid of them, and we have to bridge that gap and we
4 have to get over those insecurities and make sure
5 that we are reaching young people where they are.
6 So, I am a big fan of talking to you at the subway
7 station, at the bus stop, at the bodega, the beauty
8 shop, the beauty, you know, the beauty salon, the
9 barber shop because these are the places where young
10 people are, and it's not just schools and other
11 places, but community centers, churches, the faith
12 based institutions. For me that's what it is, and
13 it's about taking it to the next level. So, I applaud
14 all of you, our participants from all of the NeONs
15 specifically South Bronx. So, that was a shout-out
16 to the Bronx, but really--[cheers/applause] I'm so
17 thankful. I am thankful and we need all of you to
18 really to be ambassadors because not every young
19 person in New York City knows what the NeON Program
20 is about. And so, we want to encourage them. We
21 want to empower them, and talk to them about what
22 we're offering, what we're doing, spoken word, you
23 know, artists, music. Whatever form of expression it
24 is, we want them to understand we have an open and a
25

1 welcoming door, and I know that's what this program
2 speaks to, the public private partnership, the
3 recognition that we're all in this together is really
4 a powerful message, and so I commend you. I thank
5 you all profusely for what you have you done, and I
6 look forward to working with my colleagues in the new
7 year. We have a new budget year coming up, and we
8 are excited because our Speaker Corey Johnson is
9 truly a supporter and a champion of the arts and
10 culture and the intersection, and we will continue to
11 make sure that we work with you, and we certainly
12 walk with all of you. So, I thank you. Thank you to
13 our Commissioner. Thank you to all the young people
14 and participants. Also a shout-out to Kate Spaulding
15 because she's amazing, and—and really everyone really
16 thank you for your work. Thank you, Chair for
17 allowing me to interrupt. I really appreciate it.
18 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.
21 [applause] First of all, I love the fact that our
22 hearing has created a huge ruckus so that Finance is
23 wondering where is all that cheering coming from.
24 It's us. Dylan, it looked like maybe you wanted to
25 offer a comment.

1
2 DYLAN: Yes, I also wanted to say about
3 NeON Photography. This is a good thing to do because
4 most does it in middle school and high school. They
5 don't after school and high school. They don't have
6 after school programs any more. So, this is
7 basically something to do when these kids have
8 nothing to do. So, this is like, you know, figure of
9 speech so like they are open minded, and this is, you
10 know, most of the kids have problems at home. So,
11 this is like a form of expression. So that is what I
12 wanted to say.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That' a lot.
14 Thank you, Dylan. [applause] So, I wanted to ask
15 you a question because when I first got here today, I
16 saw you working with our photographer Bill Alatrise
17 (sic) right, you were doing a little photography, but
18 then you're part of Project Fame as well or you
19 started that way?

20 DYLAN: Yes, I first started with Project
21 Fame with Danny first, and then I got another
22 opportunity working with Chelsey, which is better for
23 me because now I get to explore on my page for my T-
24 Shirts now. I went and I created a clothing line.
25 So-

1

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Wow.

2

DYLAN: Yeah, I've been killing two birds
3 with one stone.

4

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [laughs]

5

[applause] That is awesome. So, I-I just had a
6 sense you have a lot to say, Dylan.

7

DYLAN: I'm not nervous no more.

8

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's right.

9

[cheers/applause] Hear that? That's—that's great
10 because it takes a lot of courage to come to the City
11 Hall and testify, and—and maybe we all start off a
12 little bit nervous even as Council Members and then
13 after a while, you can't really shut us up. You know
14 what I mean. [laughter] So, congratulations to all
15 of you, and for you for sharing your story as well of
16 the childhood trauma that you experienced, but all of
17 you thank you so much. It's really—really powerful
18 that you're here. Thank you. [applause]

19

CHAIRPERSON POWERS: We're going to call

20

up a few folks. Andrew Whitehead, Brian, Austin,

21

Lyndon Sylvester and Kenneth Swindow. They can come

22

on out. [pause] [background comments/pause] Thanks

23

for being here and tanks for your patience. We can

24

start from this side this time, and the same thing.

25

1 We'll have two minutes. Of course, finish your
2 thought if you are in the middle of making a thought,
3 and if we have questions, we'll ask them afterwards.
4 Thanks.

5
6 LYNDON SYLVESTER: [off mic] Hello,
7 everybody. [pause] Oh, press it down. [on mic] Hello
8 everybody. My name is Lyndon Sylvester and I'm the
9 recruiter for the Animation Project. I'm gong to
10 give you, you know, some information about how I got
11 here today at the Animation Project. I'm going to
12 give you, you know, some information about how I got
13 here today at the Animation Project. So, I was a
14 former probation client. I was on probation for
15 three years at the Jamaica, Queens NeON, and I-my
16 probation officer ended up referring me to a program
17 called the Young Adult Success Court, and I decided
18 to sign up for the program. I didn't really want to,
19 but I ended up going for it and I got called and had
20 to attend an orientation the next week, and when I
21 got there, I got interviewed by Bill Dean Akidikens
22 (sp?) and it was a tough interview, but I got the
23 position and had to attend another orientation where
24 I got placed at the Jamaica, Queens NeON as a
25 recruiter for the NeON Sports and Arts Programs. One

1
2 day I was at the Jamaica, Queens NeON helping out and
3 there was a stakeholders meeting, and Katrian
4 Prioleau called me into the room, and sitting at the
5 table were some stakeholders, and Brian Austin,
6 Meredith Dean, and Juan from the Animation Project.
7 Katrina told me that there was a position open and
8 that I should apply for it, and I ended up applying
9 for the position and ended getting called for an
10 interview for their—for a recruiter at the Animation
11 Project. I went in for the interview and ended up
12 getting the position as recruiter for the Animation
13 Project, and since I got this job things [pause]
14 things are—since I got this job, I started doing
15 things that I wasn't used to like speaking to people
16 and I never though probation would like help me get a
17 job making a lot of money and doing things that I
18 wasn't used to. I developed confidence over time,
19 and now I'm able to stand up in front of crowds with
20 lots of people, and people look at me different now.
21 I feel important and I view myself as an over-
22 achiever. I set goals for myself to overcome all of
23 my obstacles and push myself to stay positive at all
24 times. These are some of the—see, these are some of
25 the things that helped me overcome challenges with my

1 everyday challenges, and in the future I see myself
2 growing with the Animation Project and, you know,
3 working with them to help these young adults in our
4 community get placements and, you know, help them get
5 jobs and, you know, get them to a better place.

7 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Great. Thank you.
8 You can go next.

9 KENNETH SWINDLE: Good afternoon. May
10 name is Kenneth Swindle. I'm 43 and I started with
11 NeON relatively-not-not long ago. I think it's been
12 about five weeks. I go to the-the classes in Harlem
13 and I just wanted to say I think it's important for a
14 few reasons. One of them is that working with
15 Chelsey Davis she meets you at whatever level you're
16 at when you come in, and-and really just has the
17 spirit of a full progression kind of moving forward.
18 She's also able to cover a-a myriad of different
19 things from technical aspects to history of
20 photography, how photography can be applied and just,
21 you know, in the economy and-and different photo
22 journalism ventures that, you know, just different
23 avenues that you may be able to take it in a
24 professional experience. I think my favorite
25 experience thus far has definitely been, you know,

1
2 one minute you're a—a classroom in Harlem and then,
3 you know, Chelsey is shoving a camera in your hand,
4 and you're photographing the lead piano for the New
5 York Philharmonic like a private venue and 57th
6 Street. So, I definitely started, you know, it-it-it
7 keeps your wheels turning. It's good to be around
8 other creative people. That inspiration is kind of
9 priceless for me, and yeah, it definitely just has me
10 thinking in terms of how I can take my craft to the
11 next level or adopt other skillsets that I can apply
12 to my professional life. So, yeah, I'm very grateful
13 for NeON. I think funding should definitely continue
14 and be increased. [bell] I think that's about it,
15 though.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You two nailed
17 it coming in under two minutes. I just want to say.
18 [laughter] It's very, very hard to do. Is—is the
19 mysterious but often talked about Chelsey in the
20 room?

21 KENNETH SWINDLE: There is.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Where is
23 Chelsey?

24 KENNETH SWINDLE: There she is.

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Oh. [applause/
3 cheers] I did, too. So, I'll think about it.
4 Everyone keeps talking about you in such amazing
5 ways. So, I said that, I was like boy I hopes she's
6 in the room to hear all these people saying such nice
7 things about you. So, thank you. [laughter]

8 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: We like to recognize
9 the stows like Bill who are working behind the camera
10 behind the scenes as well. Thank you. You're next.

11 BRIAN AUSTIN; I'm going to go just a few
12 seconds over my two minutes just to break their
13 record. [background comments/laughter] So, I'm
14 Brian Austin, the Founder and Executive Director of
15 The Animation Project otherwise known as TAP. Ten
16 years ago I created TAP, a program where young adults
17 come together in a therapeutic setting to learn
18 state-of-the-art computer animation software to tell
19 their stories. The resulting animations are screened
20 publicly and shared on social media. Early on in our
21 work we partnered with the New York City Department
22 of Probation enabling us to serve hundreds of young
23 adult-young adults in Family Court. With the
24 establishment of the NeON site since specifically
25 NeON Arts this partnership expanded allowing us to

1 reach to countless underserved New Yorkers in all
2 five boroughs. Pointedly, this partnership now
3 includes the Mayor's Office of Media and
4 Entertainment. In 2017, we established the Made in
5 New York Animation Project. Together we currently
6 serve 2,000 young New Yorkers and host paid interns
7 in our Workforce Development Program. Our industry
8 partners include Blue Sky Studios, Avalanche Studios,
9 Nickelodeon, Take 2 Interactive, the Mill and many
10 others. One of the most exciting areas of our work
11 with young probationers is to witness them come to
12 life when asked to tell their own stories. In many—
13 in many settings young adults are not encouraged to
14 express their full contradictory selves. Pull up
15 your pants, take off your hat, don't curse, turn it
16 down, keep it moving. These are all well intentioned
17 and well meaning refrains directed sometimes loudly
18 at youth. Social order is, of course, necessary, but
19 with youth development as our goal, young adults need
20 a space to develop and share their ideas. This is
21 why TAPS' first mandate is to listen. Our therapists
22 begin each group with what story do you want to tell?
23 When I tell people about TAPS' work, I often find
24 myself having to emphasize that yes the Department of
25

1 Probation is our partner . [bell] Just a little
2 more. It-it-it deserves to be better known that
3 probation is in the business of offering
4 opportunities for growth. This holds true not only
5 for the individuals it serves but is equally true for
6 its partners. The New York City Department of
7 Probation has been essential in enabling TAPS to
8 bring our unique direct service programming to
9 thousands of young adults ensuring that their stories
10 are heard, that even the most disadvantaged in our
11 city have access to technology, thereby placing
12 sustainable jobs within their reach. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. Next.

15 ANDRE WHITEHEAD: Hello. My name is
16 Andre Whitehead, and I'm a NeON Photographer. I've
17 been working with Chelsey for a few months, and I
18 thank her every chance I get for this opportunity to
19 express myself in photography. I'm also currently on
20 probation. Our probation officers appeal to judges
21 (sic) and since I—since I've been in the class, I've—
22 I've—Chelsey has provided numerous opportunities for
23 me to like express myself and take photos of
24 different events such as the Thanksgiving Day Parade,
25 events with the Park Avenue Pianos, the City-City

1 Council meetings, this press conference last Tuesday
2 where I—where I met the Commissioner. It was a year
3 ago my life wasn't in this, you know—I wasn't in this
4 state mind. My life was different, and now I have
5 the opportunity to be more—way more positive than
6 I've ever been, and I see the progress in it, and I—
7 and I'm—I'm more confident, you know, and being
8 successful in a positive way. I thank you—I thank you
9 all here for giving the youth this opportunity.
10 Throughout the class this is—it's—it's just I'm
11 networking, networking with different artist is
12 making me more creative, you know, and making me more
13 open to ideas, and it's just a beautiful experience
14 and I—and I—I look forward to looking, you know, to
15 doing more with NeON Photographers. Thank you.
16 [applause]

18 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you for those
19 stories, and you can tell about the inspiration and—
20 and—and how the programs are working. I give credit
21 a lot of people who are in this room for making that
22 happen, and—and thank you for those stories. I also
23 just want to say I—I actually criticized another
24 agency at one point for doing this at the last term.
25 So, I want to commend the Department of Probation for

1 staying here and listening to these testimonies and
2 these stories. Often the Administration comes and
3 they leave after they had to do their part and saying
4 that they may have to go at some point, but it is
5 actually a respect that they give to hear all of you,
6 your stories as well. I want to thank the
7 Commissioner for stay, and her team for being here to
8 listen to the-to the stories and not just flee after
9 they say their part of-of-or have their part of it.
10 I think that is worth celebrating as well because we
11 often don't see that. So, thank. I'm going hand it
12 back to you.
13

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Somehow that is
15 not surprising though, because Commissioner Bermuda
16 as I feel like would be-rather be nowhere else than
17 right here at this moment, right, and listening to
18 this testimony. So, I just want to mention a couple
19 of things. So, it it-is it Lindo?

20 LYNDON SYLVESTER: It's Lyndon.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right. What's
22 that?

23 LYNDON SYLVESTER: It's Lyndon Sylvester.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Lyndon?

25 LYNDON SYLVESTER: Yes. Sylvester.

1

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sylvester.

2

Right. What's that? [background comments] Ah,

3

Lyndon. Got it. [laughter] I was reading it off the

4

page. So, I was struck by some of the things that

5

you said, and I loved it when you described yourself

6

as an over-achiever and you talked about your

7

confidence because in some ways I feel like I'm an

8

overachiever. I come from a very, very, you know,

9

working class family, right, and neither of my

10

parents graduated from high school, and I was the

11

first person in my family to go to college, and, you

12

know, I didn't know how I was going to make it in my

13

life at various times. I only knew that I had

14

ambition and that somehow I was going to do it, right

15

and I see that in you, right, the way you talk about

16

speaking in front of big crowds of people, and having

17

this confidence and carrying yourself in a different

18

way. So, I just want to say I expect very big things

19

from you. Maybe you're going to run for political

20

office one day [laughter] and be President of the

21

United States of America. [laughter] Would you like

22

to run in two years?

23

LYNDON SYLVESTER: Yeah, I'd love to.

24

I'd love to. [laughter]

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: There may be an
3 opportunity? [laughter] And—and—and I think it's
4 Kenneth, right? I just wanted say, too, I loved it
5 when you said that being surrounded by other creative
6 people, right—I many be paraphrasing but that was
7 inspirational to you, and I think that's also part of
8 the beauty of this program is that when someone who
9 is creative and wants to create is—is surrounded by
10 other creative people it drives everyone around in
11 that—in that network to do great things, and you
12 mentioned networking, right, which is all a part of
13 the same thing. So, I just wanted to say thank you
14 and encourage all of you to keep being ambitious
15 right and to—and to—to do whatever it is you want to
16 do because you can do it. So, thank you all very,
17 very much. [applause]

18 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. Thanks
19 so much. We're going to call up our next panel of
20 four. We're going to call up Taquan (sp?) Spencer,
21 George Warwick, Sherry Hood, and I think it's Kalief
22 Williams, Kalief Williams. [background
23 comments/pause]

1
2 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. We can
3 start—I think I started this on this side if you feel
4 like it, sir.

5 TAQUAN SPENCER: We'll start on this side.
6 Yeah, this is mic?

7 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Yes, just turn the
8 mic on.

9 TAQUAN SPENCER: Hello, hello. We on?
10 Alright. Good afternoon. I'm Taquan Spencer. I'm
11 actually a—a mentor for East New York and Bed-Stuy
12 Arches. So, my experience with the—with the NeON
13 Arts, I then went through the Fame Airbrushing. I'm
14 doing the photography now. I took—I actually took the
15 class last year, and now I'm teaching it in Bed-Stuy.
16 From my perspective it's working. Like I'm—I'm knee
17 deep in it. I'm going and knocking on doors, and
18 like somebody said in their testimony earlier they
19 don't have nothing to look forward to. My
20 participants have something to look forward to Monday
21 through Sunday, and I mean so I'm not going to be
22 long, but it's working. The programs that you all
23 are coming up with is working. They have something
24 to look forward to. They have something to express
25 theirself without being in the streets. They can

1
2 come to—to five or ten gates. They could—they could
3 shoot a camera and not a gun. That's—that's the—
4 that's one of the things that I try to get across to
5 them like oh, you call yourself a shooter. Now you
6 could really be a shooter, and you could shoot these
7 photos. So, and for me from my personal experience
8 it's—it's having me looking at life from a different
9 perspective. Now, as I'm walking down the street, I
10 just don't walk down the street. I actually see
11 different things. I see—I see things in a whole new
12 lens as I would say. So that's basically my
13 testimony. [applause]

14 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. Thanks so
15 much. [background comments]

16 GEORGE WARWICK: How you doing, Council.
17 So, everyone, I submitted paper in case. My name is
18 George and it's an honor to be here and to be able to
19 speak concerning an issue dear to my heart. I am a
20 Free Verse Poet, and it relighted my artistic spirit
21 to New York City Department of Probation and the NeON
22 Program. I would like to extend my gratitude to
23 Commissioner Bermudez and the entire DOP staff for
24 their support and encouragement of Free Verse and the
25 NeON program. Not only do I participate and

1
2 instruct, but I am a client of DOP who found Free
3 Verse and NeON helped change my attitude towards my
4 involvement with the Criminal Justice System. Free
5 Verse has given those without a voice the ability to
6 speak to open mic, published magazine and performance
7 at Carnegie Hall. Many of those served come from
8 neighborhoods underserved without artistic programs.
9 Through Free Verse, I have attended events and helped
10 with block parties in East New York, Brownsville, the
11 South Bronx, Flushing, Rose Bank and even a Kwanzaa
12 event in Stapleton in Councilwoman Rose's district.
13 We have encouraged thousands of submissions to our
14 magazine and to watch someone react when their work
15 is published makes it all worthwhile. I've seen
16 clients who dreaded coming to probation and the wait
17 it entails, embrace our open mic and writing
18 sessions. I would like to see Free Verse at all of
19 DOP locations for it changes people and instills hope
20 and is an outlet for their thoughts. In closing, I
21 want to thank everyone for listening and hope you
22 consider expanding our work where needed. A client
23 told me that Free Verse changed his life, and I told
24 him that he changed mine. Thank you and for
25 Councilman Holden, you could submit poems and

1 artistic work to the email that's in front page of
2 the magazine. Just so you know. [cheers/applause]
3 I-I passed.

4 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. I don't
5 know if you know, he's a good graphic designer. I
6 don't know how much of a poet he is but we'll find
7 out.

8 GEORGE WARWICK: [off mic] There's an
9 email address in the back.

10 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Alright, we'll be-

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: The pressure is
12 on now.

13 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: The pressure is on.
14 Thank you for that. Thanks so much. We'll keep
15 going. Thanks

16 SHERRY GOOD: Good afternoon. I'm PO
17 Sherry Good. I'm from the Staten Island NeON,
18 Councilwoman Deborah Rose's District, and I'd like to
19 say I was one of the first POs that came when-when
20 this program initiated, and it's been remarkable to
21 see kids that didn't have hope, they have hope. Oh,
22 I can't do that. I can't make a video. I can't make
23 a CD. Here's the microphone, let's do something. Now
24 you have a CD. I did it. It's the ah-ha moment that
25

1 really, really counts. I think it's the holistic
2 environment that we've created. It's not just you're
3 in trouble. That's your worst day. Let's deal with
4 that. It's lets' look forward and see where we can
5 go, what we can be. Who are you? And they don't
6 know, but by the time they finish some of our
7 programming they know. So, the NeON Arts has been
8 wonderful program to be affiliated with, and I thank
9 Ihanna Call, Labranda and Sis. (sic) Our
10 stakeholders are wonderful. Thank you. [applause]

12 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you.

13 KALIEF WILLIAMS: Hello. My name is
14 Kalief Williams. I'm 30 years old. I've been
15 participating in the NeON Arts program in Bedford-
16 Stuyvesant since October. I have a background in
17 photography, and I worked in television a long time
18 ago and since then I've kind of like let the camera
19 sit and collect dust, and I was really happy to find
20 out that through the-through the NeON Arts Program
21 that I could get back into my-what was my passion,
22 and really start to achieve what I had originally set
23 our to do. So, in a-in a great way the NeON Arts
24 Program has reignited my flame to stay great and to
25 become great and to remain. So, and, you know, they-

1 they have honestly to these--this is my second time
2 coming to City Hall and this is--the City Hall--
3 shooting at City Hall is like my favorite part of the
4 NeON Arts. It's because it's the greatest city on
5 earth and this is office that actually runs the
6 greatest city on earth, and this beautiful artisan
7 created. They don't even make stuff like this any
8 more, and it's like a million pounds of marble in
9 this place, and it's just--it's just like a very
10 intriguing, very--like a gorgeous place to shoot. So,
11 I really enjoy coming to shoot at City Hall, and this
12 program has also inspired me to--to dedicate a lot of
13 my time to giving back and to--to helping to
14 facilitate, to helping programs like this to reach
15 the people because there's a big like bi--like
16 everyone is saying there's a big--there's a big gap
17 between people knowing that these outlets exist for
18 them and it's--it's tough [bell] to say that you have
19 to be in trouble in order to figure out. But through
20 working with Chelsey and working NeON Arts, and the
21 rest of these good people we will definitely be using
22 whatever resources we have available to--to spread
23 this word and to help to--to help this program--

1 programs like this to reach more people to catch them
2 before they get into the situations. Thank you.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you, thank
5 you. [cheers/applause] I will—I will—I will just note
6 and I think I speak for my colleagues who share you
7 affinity for the city, but also the ability to work
8 in such a beautiful place everyday to do work that we
9 think we are important. Tell us when you want to
10 come and shoot photos at the City Hall. We won't put
11 Bill out of a job, but we certainly [laughter]—maybe
12 we will, you know. No, but no, but we certainly look
13 forward to seeing all the work you guys have done
14 today, and will be. I note the Council Member.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, I just had a
16 question. There are so many photographers. Have you
17 photographed Carnegie Hall?

18 KALIEF WILLIAMS: No, not yet.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Not yet. Kalief
20 has not.

21 MALE SPEAKER: [off mic] We have.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You have. Okay
23 because that would seem like you have Dylan as well?

24 DYLAN: [off mic] No, not at this time.

25 (sic)

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: It would seem
3 like a pretty incredible experience to photograph
4 Carnegie Hall as well. So, Chelsey, you seem to be
5 able to make anything happen. [laughter]

6 CHELSEY: [off mic] Not really, but can I
7 just plan for these clients for the final car fights,
8 and I think if you ever see one on fire--

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah.

10 CHELSEY: --[off mic] these cars and
11 things. (sic)

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Wonderful. It's
13 Kalief right?

14 KALIEF WILLIAMS: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, we have to
16 Kalief into Carnegie Hall to photograph it as well.
17 Again, I just want to say thank you to all of you.
18 This is one of the greatest hearings we've ever had.
19 Seriously. I've been the Chair of the Cultural
20 Affairs Committee all nine years of my tenure, and
21 we've had some really good ones. We had jazz
22 musicians play one in the hearing, and talking about
23 retirements of jazz musicians, and how we could
24 support jazz musicians who were struggling to make
25 ends meet after they finished their club playing

1
2 days. That was pretty cool because they were playing
3 in the hearing, but this one from like inspirational
4 emotional standpoint is right up there with one of
5 the best and that's because of all of you. So, thank
6 you.

7 KALIEF WILLIAMS: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you.

9 [cheers/applause]

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, the next
11 panel. Electro Welton. Is it Electra Welton here?

12 ELECTRA WESTON: Weston.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Weston. That is
14 a great name Electro Weston.

15 ELECTRA WESTON: [off mic] One that I
16 chose. (sic)

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Julie Define or
18 Defina.

19 JULIE DEFINO: Not Defino.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Desino. I am O
21 for 2. [laughter] Laura Satkowski. Is Laura
22 Satkowski here.

23 LAURA SATKOWSKI: [off mic] Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Did I call that
25 right?

COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE
ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL
INTERGROUP RELATIONS

113

1

2

LAURA SATKOWSKI: [off mic] Yes.

3

4

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: 1 for 3 and it
looks like Susanne Harnett. Alright. [background
comments/laughter] That is the next panel, and I
think we'll start with Electra. We met at the hearing
last—at the press conference last week right on the
steps of City Hall.

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

ELECTRA WESTON: Absolutely. I'm going
to—I've prepared something. I want to say first yes
I'm Electra Weston, and I'm the Founding Director of
the non-profit organization International Child
Program. I'm honored to be speaking today on behalf
of the extraordinary collective work of NeOn Arts,
Carnegie Hall and the New York Department of
Probation. I really want to testify at what
extraordinary impact it's having on youth. As an
artist, I founded an organization because I realized
how crucial it is to take our success and our
experienced back into our neighborhood to strengthen
our communities, but I'd like to share one quick
story of how NeON Arts will allow me to achieve this
goal. There was a brilliant young man that shined so
brightly during the very—my very first NeON Arts
workshop It's called Pocket Place, an introduction

1
2 to film making with cell phones. During each session
3 he was extraordinarily outgoing and talented and his
4 presence and energy inspired others. That same young
5 man was awarded an internship during the second grand
6 opportunity. One day this young man disappeared in
7 the middle of the internship. We learned that was
8 incarcerated at Rikers Island on a warrant technical.
9 We corresponded during his incarceration, continuing
10 to discuss his work, his important contribution to
11 our arts collaboration, and that his internship was
12 waiting for him when he returned. I personally went
13 to court hearings, which went about 8:00 to 4:00 p.m.
14 to speak on his behalf and to introduce letters of
15 recommendation. After three months, I and another
16 organization promised to follow the progress of this
17 youth, and the judge released this young man in my
18 custody. When they uncuffed this man, it was as if I
19 was liberated. He walked down the streets in brown
20 prison pajamas smiling and feeling free, and I was
21 liberated. We went to eat and accompanied him to a
22 men's shelter where he spent the first few weeks of
23 his release. He immediately became active in arts—in
24 our arts programming as he was in the past as if he
25 had never left, and he continues [bell] to aspire

1 today, and we are in contact on a regular basis.
2 Just to end, this arts—the arts empowers our society,
3 culture and economy and it creates necessary bonds
4 and consistency for these youth, and again I
5 passionately believe that it changed lives. It
6 changed mine. [cheers/applause]

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

9 JULIE SESENA: Good afternoon. I'm Julie
10 Desena. Sorry for the—my writing. I was writing on
11 my hand. I'm the Senior Director of Youth Justice
12 Programs at Community Mediation Services in Jamaica,
13 Queens, and also a Chairperson for the Jamaica NeON
14 Stakeholders Committee that selects from all of these
15 wonderful art—artisan art programming options. I—as
16 I stated, I work—I oversee various probation
17 programs, and alternative to incarceration programs,
18 and work with at-risk youth. Also at the Queensbridge
19 House we have another program site there, and all of
20 our participants in all of those programs have had
21 opportunities to participate in this art program in
22 NeON Arts programming. I have been in my capacity
23 since 2012 and therefore have been with NeON Arts
24 since the inception, and I've gotten to see
25 throughout the years several young men and young

1 women who have, you know, we—we-first meet with these
2 kids coming out of the Rikers, coming out of court on
3 felony convictions, having just been sentenced to
4 probation, and really meeting them at the lowest of
5 their low points in life at that time, and they're
6 not really excited about doing—they don't expect to
7 have this type of service options available to them.
8 They expect to be in a system that is punitive and,
9 you know, walking the fine line—and—and that kind of
10 thing, and it's been really, really great to see
11 young people grow through this programming and
12 through their involvement in in these—these different
13 programs. We have a few kids—a handful of kids now
14 that have been hired through Carnegie and hired
15 through these arts organizations. There is not a
16 final performance that I can go to or any of these
17 NeON Arts activities I can go to. I'm not emotional
18 watching these kids where my brain flashes back to
19 meeting them at Rikers Island when they were angry
20 and sad and quiet to seeing themselves now being so
21 expressive and so loving life and having goals and
22 having plans, and so it's been something that has
23 been great for my team to see really just the growth
24 and promise that these young people now have, and I
25

1 do attribute that to [bell] that to their
2 participation in NeON Arts. So, I thank you for your
3 past and continued support in this programming.
4 [applause]
5

6 SUSANNE HARNETT: [off mic] Good
7 afternoon. I'm Susanne Harnett--

8 MALE SPEAKER: [interposing] Turn on you
9 mic.

10 SUSANNE HARNETT: There we go. Good
11 afternoon. I'm Susanne Harnett and I'm joined by my
12 colleague Laura Satkowski. We work from Metis
13 Associates, which is one of the two independent
14 research and evaluation firms that conducted the
15 evaluation of NeON Arts. Our evaluation of this
16 program was largely qualitative, and included
17 observations, interviews, focus groups, surveys,
18 review of attendance and other program documentation.
19 We wrote a hefty report about our study of the
20 program, which I hope you will read, but at least I
21 hope you will curly up with the Executive Summary at
22 some point in the cold days ahead. But today, I want
23 to speak about a key theme that emerged from the
24 evaluation, which is engagement. By participating in
25 NeON Arts, we found that individuals became engaged.

1 This necessitated trying new things, taking creative
2 risks and opening themselves up to being vulnerable,
3 which is exactly what the arts have the potential to
4 do. Another thing that the arts provide is an
5 opportunity to equalize the playing field. We
6 observe probation officers and other adults from the
7 community engaging in the arts with the youth, and-
8 and also taking creative risks and allowing
9 themselves to be equally vulnerable, and what we
10 heard and saw was that is process was transformative
11 for all groups involved. In fact, what we found was
12 that the key themes that emerged from the evaluation
13 were evident for all participating groups. It is
14 clear that creative risk taking is an incredibly
15 empowering thing when it takes place in a community
16 of trust and respect. As Commissioner Bermudez
17 mentioned earlier, we were lucky enough to work with
18 the Youth Advisory Group that helped to design
19 evaluations tools and processes. In the parallel
20 ways the creative risks that participants were taking
21 in the program this process also took us out of our
22 comfort zone and has led to new directions in our
23 work. In summary, we just want to say that
24 developing programming with the idea that we're going
25

1 to change just one [bell] just the participant group
2 and just the youth participants is an antiquated
3 idea. We're always being changed by each other.
4 Just like a math equation, if you make changes to one
5 side, you'll make—you have to make changes to the
6 other, and that's the beauty of NeON Arts because
7 it's designed with this very idea in mind. The
8 playing field is equalized and all participants
9 including youth, adults, probation officers, artists
10 and even evaluators we're encouraged to engage, take
11 creative risks and to grow. And I also just want to
12 note that in my experience as an evaluator this
13 program operates through a unique set of partnerships
14 and serves as an excellent model for replication in
15 other locations. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
18 much. Again, I just want to say your passion and the
19 emotions with which you bring to this work was really
20 felt, and I really deeply appreciate that, and I know
21 that all of you feel the same way. So, thank you all
22 very, very much. The next panel. I know Shalonda
23 Miller is here, and I believe going to testify.
24 Could it be Carol McIntosh?

25 CARL MCINTOSH: [off mic] Carl McIntosh.

COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE
ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL
INTERGROUP RELATIONS 120

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Carl McIntosh.
3 Sorry about that Carl.

4 CARL MCINTOSH: It's not a problem.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Tiffany Bryant
6 and Mansura Canahn. [pause] This time we'll start
7 on the right with you.

8 SHALANDA MILLER: Good afternoon. Is it
9 on?

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Is the light on?

11 SHALANDA MILLER: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay.

13 SHALANDA MILLER: Alright. So, good
14 afternoon everyone. My name is Shalanda Miller. I
15 am currently the Co-Chair of Brownsville Stakeholders
16 NeON and I have been a part of NeON for about three
17 years. I was introduced to the probation or the NeON
18 from working at Columbia University with a Research
19 project that we were doing with justice involved
20 males and females. Since leaving—departing that job,
21 I am still currently holding my seat as the Co-Chair
22 because I am a resident Brownsville and been there
23 for about 25 years by way of the Caribbean. I just
24 want to say that the NeON personally for me has been—
25 has transformed me as a woman, as a mother, as a

1 wife, as a student. It—I am currently publishing a
2 book that you hold. I have about four poems that I
3 did within the last two sittings, and it's just
4 really helped me to click not only with my community
5 members and the young people, but with myself—connect
6 with myself, and I think that no matter how old you
7 are that's something that I just appreciate that
8 beyond words. You can find yourself at a young age,
9 you can find yourself at an older age and with NeON
10 Arts it helps you to endure things that you may not
11 think is possible. I am a great supporter of NeON
12 Arts. I am a believer in NeON Arts, and I just want
13 thank everyone who has anything to do with just
14 bringing NeON Arts to some place like Brownsville,
15 which I'm wearing the same shirt that Danny and some
16 other people have put together because it—it does
17 wonders. Currently, we are doing arts in Brownville
18 and BCMS, which is Brownsville Collaborative Middle
19 School doing ThriveNYC with about 70 students
20 starting—started in November of this year, and will
21 be wrapping up in March, and it's just great to see
22 these kids who sometimes don't have heat and hot
23 water where they live at come to school because
24 they're excited of—of putting a mural on their school
25

1 wall, and—and, you know, just things like that are
2 just really encouraging. They currently just lost a
3 student [bell] to cancer last week and now the mural
4 is going to be changed on short notice because of her
5 passing. They want to do something to recognize Mia
6 who passed away from—from Leukemia last week. So, I
7 just want to say thank you, and just wanted you guys
8 to know that Brownsville is very appreciative for
9 NeON Arts. [cheers/applause]

11 TIFFANY BRIAN: Oh, hi. My name is
12 Tiffany Brian. I'm from the Public Theater. We do
13 not have NeON program, but I wanted to take this
14 opportunity to speak to both of you to discuss how we
15 as a cultural institution do help people who are
16 currently incarcerated, and those who are formerly
17 incarcerated on probation. We do this to—through two
18 of our programs our Mobile Unit and our Public Works
19 Program. Our Mobile Unit tours Shakespeare
20 productions throughout the city, and we go to about
21 seven correctional facilities each—each semester, and
22 give the people the opportunity to see Shakespeare,
23 and I'll just share one quote from someone who
24 attended the correctional facility. She said, It is
25 the first play I've ever seen as an adult, and it

1 will not be forgotten ever. Additionally, we work
2 with the Fortune Society, which I know you are both
3 familiar with, which helps people with re-entry,
4 which is obviously a great, great program and we have
5 the pleasure of working with David Rothenberg, and I
6 will just share a quick quote from him: "It is
7 difficult to measure the vast impact on our men and
8 women participating in the public theater programs.
9 From personal experience I see up close people have—
10 who have been marginalized and/or overlooked gaining
11 the excitement of participating in such a creative
12 venture, and I will end on that note, but I just want
13 to say thank you. I'm inspired by all the people who
14 have testified today hearing the stories. I'm so, so
15 glad I was able to attend. [applause]

17 CARL MCINTOSH: Hello, my name Carl
18 McIntosh. I'm a very proud, you know, photographer.
19 I got involved when my son invited me to a—it's a
20 Free Verse hear-reading of poetry at his probation.
21 I said what the heck. I wasn't going to support my
22 son in anyway he supports me. I get there and it
23 like cool. It was in a church. It was next door. I
24 didn't know NeON was next door. It was in a church,
25 and it was cool. They read a little poetry. It's

1 grooving it, nice cool little thing, and I see a
2 little lady in the corner talking about that she want
3 to get in some photography. I said, oh, I have the
4 green cinema many years ago—I'm 63—from USC, and I
5 then got in the game and went into that world, and
6 did—I dwell and enjoy that. I was at an edging my
7 mind where it touched my creative measure. So, I got
8 involved in the program. It changed my life, and now
9 it's between myself and my son, okay. My son is a
10 very strong man, okay. He's very strong. He's an
11 athlete (sic) and, you know, when you're 63 you and
12 son become different worlds right. So, where we
13 might have difference who's the best basketball
14 player or just assisting with things, there are very
15 strong differences perhaps, which I encouraged him a
16 whole lot. You know, sometimes it became too, uh,
17 you know. Photography don't argue about nothin'.
18 You can't argue about a picture 'cause—'cause we
19 argue about a picture and say, Oh, no, From this
20 perspective I think the artist—but it's a totally
21 different concept. So, it came up. I can do the
22 communication between myself and him and become so
23 powerful, okay. It changed my life, okay. It
24 changed his life, too, okay. He might not be—he's

1 like shall I do my thing, but—so for example, at
2 first it's the same thing. Okay, I'm sorry for
3 talking about son. Okay, but so now we have a system.
4 Okay, I'm a computer project manager okay. So, if I
5 want to develop a system, and I've met this kind of
6 work. Well, you know it's a long process through the
7 microscope here and it has a lot of steps, right. I
8 saw my son going through—he collected something (sic)
9 and create a picture. It took a long process to do.
10 He had to plan how to get there. You have to shoot
11 the picture. So, it just became a very dynamic—it
12 just changed our dynamic in our relationship to
13 become very powerful. It come on really quickly. It
14 changed the concept of the family towards him. Now,
15 it's very positive, you know. He's a son [bell] that
16 likes to play video games, okay. He plays video
17 games. Well, [bell] everybody's kids like video
18 games. He didn't want to go away to college because
19 I'm going to do good as my dad, right. So, I said
20 come on, go to—play video games in college, right.
21 My son believes in him. That's his son, right. So my
22 grandson and nurtures him. Okay. He's playing little
23 video games in the room, right all day. I said what
24 the heck, let's get him out of here right. A long
25

1 story short. While all the times that he came to me,
2 my son became very active in his career. Someone is
3 showing him Carnegie Hall the people that come to
4 Carnegie Hall the guy named Mr. Biggs or something
5 was there, right. Their producer Rock Nation, this
6 is a true story. Listen to me now. He goes here,
7 can I produce or what? Anyway, he goes ahead and-and
8 he gets my son involved with Rock Nation-Rock and he
9 signed my son. Right, Rock Nation signed my son as
10 the video player. I'm quite sure that because of the
11 energy that my son-grandson, sure my son helped
12 activate that process. So, I'm just-I'm very hyped
13 about this. Your-the lady say something about
14 community involvement. There's no change in what I
15 was about to do. I was going to go PHE (sic) and
16 business. Now, I'm going to get more involved and
17 active, and I'm very interested exploitation like
18 exploitation of elderly people, young people, et
19 cetera. So, what Chelsey put into us, and what we
20 see with all the energy from Ana and all, it just
21 changed my whole direction, changed the direction of
22 my whole family, and I just want to thank you for the
23 experience.
24
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. Thanks
3 so much. [cheers/applause]

4 MONSORA KANAN: Okay. Thank you all for
5 staying and for letting me speak. My name is Monsora
6 Kanan (sp?) and I am program teacher with the Young
7 New Yorkers. I'm here to speak on behalf of the
8 Young New Yorkers and Executive Director Rachel
9 Barnard who couldn't be here today, who is also the
10 current public artist in residence at the DOP. This
11 is her testimony. Young New Yorkers use this art to
12 bring positive systemic change to the ways that teens
13 and young adults are prosecuted in New York's
14 Criminal Legal system. We do this by providing
15 restorative arts diversity programming as a
16 sentencing option for young people facing charges in
17 adult Criminal Court. So, since 2012 to date over
18 900 young people have been sentenced to make art at
19 Young New Yorkers instead of jail or other adult
20 sanctions. So, just let that sink in. Young New
21 Yorkers is thrilled by NeOn Art Evaluation Report
22 that provides strong evidence of the positive,
23 meaningful and sustained impact of art programming on
24 young people and the larger communities the
25 Department of Probation serves. As clearly shown in

1 the report, community arts programming contributes to
2 meaningful gains in social and emotional learning and
3 sets up an environment in which communities can be
4 safe and thriving. So, I had three or Rachel had
5 three examples here, which I guess we'll cut down a
6 little bit, and the three examples were NeOn in
7 Brownsville. NeON in East New York and Carnegie
8 Hall's Create Justice. We're going to just talk
9 about the NeON—the Young New Yorkers and NeON
10 Brownsville program. Young New Yorkers ran the
11 Restorative Arts Programming around gun violence in
12 Brownsville. At the completion of this program, the
13 young people who participated over half of whom were
14 on probation, realized a public art installation
15 called Love Letters to Brownsville in front—in the
16 front garden of 444 Thomas Boyland Street facing the
17 local 72nd Police Precinct—73rd. Sorry. In Love
18 Letters to Brownsville, 400 white roses were weaved
19 to form a sculpture that read the word 'Trust.'
20 Guests were invited to write a letter to the
21 Brownsville [bell] on bright pink tags. Guests then
22 met with the young artists attending the rose
23 sculpture and exchanged their love letter to
24 Brownsville for a white rose, a gift from the young
25

1 people to their community. Slowly, the Trust
2 sculpture transformed from white roses to pink love
3 letters swaying in the wind, and then there are two
4 other examples, which I'll skip over. So, in all of
5 these project young-youth used arts to lead the
6 conversation around criminal legal issues that
7 impacted them, and sought to create change by
8 creating positive new connections between themselves
9 and those with the discretionary power within the
10 criminal legal system, and the second part, which
11 I'll really quick is PAIR. In addition to founding
12 Young New Yorkers and also currently the Department
13 of Probation's Public Art in Residents or PAIR. My
14 experience with working as an artist with the DOP
15 leadership has continued to impress me with their
16 commitment to create safe thriving communities not
17 only through supervision practices, but by creating
18 supportive structures that allow individuals to move
19 beyond difficult immediate circumstances and to
20 become contributions to their communities. For the
21 residency the Department of Probation leadership has
22 explicitly asked me to improve client-officer
23 relationships and develop a series of concrete
24 interventions in collaboration with the DOP community
25

1
2 to be staged across all five boroughs. The project
3 is to be realized this February and will use art to
4 center the existing wisdom of staff and clients and
5 to create new modes of connection to lead to better
6 staff and client relationships, and in turn better
7 case outcomes for clients keeping more people in the
8 community. In my experience the DOP has shown their
9 commitment to keeping people within their communities
10 and the NeON Arts program shows their courage and
11 willingness to meet this commitment through
12 innovative means such as the arts. The future
13 opportunities of arts at the DOP with the
14 implementation of Raise the Age, the DOP is providing
15 adjustments to adolescent offenders. Currently, this
16 group includes 16-year-olds and starting next
17 October, it will also include 17-year-olds. The
18 Young New Yorkers with our 7 years of experience with
19 providing arts program as sentencing options to over
20 900 young people ages 16 to 25 encourages the DOP to
21 provide arts programming as an adjustment option.
22 Young New Yorkers welcomes the opportunity to partner
23 with the DOP on this project. In conclusion. This
24 hearing demonstrates the DOP and the Council's
25 commitment to exploring innovative art space

1 alternative in New York City's criminal legal system.
2 Young New Yorkers looks forward to continuing to work
3 with the Department of Probation to provide
4 statistically verified art space alternative
5 sentencing program. Please do not hesitate to reach
6 out to Rachel Barnard, the Young New Yorkers' founder
7 and Executive Director with any questions.
8

9 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. Thanks
10 so much. [applause] It's just I wanted to say thank
11 you. I know we have to keep going because we have—
12 we're running out of time here. I'm glad you brought
13 up the PAIR programs because I don't think we had
14 enough opportunity to talk about that, and I actually
15 had some questions about it earlier. I also wanted
16 to say thank you to Public Theater. I did have an
17 opportunity to see *Twelfth Night*. It's fantastic—it
18 was fantastic, but also the idea that there was folks
19 in line from the Fortune Society and other—other
20 partners there as well, which I think are really an
21 important part of that process, and I'll just give
22 you a quick—I—I went to it, and I saw somebody who I
23 think was the mailman in the *Twelfth Night*, and the
24 next day I went to the Fortune Society and I saw him
25 there, and I forget his name, but he was wonderful.

1 He's a great actor, and it also was great to see him
2 on stage, and then be able to see him the next day
3 when I was there. So, thank you for all your work.
4 Thank you. [applause] Alright, the next we will have
5 David Johnson from Free Verse, Eric McLode-McLeod.

7 ERIC MCLEOD: [off mic] Yes, I'm here.

8 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Frank Dody and
9 Sarina Chandler. [background comments/pause]

10 FEMALE SPEAKER: One had to leave.

11 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Okay, one had to
12 leave. Thank you. So, we're going to—we'll start the
13 clock. We can start on this side, and again, we're
14 going to—we are going to try to do two minutes a
15 person. So, if you can summarize or para--paraphrase
16 portions that might be longer. I'm sorry to do that
17 to you, but it's 3:45 and we have one more panel.
18 We're trying by 4:00 so, and of course, you could
19 submit written testimony as well. So thank you.

20 FRANK DODY: Good afternoon and thank you.
21 I'm Frank Dody, the Program Manager for Education and
22 Training at Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration, and also
23 the Co-Chair of the Bed-Stuy NeON. It's been my
24 pleasure to have been a member of the Bed-Stuy
25 Stakeholders Group since its inception in 2012, and

1
2 in my years with NeON, I've also been able to be part
3 of the exciting NeON Arts program since it started.
4 My initial interest in seeing arts programs embedded
5 in the work of community engagement for individuals
6 on probation came from my years in the Education
7 Program at Rikers Island. As Assistant Principal and
8 later Principal, I had the opportunity to set Budget
9 for the Arts programming, and to see the positive
10 impact it had on our students. I knew the Department
11 of Probation was on the right track with NeON Arts,
12 and I was eager to support it and be involved. When
13 the applications opened in New York City, which is
14 rich in the arts and the art—and artists, the
15 stakeholders and the youth have a wide choice of
16 artists and art forms to select from. In Bed-Stuy
17 we've had spoken word artist, theater productions,
18 visual artists, airbrush artists, animation and
19 photography. Our youth and community have enjoyed and
20 engaged and benefitted from all of these experiences.
21 Youth have been uplifted with their engagement with
22 the work, the artist themselves, the community in
23 which they produced the work, the processes they go
24 through as individuals and as members of a team and
25 the recognition that they receive in finales and—and

1
2 products that come from the art experience. During
3 the experience they learn new skills, and gain new
4 levels of self awareness. This is especially
5 significant as the population often feels intimidated
6 upon-around taking on new tasks and embracing new
7 experiences. The community aspect of the projects
8 given direct experience and the power of teamwork and
9 collaboration. These skills are easily transferrable
10 to other aspects of their lives. The-the fact that
11 it's a community-based project I think is really
12 significant because the community gets to see folks
13 on probation [bell] through a different lens. Thank
14 you.

15 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you.

16 SARINA CHANDLER: Good afternoon. Hi.
17 My name is Sarina Chandler, and I am the Co-Chair for
18 the Harlem NeON. I'd like to speak to you today about
19 two words: Challenge and Evolution. When I was a
20 little girl growing up in Saratoga Springs, New York,
21 I was a member of the 4H, the Girls' Club and on the
22 YMCA's swim team. I was fortunate that both my
23 parents worked and were able to afford the \$50 fee
24 for me to join the YMCA, and have access to programs
25 that allowed me to express myself artistically. I

1 filled my parents' house with potholders and
2 ashtrays. [laughter] As I became a woman, a wife and
3 a mother, my-my interest evolved, and I understood
4 that my children's challenges went beyond knick
5 knacks and sports. Their challenges were the
6 challenges of my youth evolved. Now that I'm a
7 grandmother, and a great grandmother, I see yet more
8 evolution in the challenges facing our youth today,
9 and the dangers lurking and lying in wait for them.
10 As a child growing up, probation was a bad word. It
11 meant that you were in trouble. You were a bad kid.
12 You were o the wrong path. You were-you had no
13 future other than the Criminal Justice System, but
14 probation has evolved and partnered with Carnegie
15 Hall to create the Neighborhood Opportunity Networks,
16 and the stakeholder groups. The NeON Programs are
17 free, and they are, in fact, enriching our lives of
18 the youth and our communities, and creating
19 opportunities for the young people to express
20 themselves [bell] artistically through culinary arts,
21 animation, spoken word, and other art programs, and
22 this will lead to continued education and employment
23 opportunities. I would like to issue a challenge to
24 everyone here: Seek out your NeON. Go to those
25

1 monthly meetings, invite the youth and your community
2 leaders and your community based organizations.
3 Joint the stakeholder groups, and evolve with us.
4 Thank you. [applause/cheers]

5
6 DAVE JOHNSON: Good afternoon City
7 Council Members. Thank you for your time today. I
8 want to thank Ana Bermudez and the DOP staff, the
9 NeOn Arts staff and everyone at Carnegie Hall for
10 giving me this opportunity. My name is Dave Johnson.
11 I'm a poet and playwright. I've served the New York
12 City Department of Probation for a little over seven
13 years as a Poet in Residence, and I'm the founder and
14 creator of Free Verse writing program. I think
15 everybody got a copy. Thank you for the—all the kind
16 remarks about the magazine, and as George said
17 earlier, it's a magazine that's open to everyone.
18 It's open to the community. It's open to our staff,
19 everyone. When you read this magazine, you'll see
20 there are no titles. So, you'll see side-by-side
21 clients and their probation officers and professional
22 poets all in the same magazine. This last magazine,
23 you'll see we had over a thousand submissions to
24 this—to this journal. When we started, I just simply
25 went into the program or went into the waiting room

1 and would ask people if they wanted to write a poem.
2 You can imagine they looked at me as if I was insane,
3 but that quickly changed as we—as we served to
4 develop. Born and bred and living in the heart of
5 the waiting room in the South Bronx where clients are
6 checking in with their officers. Free Verse solicits
7 for the magazine, and then we also created a—a paid
8 writing apprenticeship program where the—where the
9 young people are employed right there in the waiting
10 room to teach others how to read and write poems as
11 well. We host—host weekly open mics and workshops,
12 numerous public events that invite DOP clients,
13 officers, staff, professional writers and artists all
14 to the community together. I have—I sent this around
15 so I know you have copies of it, but I just wanted to
16 highlight a couple of things. That in direct line
17 with the Council's mission and vision of reform in
18 the social justice system [bell] Free Verse seeks to
19 create spaces for freedom of expression and places
20 for economic opportunity that promote democracy and
21 human achievement through the written word. Our
22 strategy is not only to create an arts program, but
23 we are conduit for creating value for court involved
24 clients and the community, and to serve the city. We
25

1 propose to build on our existing publishing house and
2 Working Artists program that produces original work,
3 generates educational material for literacy at all
4 levels and that creates more jobs for Department of
5 Probation client and court involved youth that will
6 serve all social service agencies, and non-profits
7 throughout the city. Free Verse has been able to
8 extend their reach beyond DOP by employing DOP
9 clients with other agencies and non-profits.
10 Presently, we-as-as we all are looking for more
11 funding, we were generously allotted a funding to
12 expand through the DCLA Grant. Thank you very much
13 for that, which was allotted to us, which-which
14 allowed us to hire eight additional clients and put
15 them to work between January and June throughout the
16 city. George, who spoke to you earlier was one of
17 those clients, and he hired three more clients in the
18 Staten Island branch of the NeON. Free Verse has a
19 grand plan, and seven years ago there were very few
20 people that I proposed this idea of Free Verse to
21 that thought it would actually work minus Sharun
22 Goodwin who is right here and Assistant Commissioner.
23 Thank you, Sharun for all your belief in this
24 program, but DOP gave Free Verse and me an
25

1
2 opportunity, and we've been able to extend our work
3 into other venues and are working with so many
4 organizations now. Some of our guys are teaching in
5 visually impaired centers for seniors, Brooklyn
6 Public Library, Adult Literacy Centers and so many
7 other places. I know we're out of time, but thank you
8 very much.

9 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thanks. Yes, thank
10 you. Thank you. I just want to [applause] I wanted
11 to say one other thing. I noticed that Mr. Johnson I
12 think we're almost neighbors, and in light of that I
13 was going to and your Council Member Carlina Rivera
14 was here earlier. In addition to talking to
15 stakeholders, we'll also make sure that we elevate
16 the work that you're doing, across the City Council,
17 across other elected officials, too. That this is
18 what part of today is about, but also for many folks
19 who live in communities that you have elected
20 officials, too, making sure they know the work that's
21 being done, and make sure it's not a forgotten part
22 of the conversation when we talk about criminal
23 justice and criminal justice reform as well. So thank
24 for that. Thank you for your patience and thank you
25 for your testimony as well.

COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE
ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL
INTERGROUP RELATIONS

140

1

2

SARINA CHANDLER: Thank you. [applause]

3

4

CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Okay. This will be
our last panel. I really thank everybody who stayed
to the end here. We have Michael McIntosh, Sarah
Oger-Ogger. Sorry if I got that wrong. Ebony Walden
and Emrose Daly. (sic) [background comments]

8

MALE SPEAKER: Hello. Good afternoon
everybody.

10

11

12

CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Hold on. We're just
going to wait one second for the other folks to get
up. We appreciate your enthusiasm--

13

14

MALE SPEAKER: [interposing] Well, I
noticed--

15

CHAIRPERSON POWERS: -though.

16

17

MALE SPEAKER: I noticed it's the end of
this. I wanted to give a little shout-out to it--

18

CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Okay.

19

20

MALE SPEAKER: For the final, the last
laugh. [laughter] [background comments/pause]

21

22

23

24

CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Okay everybody,
we've lost the other two along the way. They're here
with us in spirit and perhaps watching online. So,
why don't we—you can go ahead. Thank you.

25

1
2 MALE SPEAKER: Okay, ready, right. First
3 I want to thank everybody for coming, and me I happen
4 to be a living proof of a program like this, an
5 alternative to incarceration is very important
6 especially nowadays and just to have access to
7 certain people, places and things, and if you could
8 organically start building up these types of
9 relationships with probation officers not on a
10 dysentery but on a creative level, and just having
11 these things it really works. You know that's the
12 best thing that I would like to say, and I'm from
13 East New York, Brooklyn and we have been affected a
14 lot by gun violence and in the whole cycle of it of
15 parents going to jail and they're never coming back
16 and things like that. And I have reconnected with my
17 family on certain levels, and I'm just living proof
18 coming from where I'm coming from, they access to the
19 community and people in the community to have access
20 to these things is very important and NeON Arts is
21 providing a blueprint where we could say hey, and
22 sort of a lot of different criminal justice
23 committees and everything that have all types of
24 ideas. But, if we could just be like the blueprint
25 of wow, you know, because not only do you have to

1
2 talk the talk with NeON Arts, you've got to walk the
3 walk. You got to come up, you got to come to these
4 classes, you got to come to these events, and when
5 your probation officer sees you doing these things,
6 it builds up a certain seniority, and that's the
7 beginning, that's a baby step because you've got to
8 crawl before you walk. That's a baby step into the
9 alternatives to incarceration. That's the main thing
10 that I wanted us all to focus on is on alternatives
11 instead of just putting people in jail, locking them
12 up, and then throwing them back into the system.
13 That's what I want to say. Thank you, everybody for
14 coming.

15 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you.

16 [cheers/applause]

17 SARAH OGGER: Okay, I'm Sarah Ogger—is
18 this on—and I'm the Executive Director of Humanities
19 New York. So, we're not involved with NeON, but we
20 are—and probably invited because we're heading down
21 this path. I'm so inspired to be here. I wish I
22 could see these hearings like before Congress and a
23 few other things. [laughter] So, I'll start by
24 saying participation in a democracy requires placing
25 sometimes quite literally your life in the hands of

1
2 your fellow citizens. It requires robust civic
3 trust, and it's hard to trust someone whose life and
4 experience you do not know. Building on this insight
5 Humanities New York uses the tools of the humanities
6 to foster engaged inquiry and dialogue around social
7 and cultural concerns. One of our most direct
8 engagements with the issues we're talking here today
9 began last march. We hosted a public conversation at
10 Federal Hall just a few blocks away. The event was
11 called *After Attica: Criminal Justice and Mass*
12 *Incarceration*, and took historian Heather Ann
13 Thompson's Pulitzer Prize winning book about the
14 Attica uprising called *Blood in the Water* as a
15 starting point for a discussion about the social and
16 historical forces at work in the American penal
17 system. We also had a Michael Winerip on that from
18 the New York Times, and Toussaint Losier from Harvard
19 University. Based on the event, we started to
20 incorporate work on New York State prisons in our
21 recently adopted Strategic Plan as the key area of
22 focus. We have empaneled a committee led by Board
23 Member Deva Woodly, Associate Professor of Politics
24 at the New School or University. In the meantime we
25 are a grant maker and we want you all to remember

1 that. We are researching and planning but also
2 making some grants. I want to talk about three of
3 them. We have provided funding to *The Incurrigibles*,
4 which is a Brooklyn based theater project for bearing
5 witness to the incarcerated girls of New York, Town
6 Hall at the Brooklyn Courthouse where experts
7 including formerly incarcerated women, professors,
8 judges, and advocates discuss the harm girls often
9 endure during incarceration and what the future of
10 justice for girls out to look like. [bell] I'll
11 mention just two quick one. Stella Adler Studio for
12 Acting is running a project called *Ritual for Return*,
13 which is a program that addresses the way people are
14 just dumped back into society with any marking or a
15 graduation of some sort. So, they designed their
16 ritual together as an art project and drama project.
17 Columbia University Attainment (sic) Center for the
18 Humanities. Outside In Art Museums at Rikers Island
19 is another project that brings incarcerated youth
20 museum educators and the general public to create art
21 in a healing environment, and that ends with an art
22 exhibit. We're also going to hook up with reading
23 groups as based on James Baldwin in America and
24 Audrey Lord Reading Groups that any non-profit can
25

1
2 take. Please take them. So, that is also in the
3 written testimony. Thank you for everyone's
4 patience.

5 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
7 much. [applause] So, Chair Powers mentioned before
8 how great it was that Commissioner Bermudez was
9 hanging around a little bit longer. I've—I've
10 certainly seen lots of commissioners for portions of
11 testimony. I don't know if I've ever seen a
12 commissioner stay for the entire hearing so thank
13 you. [cheers/applause] That's a first and I've done
14 this for nine years. So, I just want to say thank
15 you. You know, I feel like we've become fast friends
16 NeON Arts and—and myself, and these last several
17 weeks have really been very, very important for me as
18 the Chair of the Cultural Affairs Committee, but also
19 to me is like a human being, and so it's been really,
20 really inspirational and this is an important
21 hearing. And, you know, all of our days are
22 incredibly busy, and we do a million things, and
23 every once in a while something stops you. Right?
24 It's almost like the power or art itself. It's why a
25 theater performance is so great. It's why a visit to

1 a museum and looking at art is important because it
2 stops you for a second from the chaos of the world,
3 and it makes you think about why we're here, and what
4 we're supposed to be doing with this time on this
5 earth. Both of us as elected officials, but as
6 people. This hearing is that moment, right. It's one
7 of those moments where you're like wherever I was
8 coming from rushing from that luncheon, wherever I'm
9 going now rushing to those evening events, this
10 moment, these three hours were really, really
11 important and mostly important because of all of the
12 participants in the program who spoke and shared how
13 it transformed you life and Kalief's life and all of
14 the young people who have since left, but they've all
15 left their mark, right in an incredible way. So,
16 thank you and we'll take all of this energy and dare
17 I say love and move it into a way where we possibly
18 can expand the program. So thank you so much.

19 [applause]

20
21 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. I-I-
22 thank you. I-I just want to follow up on-on some of
23 the words that Council Member Van Bramer said and we
24 should do more hearings together. This is a really
25 fantastic one. We have often on my committee we talk

1 about, and I said this earlier, the challenges that
2 we have in this city and the desperate need to make
3 sure that criminal justice system is in a much better
4 place than it is today, and where it has been in the
5 past. We don't do enough with shining a light or
6 holding up those who we think are really doing their
7 jobs and those that are helping—impacting lives in a
8 positive way. As a body we don't do that enough but
9 certainly I know in my committee we don't do enough
10 of talking about the good news and the stuff that is
11 working in the city and ways that we can continue to
12 invest in those. I think you've heard from that side
13 of the table to this side of the table a lot of
14 appreciation for the work that you're doing, but
15 this—this is in—this is I think one of the most
16 important parts about this hearing, and everybody who
17 came up and talked about the way it affected their
18 life because that is the people that are being
19 affected. And I will just leave with these parting
20 words, which I said earlier is that I have been here
21 for a year. This is probably the best hearing I've
22 had. It is also when we talked about how special of
23 a place this in City Hall, I'm never the first day I
24 walked into this as a—as a Council Member, and made a
25

1
2 commitment to do well for this city, and for the
3 people that live within it. I feel like we are here
4 today collectively sharing in that goal, and it
5 reminds of something. I think maybe it was you or
6 somebody mentioned that the importance of this place.
7 It's not just the architecture, it's what we do
8 inside of it, and I really do appreciate the
9 opportunity to do this work every single day. I want
10 to thank Council Member Van Bramer. I want to thank
11 all the members that participated in here and shared
12 their own anecdotes and importance as well, and we
13 don't get anywhere if not for the staff that helps
14 put these hearings together both our individual
15 staffs. Would you please give them a big hand?
16 [applause] And so, we'll see you I guess next month
17 at the budget hearing. I think it is next month. I
18 think we just had that today. [laughter] So, thank
19 you and thank you everybody, and with that—that being
20 said, we are adjourned. Thanks. [gavel]

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 January 18, 2019