

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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Thursday, February 20, 2025

Start: 10:13 A.M.

Recess: 12:35 P.M.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Hon. Dr. Nantasha Williams, Chair
Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Rita C. Joseph
Christopher Marte,
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
Kevin C. Riley

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Althea Stevens

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

A P P E A R A N C E S

Sideya Sherman,
Chief Equity Officer and Commissioner of Mayor's
Office of Equity and Racial Justice (MOERJ)

Linda Tigani,
Racial Equity Chair and Executive Director of
Commission on Racial Equity (CORE)

Jimmy Pan,
Representing - Self;
Former Policy Director of the Racial Justice
Commission

Sharon Brown,
Representing - Self

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS
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2 SERGEANT LUGO: Good morning, this is a microphone
3 check for the Committee on Civil and Human Rights.
4 Today's date is February 20, 2025, located in the
5 Chambers, recording done by Pedro Lugo.

6 (PAUSE)

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning, and welcome to
8 the New York Committee on Civil and Human Rights.
9 Please place your phones to silent mode or vibrate.
10 Do not approach the dais at any time during this
11 hearing, thank you for your cooperation.

12 Chair, we are ready to begin.

13 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: (Gaveling in)

14 Good morning everybody, my name is Nantasha
15 Williams, and I serve as chair to the Committee on
16 Civil and Human Rights.

17 Thank you to everyone joining us for this
18 morning's hearing. I'd like to start off by wishing
19 everyone a happy Black History Month. I'm so proud to
20 be able to hold a hearing on the State of Black New
21 York, and I look forward to honoring Black History
22 Month with a meaningful and productive discussion
23 surrounding the past and present reality faced by
24 Black New Yorkers.

1
2 Defined as institutionally created and reinforced
3 privilege for some groups of people and a lack of
4 privilege and access to resources by others,
5 systematic inequity, also known as structural
6 inequity, has been a barrier to the success and
7 advancement of marginalized groups for a long time
8 and continues to have a negative impact even to this
9 day.

10 New Yorkers of color long experienced the
11 negative impacts of systematic racial inequities with
12 these disparities often affecting Black New Yorkers
13 acutely. Studies show that Black New Yorkers are more
14 than twice as likely to be impacted by material
15 hardships in any given year compared to white New
16 Yorkers, and a more than three times as likely to be
17 impacted by persistent material hardships over the
18 course of four or more years.

19 Redlining, educational disparities, housing and
20 food insecurity, and equal access to adequate health
21 care are just some of the issues that can still be
22 linked back to the systemic inequity embedded into
23 the foundation of this country, this state, and this
24 city.

1 At today's hearing, I'm hoping to really dive
2 deep into the circumstances and systemic factors that
3 contribute to the ongoing inequities that Black New
4 Yorkers face while also gaining insight on any recent
5 advancements and efforts the Administration made to
6 rectify these injustices, including its own
7 interagency work and its direct engagement with
8 affected communities.
9

10 This morning's hearing will also cover current
11 status of Racial Equity Planning. In 2022, New
12 Yorkers overwhelmingly voted in favor to pass three
13 ballot measures proposed by the Racial Justice
14 Commission. As a result, the creation of a racial
15 equity planning process and final plan is mandated.

16 In June of 2024, this committee held an oversight
17 hearing on *the Implementation of The Racial Justice*
18 *Commission's Ballot Measures*. And while I feel that
19 we had an engaging and informative hearing, I must
20 stress the importance of ongoing oversight and
21 collaboration when it comes to this extremely -
22 especially in today's climate - extremely important
23 work.

24 Not only does this committee look forward to
25 updates and discussion of this work, but its public

1 disclosure is also a duty we owe to New Yorkers who
2 should always be kept informed of the decisions and
3 plans that will affect their lives.
4

5 With the Administration's new target dates for a
6 preliminary and final plan quickly approaching, the
7 time is ripe to discuss progress and hurdles.

8 I also hope to receive updates on Local Law 91 of
9 2024 in relation to studying the impacts of slavery
10 in New York City and recommending potential
11 reparative measures for resulting harms, and Local
12 Law 92 of 2024 in relation to the creation of a truth
13 healing and reconciliation process. Both of these
14 laws were passed with the intent to aid in rectifying
15 past injustices afflicted on Black New Yorkers. The
16 legacies of which we'll be discussing during today's
17 hearing.

18 Thank you to Committee staff, Finance staff, and
19 my office for their work on this hearing, and thank
20 you to my colleagues who have also joined us today -
21 I'm joined by Council Member Marte, Council Member
22 Joseph also has joined us, and then we're also joined
23 by our Public Advocate.

24 And I will now turn it to our Public Advocate for
25 some opening remarks.

1 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you very much,
2 Madam Chair. As mentioned, my name is Jumaane
3 Williams, and I'm Public Advocate for the City Of New
4 York. Thank you, Chair Williams and members of the
5 Committee On Civil And Human Rights for holding this
6 hearing and allowing me the opportunity to provide a
7 statement.
8

9 I also want to say, happy Black History Month,
10 irrespective of what, our mayor Donald Trump, who I'm
11 sorry, Freudian slip there, President Donald Trump
12 has to say about it.

13 The past few weeks have been overwhelming with
14 the news cycle bringing constant and conflicting
15 changes to our federal government policies, more than
16 ever before, it is important that we listen to those
17 who testify today and uplift Black New Yorkers.

18 For nearly five decades (sic), the COVID-19
19 pandemic exacerbated and exposed the racial
20 inequities that have continued to impact New York
21 City. While all New Yorkers have been impacted, data
22 shows that once again Black New Yorkers have been hit
23 the hardest socially, economically and when it comes
24 to the state of health. The systemic marginalization
25 because of the color of the skin cuts across all

1 areas of life at a time when they are feeling
2 particularly vulnerable. We need to hear from
3 Administration about plans to address racial inequity
4 viewed through a citywide lens.

5
6 James Baldwin, one of our greatest New Yorkers
7 once said, "Anyone who has ever struggled with
8 poverty knows how extremely expensive it is to be
9 poor." It's this cost and continued lack of
10 investment that has put our Black communities in
11 peril. They suffer disproportionately from
12 skyrocketing rent, predatory lending, and increasing
13 evictions. As the cost of basic necessities and rent
14 rapidly increase, we can expect even more New Yorkers
15 facing eviction.

16 In the past few decades, the City's Black
17 population has decreased by almost 200 people. Among
18 Black children and teenagers living in the City, the
19 number declined by 19% from 2010 to 2020. Black
20 families are not leaving because of congestion
21 pricing but rather they cannot keep up with the cost
22 of what it takes to find decent housing in this city.

23 In light of what's happening in Washington D.C.,
24 with, our president and mayor I guess, executive
25 orders, we should focus on what we can do here in New

1
2 York City and hold our mayor accountable to the needs
3 of our neighbors.

4 CUNY is an economic driver for New Yorkers and
5 the Adams' Administration needs to push for full
6 funding to ensure students are safe and able to
7 learn.

8 I look forward to seeing the adoption of
9 Restorative Justice Health Centers at all CUNY
10 schools.

11 Another economic drama driver of our city is 3-K
12 and access to affordable local childcare. New York
13 City needs to see a dramatic improvement in the
14 timeline to pay contracts, especially to small day
15 care centers and small businesses struggling to stay
16 open because of unreasonable wait on payments for
17 services rendered.

18 In terms of housing, deed theft poses one of the
19 most significant risks to Black homeownership in New
20 York City. I introduced Intro 67, which would require
21 the Department of Finance, Department of HPD, and
22 Consumer and Worker Protection to conduct education
23 and outreach regarding deed fraud and foreclosure
24 prevention assistance fraud.

1 Council Member Hudson is introducing Intro 888,
2 which would require disclosure of market value for
3 unsolicited offers to purchase residential
4 properties, and Council Member Riley's legislation,
5 Intro 901 will require the Office of Financial
6 Empowerment to provide assistance to homeowners, both
7 of which will prevent predatory practices.
8

9 The same way we work to keep these Black families
10 in their homes, we must ensure access to housing for
11 those who have overrepresented in our legal system.
12 Studies show that Justice Involved Supported Housing
13 or JISH gives people a better shot at not having
14 interactions with the system.

15 The patterns in the city show Black youth crying
16 out for viable support and programming. One of the
17 most successful approaches to keep these young people
18 from getting into trouble is giving them something to
19 do. Fully funded year round employment opportunities
20 will help Black families avoid the hunger games for a
21 few selected spots in the summer.

22 When we talk about health care outcomes, one of
23 the strongest examples of racial disparity is
24 maternal health outcomes. As we've seen just this
25 month, racial gaps widened, Black women in The U.S.

1
2 died at nearly 3.5 times higher than white women
3 around the time of childbirth in 2023. In 2022, I
4 was happy to pass legislation as part of a package of
5 mental maternal health bills - also, New York City it
6 is actually higher than that. With the Council, we
7 were ensuring that these rights are upheld and New
8 Yorkers are empowered to demand what they deserve,
9 making sure that public hospitals are funded with
10 contracts that ensure quality doctors serve patients
11 who are predominantly people of more color can help
12 address these continued shameful gaps that cost the
13 lives of women.

14 I do want to say my office put out a report a few
15 years ago that showed the places that had the most
16 gun violence, also had the highest COVID deaths, had
17 the most absence in schools, had the highest calls
18 for mental health assistance, and also had the least
19 amount of affordable housing. Yet, seem to try to
20 solve all of those things by arresting- trying to
21 arrest the children of this generation that we
22 arrested their parents just a generation ago thinking
23 that's going to solve the problem.

24 I expect the Administration to make it clear what
25 their plan is moving forward since they are already

1
2 behind on schedule for these new NYC preliminary
3 evaluation equity. I hope during today's hearing we
4 can work together to create a more equitable and just
5 city for Black New Yorkers.

6 I do want to just if I can mention a statement on
7 Black leadership. All of this is happening at a time
8 when we've had more Black leadership than we've ever
9 had in the city, state, and federal government. That
10 means we managed to diversify the leadership but not
11 change the outcomes at the end and that's a problem
12 that all of us need to hold.

13 I also wanna be a 100 percent clear that you can
14 be treated differently or probably are if you are in
15 leadership and a Black person. It doesn't change the
16 fact that you might also be doing a lot of
17 foolishness at the same time. Both of those things
18 can be true at the same time. And, to be asked to
19 come to the defense of certain Black leadership so
20 they can be treated differently while doing the same
21 foolishness that they should not be mimicking, but
22 actually changing, is not a good thing for the
23 political will, the political power that we have.
24 We're better off using that power to defend Black
25

1 leadership trying to do what's better for the
2 community, not what's better for themselves.

3 Just want to make sure that that's on the record.

4 And, lastly, I do wanna say anti blackness is
5 steeped in this country from the beginning, and we
6 have to be honest about that, and one of the reasons
7 they're trying to erase history is that people think
8 somehow we woke up and everything was all about
9 meritocracy.

10 Lastly, no one is responsible for the system
11 that's born today, none of us, Black, white, brown,
12 but I believe all of us are responsible for the
13 system that we move on to our next generation. In
14 order to move on a better system, we just have to be
15 honest about the system that's here and how we got
16 here.

17 Thank you so much for this hearing and look
18 forward to hearing some more.

19 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you, and yeah one of
20 the things you said reminded me of what one of my
21 colleagues said in my program that I was in, and she
22 always talks about how ,you know, white supremacy is
23 so pervasive that it doesn't need ,you know, a
24 particular ethnicity or race to uphold it, that it's
25

2 just so deeply embedded into our systems. So it
3 doesn't really matter ,you know, who's in leadership
4 that the system itself is pervasive in that way.

5 So thank you for being here. Thank you for your
6 testimony.

7 With that I'll turn it to...

8 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you, Madam Chair.
9 I just wanted to say it's the first time I saw your
10 name tag with PHD on it.

11 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Oh, gosh, thank you.

12 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: That's awesome. That is
13 awesome.

14 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Oh, thanks. I didn't do
15 that, my office did. (LAUGHS)

16 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: I'm glad they did.

17 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I saw it one day, and I'm
18 like, why is this here?

19 Okay, with that, I will turn it over to Committee
20 Staff to swear in the panel. And thank you so much
21 for being here, Commissioner.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: All right, before we begin
23 testimony, I'll administer the oath.

24 So, Commissioner Sherman, please raise your right
25 hand. Do you swear or affirm to tell the truth, the

1 whole truth, and nothing but the truth, before this
2 committee, and to respond honestly to council member
3 questions?
4

5 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: I do.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: All right, go ahead.

7 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Chair Williams, Public
8 Advocate Williams, Council Member Marte, members of
9 the Committee on Civil and Human Rights,
10 distinguished members of the City Council and the
11 public, good morning.

12 I'm Sideya Sherman, New York City's Chief Equity
13 Officer and Commissioner of the New York City Mayor's
14 Office of Equity and Racial Justice.

15 Thank you for the opportunity to join you today
16 to discuss the state of Black New York and provide an
17 update on the citywide racial equity planning
18 process.

19 As we near the conclusion of Black History Month,
20 it's a fitting moment to reflect on the remarkable
21 progress Black people in our nation have made. Black
22 history is American history. The Black community's
23 century long struggle for freedom and opportunity is
24 fundamental to our country's evolution, steadily
25 guiding us towards realizing our democratic ideals.

1
2 I'm honored to serve as New York City's First
3 Chief Equity Officer carrying forward the legacy of
4 those who came before me to ensure that our city is a
5 place of opportunity and access for all.

6 Since our last council hearing, our team has been
7 hard at work advancing the Racial Justice Charter
8 Amendments. These historic measures, now embedded in
9 our City Charter give us a clear mission, transform
10 government systems and structure to foster racial
11 equity and justice across New York City.

12 Since launching our office in late 2023, we have
13 worked to stand up our operations while spearheading
14 the Citywide racial equity planning process and other
15 crucial work. This is of the utmost importance to us,
16 and we have dedicated the past year to rallying city
17 government behind it and engaging the Administration
18 at all levels.

19 Our efforts are unprecedented in scale and
20 ambition. To meet this moment, our team has worked
21 hand in hand with over 40 city agencies and 250 staff
22 conducting full day training sessions, providing one
23 on one technical assistance sessions, and offering
24 ongoing guidance to help agencies develop, refine,
25 and complete preliminary racial equity plans.

1 This measurable plan, which is in its final
2 stages, is designed to drive change across four key
3 areas: budget, programs and policy, contracting, and
4 personnel.
5

6 By aligning these areas with our unwavering
7 commitment to racial equity, we are setting the stage
8 for transformative long lasting change.

9 As we prepare to issue the Preliminary Citywide
10 Racial Equity Plan in the coming days, we look
11 forward to feedback from the Council, our colleagues
12 at the Commission on Racial Equity, and the public.

13 While we advance our forward looking racial
14 equity planning efforts, we also remain focused on
15 developing programs and initiatives that meet the
16 needs of New Yorkers today.

17 Black New Yorkers have made great strides in our
18 city, but we continue to confront health, economic,
19 and other inequities that can limit opportunities for
20 advancement. Through our New York City Young Men's
21 Initiative and NYC Her Future offices, we are laser
22 focused on addressing these issues with innovative
23 programs for young people across our city.

24 YMI has long prioritized educational attainment,
25 launching successful programs such as NYC Men Teach,

1
2 the CUNY Fatherhood Academy, and NeON Works which
3 provide education, career training, and credentialing
4 to young people ranging from those who are the most
5 disconnected from school and work to those completing
6 college and pursuing advanced degrees.

7 YMI has also emphasized literacy, understanding
8 that not only do we want our students to graduate,
9 but we want to ensure that they have the literacy
10 skills they need to succeed.

11 Through initiatives like Sound Partners, Quick
12 Reads, and Raising Readers, we collaborate with over
13 42 schools to support literacy through family focused
14 programming, yielding positive results and enhancing
15 students ability to decode words and read more
16 accurately.

17 NYC Her Future, our new companion office to YMI,
18 has made swift progress since its inception last
19 spring engaging young people through community based
20 events, developing new training and career
21 exploration programs, and rolling out targeted
22 initiatives like our doula training program, which
23 directly contributes to our city's effort to address
24 the crucial issue of Black maternal health.

1
2 Last year we proudly partnered with the McSilver
3 Institute [for Poverty Policy and Research] to cohost
4 a legislative breakfast on this topic, convening New
5 York City and state elected officials alongside
6 leaders in academia, health, and maternal health
7 advocates to identify root causes and collaboratively
8 pursue solutions. We thank the Council for their
9 partnership in addressing this vital issue.

10 The persistent racial wealth gap continues to
11 hinder progress for our Black New Yorkers. Addressing
12 this issue requires access to quality jobs, financial
13 stability, and the asset accumulation necessary for
14 true economic security. From day one, this
15 Administration has been focused on affordability,
16 prioritizing affordable housing, jobs, and putting
17 money back in the pockets of New Yorkers.

18 We are particularly proud of our partnership with
19 NYC Kids RISE in New York City Public Schools on the
20 citywide expansion of the Save for College program.
21 Right now, over 280,000 students have NYC scholarship
22 accounts with 42 million invested towards their
23 higher education and career training goals. What's
24 most exciting about this effort is that our city now
25 has the infrastructure to invest collectively -

1 government, private sector, and community in the
2 future of our students.

3
4 Our office is also focused on advancing place
5 based initiatives, recently partnering with NYCHA to
6 invest in a series of programs that support
7 entrepreneurship, career training, and asset building
8 for Bronx based public housing residents.

9 We are committed to continuing to expand our
10 programmatic efforts, but we acknowledge that
11 programming alone cannot address systemic inequities.
12 This is why our work on the Citywide Racial Equity
13 Plan and other structural reform efforts remain
14 central to our mission.

15 As we advance the racial Justice Charter
16 Amendments, we are also collaborating with our
17 colleagues across the government to implement new
18 anti racism training requirements.

19 Additionally, we are proud to support the
20 implementation of the recently passed Local Law 92
21 which calls on the city to study reparations and the
22 legacy of slavery. I want to commend you, Chair
23 Williams, and the Council for your leadership in
24 advancing this groundbreaking work through last
25 year's Juneteenth legislative package. We look

1 forward to staying engaged with the committee as this
2 work progresses.
3

4 Thank you for your commitment to creating a fair,
5 just, and equitable city. We share your vision and
6 dedication to building a future where all New Yorkers
7 can thrive. We welcome any questions you may have.

8 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you. And I just
9 wanted to acknowledge that Council Member Riley has
10 joined us on Zoom, and we are also joined by Council
11 Member Stevens, who has been cochairing efforts that
12 the Black contingency of the Council has been pushing
13 for. So, thank you for joining us today.

14 The first question I have is to what extent does
15 MOERJ engage with the public in its work? For
16 example, do you consult with community leaders and
17 stakeholders on a regular basis to stay up to date
18 with current issues and concerns of the communities
19 impacted by structural inequity and racial injustice?
20 If so, can you give some examples of any Black
21 community based organizations or groups that you
22 consult or work with?

23 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Sure, so thank you for your
24 question Council Member. Our office is not only
25 MOERJ, but it's home to a number of other offices

1 including the Commission on Gender Equity, the NYC
2 Young Men's Initiative, NYC Her Future, as well as
3 the Unity Project. So as a collaborative we engage
4 with a number of stakeholders in a variety of ways
5 from outreach events, engagement events, resource
6 fairs, etcetera. We also convene advisory bodies, so
7 you know as part of our racial equity planning
8 process we've convened an advisory board that
9 includes racial justice leaders as well as folks
10 who've been leaders in government transformation
11 Through our Commission on Gender Equity, we also have
12 a set of commissioners that help advise our work
13 which is at the intersection of race and gender and
14 sexual orientation and identity. So we work in a
15 variety of ways to engage leaders.
16

17 The other thing that I would point out is that
18 our office, in collaboration with the Civic
19 Engagement Commission, for the last three or four
20 years, has funded neighborhood coalitions across our
21 33 TRIE (Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity)
22 equity neighborhoods. So these are community based
23 coalitions that are really providing advancing local
24 projects, but also providing the local infrastructure
25 necessary to engage with government.

1
2 And so as we've gone through this racial equity
3 planning process, we've relied on our partners and
4 the Commission on Racial Equity who have been
5 engaging the public to share Community Equity
6 Priorities, but the Commission has also engaged that
7 network that's part of the TRIE network.

8 So there's a variety of ways in which we are
9 connecting to partners and engaging and we will
10 continue to do so.

11 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

12 Would you be able to share like a list of like
13 the nonprofit?

14 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Sure, yeah there's a range
15 of groups including organizations like the NAACP the
16 groups of courses... (CROSS-TALK)

17 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: You don't have to share it
18 now...

19 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Sure...

20 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: like later, thank you...

21 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: We'll send... we'll share
22 that.

23 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Because, again, you know,
24 we've been having a lot of conversations and one of
25 the things in a conversation that we have had

1
2 previously is, well who are these organizations
3 doing the work? Just for our own personal
4 information...

5 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Gladly...

6 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: we'd love to know and I'm
7 sure some of it might be duplicative, but because
8 you're actively engaged in this work, it would be
9 good to just know what are the organizations you're
10 working with. Thank you.

11 Does the agency hold any town halls or public
12 forums in order to engage with the every the average
13 everyday New Yorker? If not, are there any plans to
14 do something of this in the future?

15 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Sure, so we haven't had
16 town hall meetings per se, but we certainly have
17 community workshops tied to community based planning
18 efforts.

19 And as I shared also, we certainly through...
20 particularly through our work with the Young Men's
21 Initiative and NYC Her Future, host a number of
22 neighborhood events where we're able to engage and
23 connect people to resources.

24 Some of our recent community engagement workshops
25 include work that we've done in The Bronx to engage

1 residents around addressing specific disparities
2 across the borough. We've hosted borough wide
3 sessions with nonprofit partners and community
4 members. We've replicated those sessions in Spanish
5 and hosted in language sessions to have hands on
6 workshops, and we've also replicated that to host
7 sessions that specifically were designed for young
8 people that they can engage in the work in a way that
9 made sense for them.
10

11 So that certainly ,you know, while we don't have
12 a large community engagement apparatus, we make sure
13 that we're strategic and deliberate in offering and
14 developing opportunities to engage New Yorkers.

15 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

16 Do you have any mechanisms to receive direct
17 feedback or suggestions from New Yorkers? I know CORE
18 kind of does some of this work, but just wondering if
19 your office also has a mechanism to receive direct
20 feedback.

21 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Sure, so outside of our
22 website and when we have distinct engagement efforts,
23 those would be the primary vehicles. As part of the
24 racial equity planning process, as I shared we
25 certainly have received feedback through the

1
2 Commission on Racial Equity and their Community
3 Equity Priorities to help inform our planning
4 process.

5 And as we release the preliminary plan, we'll
6 have vehicles for the public to directly share
7 feedback, but we also are encouraging the public to
8 share feedback with CORE so that they can also share
9 that with us as part of their process.

10 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

11 I know a while ago CCHR had released a report on
12 the State of Black New Yorkers; but I just ,you know,
13 I want to know, uhm, there's not a lot of people that
14 don't know about these reports and things that you
15 all do. Like, you spend a lot of time doing this
16 work, and no one knows about it, which is why I
17 wanted to have this hearing, because I do appreciate
18 the work that you all do, and I feel like it just
19 kind of flies under the radar.

20 So are you using social media to engage with New
21 Yorkers to share the work that you're doing? And if
22 applicable, could you speak to any social media work
23 directed to Black New Yorkers specifically?

24 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: So we do use social media
25 to share our work. I will say that most of the work

1 that we've produced, at least in these first three
2 years, have really been focused on ,you know,
3 geographic communities, communities of color at
4 large, LGBTQ+ community, a variety of intersecting
5 identities. We also have developed programming
6 opportunities, for instance during Black History
7 Month, to lift up stories of Black New Yorkers in
8 particular.
9

10 In terms of how we share our resources, we,
11 again, leverage our website, we leverage social
12 media, and, again, through the offices that are part
13 of our umbrella, right, we've also issued a number of
14 reports. Earlier this year we issued, through the
15 Commission on Gender Equity, a guide to NYC students
16 to understand their period, for instance.

17 Most recently we, through CGE, issued a number of
18 one-pagers so that New Yorkers can understand
19 economic mobility or health equity or a number of
20 issues.

21 We are always certainly looking for new avenues
22 to ensure that that information is reaching the
23 public. So this is why we also partner with agencies
24 like CCHR to make sure that we're getting the word
25 out and joining resource fairs, and we'll continue to

1
2 look for more avenues to make sure that we're
3 reaching New Yorkers.

4 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

5 I'll pause I know my colleagues are ,like, busy
6 I don't know if you guys have any questions. Council
7 Member Stevens, you have any questions?

8 Since he's the Public Advocate, I guess he'll go
9 first.

10 (LAUGHTER)

11 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Go ahead.

12 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you, it's
13 actually not a question but a comment. Just, thank
14 you for all the work that you are doing. Hopefully we
15 can find more ways, as the chair said, to get that
16 out to the public.

17 I also just want to put on the record, uh, so if
18 my kids ever listen to this, uh, they also hear the
19 Black joy part. So, even through all of this, the
20 community is still able to find joy. And as my kids
21 are growing, I want to make sure that they hear that
22 part as well. And many people are thriving, but it
23 is, to be honest, they are thriving in spite of what
24 was put in place.

25 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Mm-hmm

1
2 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: and not because of what
3 was put in place. I just wanted to make sure I put
4 that on the record, thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Thank you.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Thank you, Chair, uh, Dr.
7 Williams. I really appreciate you taking on this
8 topic and bringing this to the forefront and thank
9 you for being here with us.

10 Like the chair said earlier, I've been working
11 with the BLACK, which is a subcommittee of the Black
12 Hawk BLAC, which is the Black Delegation of City
13 Council, to really talk about our issues and how we
14 move forward.

15 And so, one, I think my first question with you
16 is, like, how can we work together more closely
17 around some of the work that you're doing as far as,
18 like, some of the reports and things like that so we
19 can be working more in tandem and supporting your
20 work in a much different way?

21 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Sure Council Member, and I
22 know that I met with you very early in the
23 Administration, so glad to reconnect. And would
24 definitely love to work more closely and
25 intentionally with you.

1
2 So as we release ,you know, our work, and some of
3 the reports that are going forth, it would be great
4 to brief your office to find areas of opportunity and
5 collaboration.

6 I also know that you have a particular focus on
7 young people, and we've recently rolled out a lot of
8 initiatives that are very focused on young New
9 Yorkers and would love to engage you in that and just
10 work more closely.

11 So I would gladly reach out to your office and
12 figure out ways -concrete ways - that we can do work
13 together.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Absolutely, thank you so
15 much.

16 And I guess the other question I had and I'm sure
17 Dr. Williams is going to get to it, but just thinking
18 about with the threat of a lot of the issues around
19 the federal government, DEI being under attack, and
20 just thinking about how that's going to impact your
21 work, can you talk about a little bit of ,like, how
22 you've been preparing for that and then the status of
23 what's going on with your office currently?

24 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Sure, so ,you know, our
25 values in New York City remain. This is a city that

1
2 embraces diversity. We believe strongly in equity and
3 fairness and inclusion and the work that we do
4 particularly as outlined in the Charter continues.

5 And so we are steadfast in continuing to do this
6 work. Obviously we're monitoring what's happening at
7 the national level, and even prior, right, this work
8 was certainly being challenged and threatened prior
9 to even this administration.

10 And so we're doing what we need to do to ensure
11 that we safeguard the work, but still pushing it
12 forward so that we're meeting the commitment that
13 we've made to New Yorkers and improving the lives of
14 New Yorkers.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yes, thank you so much.

16 I know it's difficult times, and it makes work
17 that you guys are doing harder, which means we have
18 to give you guys some more support and more staff and
19 more funding, because I think, more than ever, the
20 work that you're doing is necessary and important.

21 So thank you, Chair, who's always championed this
22 work and really has pushed to the forefront the
23 importance of the work and how the things that we're
24 doing on the Council is supported by your work, and
25 we need to make sure we're supporting it as well.

1
2 So thank you so much for being here, and I look
3 forward to talking offline and meeting and working
4 with you in the future.

5 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Thank you, Council Member.

6 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you, Council Member
7 Chair Stevens. And I just want to echo something that
8 she said, I know I said it to you offline, too, that
9 ,you know, I for sure want to be supportive, and a
10 part of why, like, I really wanted to have this
11 hearing is because I think it is so important to have
12 these conversations, even if things are imperfect or
13 a little messy, just so New Yorkers know from both
14 sides of City Hall that there is a focus and an
15 interest in ,you know, improving the lives of Black
16 New Yorkers. And ,you know, if our colleague, Council
17 Member Hudson, was here she would say this line that
18 I feel like we've all adopted, that ,you know,
19 focusing on Black New Yorkers is an inclusive plan.
20 Because if Black New Yorkers are good, everybody is
21 else benefits from that. So this is of course not
22 just solely about Black New Yorkers, but if we as a
23 city are addressing the needs that Black New Yorkers
24 have, everyone will benefit from that. So this is an
25 inclusive plan that really serves the most

1
2 marginalized in our city. So we again we want to
3 support you and the work that you're doing and
4 appreciate you being here.

5 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: So you have your hands are
7 really full, you have tons of commissions and working
8 groups and task forces and multi agency bodies such
9 as the Commission on Women and Gender Equity, NYC Her
10 Future, New York City Pay Equity Cabinet, just to
11 name a few.

12 So given that you often take an intersectional
13 approach to your work and these entities cover
14 varying demographics, to what extent do these
15 entities work together to advance your work overall?

16 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Great question, thank you
17 Council Member.

18 So one of the visions of bringing these offices
19 together within this administration was to really
20 make sure that there was an intersectional approach
21 to equity. So over the past two plus years, as we've
22 been leading this work and standing up our office, we
23 also have been working to make sure that those teams
24 have leadership in place. I'm really excited that we
25 now have executive directors across almost all of our

1
2 offices and we soon will have one for the Commission
3 on Gender Equity.

4 And all of the executive directors of those
5 offices report to me. We all work regularly together
6 on a weekly basis or a bi weekly basis, everyone's
7 meeting, we share resources across our team, folks
8 weigh in on each other's work.

9 So we're ensuring that as we're serving New
10 Yorkers and we're working on our racial equity
11 planning efforts, we're factoring in the whole person
12 from their sexual orientation and identity to their
13 gender to their age to the community that they live
14 in and really bringing in the expertise of our
15 colleagues across those areas.

16 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

17 So I wanted to talk a little bit about TRIE.
18 Could you speak more about the ongoing work of TRIE
19 including any name, titles, affiliated organizations
20 for task members and if any current plan exists to
21 expand TRIE.

22 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Sure, so the task force on
23 racial inclusion and equity was previously started
24 during the pandemic. I had the honor of leading TRIE
25

1 at that time, and it was really formed in response to
2 the disparities that we saw during COVID.

3 At that time we've developed and have continued
4 to develop a set of priority neighborhoods, and these
5 priority neighborhoods all have these neighborhood
6 coalitions, which I referenced earlier and happy to
7 share a name of those groups.

8 Internally; however, TRIE is very focused on city
9 government itself. So through the task force we bring
10 together city agency designees to really focus on
11 more real time issues, programs, activities,
12 initiatives.

13 As I shared earlier, a lot of our work within
14 this administration has been focused on the Bronx
15 with the recognition that of our priority
16 neighborhoods the majority of zip codes are
17 concentrated within the borough.

18 This is why we've had community engagement in the
19 borough. We were able to invest in some new programs
20 last year focused on Bronx residents, and we're
21 looking to roll out more support to address some of
22 the disparities we see in the borough.

23 But the work of TRIE is still citywide, right.
24 The neighborhood coalitions cover all 33 communities,
25

1
2 and as we look to move forward with our racial equity
3 planning work, you'll see that many agencies are also
4 prioritizing these communities within their work.

5 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

6 So it is my understanding that there has been
7 three Bronx community engagement workshops so far.
8 Are there any plans to hold similar workshops across
9 other boroughs? Is there an expected timeline for the
10 development and rollout of these workshops?

11 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: So our goal is to actually
12 go back to The Bronx and share a readout of where we
13 are based on their feedback and based on the feedback
14 that we have internally. Obviously we also have been
15 working on the city racial equity plan at the same
16 time. There's significant overlap between the
17 agencies that are represented in TRIE and the
18 individuals as well as the racial equity planning
19 process.

20 So we've certainly have prioritized the plan and
21 intend to go back to those same community groups,
22 share a report out of what we heard, share some of
23 the early initiatives that we're able to fund and
24 support, and then work in partnership with them to
25

1 try to lift up some of the other recommendations and
2 priorities.
3

4 We certainly would love to replicate that process
5 across other boroughs as we have additional capacity,
6 but again you know the planning work that we do also
7 serves as a vehicle for us to concentrate efforts
8 across neighborhoods.

9 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, yeah, and you just
10 said a word I was thinking about, you said overlap,
11 and I was thinking like is there some duplicity here?

12 It's like your office which is like a catchment
13 but then there's CORE and then there's TRIE. It does
14 seem there's a level of overlap or perhaps duplicity.

15 So how are you ensuring either coordination or
16 ,you know, this entity is doing this, maybe this
17 entity can do that to maximize the limited resources
18 you do have, versus sort of everyone on top of each
19 other doing the same work or serving the same
20 demographics.

21 So like how do you account for that? How do you
22 address that? How are you seeking to streamline and
23 ,you know, eliminate any overlap?

24 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Absolutely, so one of the
25 areas of overlap, just in terms of composition,

1 necessarily mission, is the composition of our Racial
2 Equity Planning teams, the agency partners who work
3 on the planning process and those who also may be
4 designees to the task force on Racial Inclusion
5 Equity.

6
7 And so we want to create some efficiency there
8 and try to ensure that as agencies move towards
9 implementation that there's alignment with the work
10 of TRIE, so that we're as effective as possible.

11 We obviously also collaborate with the Commission
12 on Racial Equity, which ,you know, has a very
13 external facing presence and works across a number of
14 communities to ensure that we're not duplicating
15 efforts and that ,you know, to the extent CORE is
16 getting feedback that's important for us to know that
17 we're leveraging the information that they have.

18 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

19 Can you please share any preliminary
20 recommendations that MOERJ has made to relevant
21 agencies based on information and feedback gathered
22 from workshops. Did any directives accompany these
23 recommendations, and/or will agencies be required to
24 report in any way on these preliminary
25 recommendations?

2 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: This is with respect to the
3 Bronx engagement process?

4 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, workshops.

5 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Okay, sure.

6 So, and just to give a big picture, those
7 workshops were really focused on specific issue areas
8 and then potential programmatic solutions.

9 So some of the recommendations that resonated,
10 for instance included, I'm sorry, Council Member -
11 So some of the recommendations that resonated, for
12 instance, in our workshops included interest in
13 entrepreneurship programs, people wanting
14 opportunities to build assets for instance, so that's
15 why I shared. Some of the early programs that we were
16 more immediately able to invest in right after
17 workshop discussions were some of the investments in
18 NYCHA, right, so which has obviously a deep
19 concentration in the Bronx.

20 So there's new career track apprenticeship
21 training rolling out, there is an expansion of an
22 entrepreneurship program focused on Bronx residents
23 in the borough, and we're also working to expand an
24 asset building program that the agency has.

1 That's just one example, but where there are
2 recommendations that align with existing agency
3 programs or initiatives, we've worked to be able to
4 resource those to the extent that we can. And then
5 certainly look to go back to the community to figure
6 out how we lift some of the bigger ideas.

8 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, just another followup
9 question on like capacity.

10 I mean obviously I'm sure if you had all the
11 money in the world and all the staff in the world,
12 you can do all the things, but is there some thinking
13 or ,you know, strategic future, strategic planning
14 around like how to scale into other areas?

15 Like, is there thinking around that, or is this
16 like not really a thought because you don't have the
17 resources to do it?

18 I'm just wondering internally is there some
19 thought being put behind how you can enter into other
20 communities that might fit the same level of
21 priority?

22 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Absolutely, so I mean
23 there's... there are ways in which, again, as we
24 continue to work with the task force and reconvene
25 our efforts, there's ways in which we could replicate

1
2 that process in other communities, but that can
3 really leverage a lot from what the City is already
4 doing.

5 So in the example that I shared, our partners
6 have been HPD and CCHR who also have a strong
7 community engagement team and presence. So there's
8 ways that we can scale this work leveraging our
9 agency partners. We assess our needs every year, and
10 so as, uh, if we see that there are needs down the
11 line for TRIE to continue to grow its work,
12 absolutely ,you know, we'll try to advocate for
13 those. But there's also a lot of leverage, because
14 it's a task force by nature, and so it does require
15 that agencies also bring their resources to bear in
16 the work.

17 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: So that said, are there any
18 thoughts to dismantle TRIE?

19 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Absolutely not.

20 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I'm ,like, I don't
21 under... I don't know.

22 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: So...

23 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Like what are you guys
24 actually doing?

1 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Yeah, So absolutely not. I
2 would, you know, TRIE is different from the long term
3 planning work that we're doing, right? It is bringing
4 together city agencies to focus on the issue area,
5 right, engaging community as we have, and then moving
6 forward with solutions.
7

8 So the examples that I shared with the programs
9 that we invested in in the last budget, that is a
10 result of that work and that is typically how TRIE
11 has worked in the past. Bringing people together
12 around issue areas or around a specific community and
13 bringing agencies together just to deploy solutions.
14 And so that work is critical.

15 I would also add that the work on the ground
16 through TRIE, which is happening through the
17 community based coalitions, is also critical and we
18 not only do we support that work, it is the
19 infrastructure that is necessary to ensure that
20 communities are able to really effectively engage
21 with government. That work came out of the task
22 force, it's a result of TRIE, and it's unique in the
23 sense that the City is actually really funding groups
24 to come together, which is not typical with the way
25 in which the city funds work.

1 We're funding groups to come together to build
2
3 their capacity to operate as coalitions and that's
4 really, really important work in terms of ensuring
5 that communities have the networks that they need to
6 engage with the city effectively.

7 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Is that information public
8 ,like, this community coalition that you have in the
9 Bronx?

10 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Yeah sure.

11 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: So ,like, I could go on the
12 website and see?

13 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Yeah, we can send you the
14 list of coalition members, uhm, as well as... I mean
15 we've had releases and other information about the
16 networks as well.

17 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, so you said the issue
18 area was like primarily around entrepreneurship and
19 asset?

20 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: What I'm saying is that's
21 just one issue area that came up in...

22 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Mm-hmm?

23 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: I'm giving an example of an
24 issue area that came up in one of our community
25 workshops that we, by virtue of having that, right,

1
2 we're able to more immediately respond to within the
3 budget.

4 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: So can you give me some
5 more details on like what you actually did? So ,like,
6 oh, we want to do entrepreneurship, so then what did
7 you do? Did you, like...

8 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Sure, so in the example
9 that I shared, our office invested a million dollars,
10 near a million dollars, in Bronx based programs
11 focused on public housing residents. There are three
12 programs, one will provide career apprenticeship
13 training with access to unions for residents in the
14 borough. Another program will support NYCHA residents
15 who are food based entrepreneurs in the borough to
16 really be able to grow and scale their business, uh,
17 and also obtain the licensing that they need to do
18 their work. And another program will support
19 expansion of the Family Self Sufficiency Program, uh,
20 which allows residents to sort of use their, as they
21 increase their assets due to participation in the
22 program - as they increase their income due to
23 participation in the program, the difference between
24 their old rent and their new rent is saved in an

1
2 escrow account that they then are able to sort of
3 cash out when they reach their goals.

4 And so the funding that we're providing is to
5 provide the technical assistance to increase the
6 number of residents who have at least \$10,000 in
7 assets through the program.

8 So those are just three examples of programs that
9 sort of came out... program expansions, right, that
10 came out of those community sessions.

11 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: And you're gonna send me a
12 list of them? So community coalition organizations
13 are the organizations that receive this \$1 million or
14 was there a specific organization? Is that money
15 being allocated to an agency who's actually doing the
16 work? Who's actually...

17 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: So we allocate that, so
18 sorry, let me just separate the two.

19 So there's funding that we allocate for the
20 community coalitions that goes to the Civic
21 Engagement Commission, which then works with the
22 coalitions.

23 The funding that I referenced in respect to those
24 programs is funding that we allocated to the Housing
25 Authority to then subcontract out or directly manage

1 those three programs that I... those three program
2
3 examples.

4 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, how much other money
5 have you allocated? So there's one for, I guess,
6 like, just the building of the coalition and then you
7 gave one example of like a tangible thing that came
8 out of a workshop ,like, okay, here's a \$1 million to
9 talk about self sufficiency, jobs, helping you
10 support your businesses.

11 Are there any other initiatives or money that has
12 been allocated to things that have come out of the
13 workshops?

14 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: At this time, no. So those
15 are some of the early examples. Our goal is to go
16 back to the community with all the recommendations
17 that we have and be able to move forward with bigger
18 resource allocations.

19 As I mentioned, though, they're also, uhm, and as
20 we release the plan, there are agencies that are also
21 prioritizing certain TRIE neighborhoods, certain
22 geographic areas that are consistent with many of the
23 recommendations that we heard.

24 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, so this was the
25 duplicity you mentioned. So as you build out the

1
2 Racial Equity Plan, some stuff that you might have
3 learned might be addressed through the racial equity
4 planning process.

5 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: And there's alignment, yes,
6 so the goals also have alignment.

7 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, a lot of your work is
8 meant to target discrimination and racism at a
9 structural and systemic level. According to the
10 Poverty Tracker developed by the Center on Poverty
11 and Social Policy and Robin Hood, nearly 80% of Black
12 New Yorkers report facing at least one form of
13 institutional discrimination in their lifetime such
14 as when we're trying to vote, rent an apartment, or
15 when applying for jobs and promotions.

16 Does your office collect or receive any data
17 similar to this from New York City agencies across
18 the spectrum or any other entities? Does it do any of
19 this on its own through independent data collection
20 on institutional discrimination? If so, could you
21 share how such data is digested and used in your
22 work?

23 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: So we don't collect
24 individual data on discrimination. Most of that
25 information to the extent that people are reporting

1
2 it goes to CCHR or the State Commission on Human
3 Rights depending how people report.

4 We certainly stay abreast of what's happening in
5 our city - as well as we work closely with our
6 partners to understand changes to the law with
7 respect to human rights law. New York obviously has,
8 know, very generous human rights law with a number of
9 protections, but we don't collect that data directly.

10 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, the oversight role of
11 government agencies over the private sector can often
12 be very limited, that being said, according to the
13 Department of Labor there are roughly 4.2 million New
14 York City residents employed in the private sector as
15 of December 2024 which is an increase of about 77,000
16 from the previous year. Given the significant and
17 rising number, how is MOERJ working to advance toward
18 its goal within the private sector if at all
19 possible?

20 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: So our work has been
21 primarily focused on government and advancing racial
22 equity through government reform.

23 Again, to the extent that people in the private
24 sector are experiencing discrimination, the City
25 obviously has resources, and we've also raised

1 awareness and partnership with private sector
2 partners around critical issues that cut across
3 government like pay equity. But we don't have a
4 direct role in oversight of the private sector, but
5 certainly as our work evolves, can ensure that we're
6 leveraging and engaging the sector and also sort of
7 sharing some of the best practices that we develop
8 within government.
9

10 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

11 Access to healthcare has become like one of
12 biggest issues cited as a byproduct of systemic
13 inequity. Could you tell us about any of the work you
14 are doing with the Department of Health and Mental
15 Hygiene or the Department of Health? Are there any
16 opportunities for MOERJ to provide feedback or
17 guidance on how our hospitals and healthcare
18 facilities could better consider low income New
19 Yorkers of color when making reforms or improvements
20 in their practices and policies?

21 I know you referenced the session you did with
22 McSilver, but you know are there any other things
23 that you're doing and again is there any guidance,
24 feedback, recommendations you can share on that
25 today?

1
2 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Gladly. So we work closely
3 with the Department of Health, they're really a great
4 partner and also a leader in this work.

5 We ,you know, have been part of the interagency
6 committees that have supported the chronic disease
7 prevention plan as well as some of the other
8 interagency planning work that the Department of
9 Health has underway including their maternal health
10 efforts. The programming that I mentioned, our doula
11 certification programming, is also operated in
12 partnership with the Department of Health.

13 There's also funding that we've allocated to
14 Department of Health to support some of our LGBTQ+
15 programming, as well as funding that we've been able
16 to allocate to health and hospitals to particularly
17 around LGBTQ+ programming and supporting the
18 renovation of the Judson Health Clinic and ensuring
19 that there's robust programming there.

20 So we work pretty closely with our health
21 partners and certainly understand there's a real core
22 intersection of health equity and racial inequity.

23 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, now turning to racial
24 equity planning. The timeline on your website states
25 a preliminary citywide Racial Equity Plan is expected

1
2 to be finalized by this March with updates and a
3 final plan expected to be released by this coming
4 June.

5 Does MOERJ feel as if it is, I guess, back on
6 track to meet these targets, uhm, these target dates?

7 If not, could you speak more on the needs of your
8 agency in order to meet these target dates?

9 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: So thank you Council
10 Member, and I know this is of important interest to
11 you, so we are on track, and we are working steadily
12 as we speak to release the plan based on that
13 timeline that is shared. So we look forward to
14 engaging you once we release the plan and keeping you
15 abreast of our progress.

16 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

17 How will the Administration ensure that any
18 delays will not impact the fiscal year 2026 six
19 budget process?

20 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: So based on our timeline
21 for release, there's still an opportunity for the
22 City to factor the plan into the Preliminary Plan
23 into Exec.

24 Additionally, agencies are lifting up priorities
25 that may already be funded as well as resource

1 allocation within their agency particularly for their
2 goals that extend between '26 and '28 which are
3 usually pretty short term goals. And so there's still
4 an opportunity for the plan to influence the City
5 Budget.

6
7 One thing that I would also flag is ,you know,
8 obviously the New Needs are just really a fraction of
9 the City Budget so we've gone through this process.
10 We've also worked with agencies to think about how
11 they're allocating their existing needs, their
12 existing resources, right, as part of an effort
13 towards structural reform to make sure that it's in
14 alignment with their goals.

15 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: What steps will MOERJ take
16 to ensure that community feedback during the two-
17 month review process will be incorporated into the
18 final Racial Equity Plan?

19 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: So once we release the
20 Racial Equity Plan, the public has an opportunity,
21 there is 30-day window for feedback.

22 As I shared, we'll have an opportunity for the
23 public to share that feedback directly with us, the
24 Commission on Racial Equity, and I don't want to
25 speak to their work, but I know that they will also

1
2 be sharing feedback and engaging their commissioners
3 and the public and we encourage New Yorkers to engage
4 with them as well.

5 And then of course we're looking for feedback
6 from the Council and other elected officials in the
7 city.

8 Once we have that feedback there is then
9 approximately around two and a half months that the
10 City has to incorporate it and to work on an updated
11 final plan.

12 So we will, uh, as we get that information, you
13 know, we'll stay in dialogue with our partners to
14 make sure that we understand it and that we're
15 incorporating it and factoring it into what goes into
16 the final plan.

17 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, thank you.

18 Will the Council have opportunities to also
19 engage in this process?

20 So I mean, obviously, it's really important for
21 the Administration to share this information up and
22 down throughout the Admin certainly to OMB. But,
23 again, as council members, I know some of my
24 colleagues, I know I'm really interested in this
25 stuff and would love to engage in the process, so

1 just wondering if you all have factored in any ways
2 for the Council to engage in the process?
3

4 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Absolutely, once we
5 complete the Preliminary Plan, and I know this is a
6 particular interest and you have you know significant
7 expertise in this area, we'd love to brief you, brief
8 the Committee, have an opportunity to talk through
9 the plan in more detail, gain your feedback, and as
10 we work on the final, we'll certainly keep you
11 abreast as well.

12 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

13 Has TRIE had any involvement in the racial equity
14 planning process? I mean I feel like we kind of
15 discussed this, but it would be good to know if there
16 has been like any official involvement, or is it just
17 pulling from what you learned there and sort of cross
18 referencing where you need?

19 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Sure, I'll say there's two
20 vehicles. So in terms of the composition of TRIE
21 internally, City agency staff, as I mentioned many of
22 the designees overlap with those who are also the
23 designees - many of the people who are designees for
24 TRIE are also designees for their agency's racial
25 equity planning process.

1
2 However, externally, the community based
3 coalitions that are part of the TRIE Neighborhood
4 network, as part of the Commission on Racial Equity's
5 work, they have engaged those network members as well
6 in developing their community priorities and in
7 addition to many other New Yorkers. So there has been
8 points of intersection. And ,you know, I think as we
9 continue to move this work further, we're looking to
10 bring even more alignment.

11 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

12 What steps has the Administration taken and does
13 it plan to take in the future to ensure that agency
14 spending reflects racial equity priorities and that
15 agencies continue to cooperate effectively with your
16 office?

17 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: So we're producing what is
18 a measurable plan. There are goals, outcomes,
19 indicators, uh, and that it will be the way in which
20 we ensure that the plan is implemented and there are
21 accountability systems in place.

22 As I shared, many agencies are certainly
23 identifying ,you know, programs that may be funded,
24 but they also are focusing on how they allocate their
25 existing resources to effectuate their goals.

1
2 And so there will be constant updates and
3 alignment as we ,you know, the City will sort of
4 consistently be in a planning cycle for the
5 foreseeable future between progress reports and
6 planning.

7 So there's opportunity for constant adjustment
8 and realignment based on the way the process is
9 structured too.

10 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, this question right
11 here is probably like my number one concern, because
12 I see it with ,you know, CCHR, I see it with EEPIC,
13 ,you know, we just had a hearing yesterday where DOI
14 was here. It's like these - maybe because you're like
15 a mayoral kind of body, it's a little different than
16 some of these sort of independent type of bodies, or
17 like sister agencies that aren't as big as the NYPD
18 in terms of the respect and deference level I feel
19 that happens across the Administration.

20 So my biggest concern is that you'll do all this
21 work, and there's no teeth behind it and like
22 agencies that need to take action to fulfill on this
23 measurable plan won't actually take action and
24 there's no way to truly hold them accountable.

1 So ,you know, I would say that's like, my biggest
2 concern is ensuring that ,you know, whether it's you
3 or CORE or whomever, like you have enough, uhm,
4 respect to be able to ,you know, hold whomever
5 accountable - even if it's OMB - to delivering on the
6 things that come out of these plans. Because it's
7 kind of pointless for you to craft these plans and no
8 other agency does anything about it, and you can't
9 hold them accountable to it.

11 So that's... this is this is like my number one
12 concern about all of this stuff, uh, are the agencies
13 actually making change? And I've seen again, you
14 know, with the Fire Department in particular. I mean
15 they really have not made any substantive changes and
16 it's why the City is like actively in a lawsuit.

17 So anyway, I hope that you have the authority and
18 teeth that you need and whatever respective task
19 forces and committees and commissions under you have
20 the same, because I've seen countless times how
21 agencies don't really comply, and there's nothing
22 really you can do to get that agency to comply. And
23 ,you know, the crux of this is talking about systems,
24 and these systems exist with or without us, but it
25 calls for us to force change. And I just, I'm ,like,

1
2 really concerned about the strength of these
3 inequitable systems recreating themselves in
4 perpetuity just in different names in different ways.

5 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Would you like me to...

6 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Sure.

7 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: (INAUDIBLE) Council Member?

8 So...

9 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: You can respond to my TED
10 Talk.

11 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: No, no I appreciate your,
12 uhm, what you shared, and I certainly share your
13 sentiment.

14 We've been clear from the start of this process
15 that this is not just a compliance exercise, right?
16 If it were, we would have put out a plan months ago.

17 The goal is to ensure that this is truly a
18 transformative plan, and to do that we've done the
19 groundwork to really rally support across all levels
20 of the Administration.

21 This started with a directive from the Mayor to
22 agencies to meaningfully engage in this process. All
23 City leadership has been engaged in this process.
24 Agencies have been really thoughtful and intentional
25 in creating their plans. They're serious about them.

1
2 And we've built the infrastructure now as we've been
3 building our office to ensure that we have the
4 systems that we need to ensure accountability.

5 We now have a fully staffed Racial Equity
6 Planning Team, so that includes not only our
7 planning... our Director of Equity Planning And
8 Technical Assistance, but also 10 Equity Planning
9 Managers that have agency portfolios that will be
10 working hand in hand with agencies throughout
11 implementation.

12 We also have been working to set up the systems
13 that we need to track and ensure that there's
14 progress. There's also public reporting as part of
15 this process, so we will obviously share progress
16 reports with the public. And then obviously there's
17 other means for public accountability through the
18 work of CORE, through the work of the City Council.

19 And so we take this work very seriously, and part
20 of my goal is to ensure that as we build this team,
21 as we build this inaugural plan, that the
22 infrastructure lasts beyond me, beyond any other
23 Chief Equity Officer, so that it remains prominent
24 and central within city government.
25

2 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yes, and I do not doubt
3 that you take it seriously. I know you take it
4 seriously. I'm talking about ,like, the other
5 agencies and people who have been in government for
6 multiple decades, that have ,like, adopted bad
7 behaviors or ,you know, essentially have become a
8 part of the system who don't care about racial
9 equity.

10 And I just want to make sure they take it
11 seriously. Like, I'm very clear that you and your
12 team, you all take it serious. I'm concerned about
13 the other people who don't take it seriously that
14 it's not a priority for them.

15 Can you just tell me like how many people are on
16 the Racial Equity Plan Team? You said 10, and then a
17 data person, so 11 people altogether?

18 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: So we have 10 equity
19 planning managers and a director of equity planning
20 who all report to our deputy commissioner. We also
21 have a senior advisor who's supporting policy, some
22 planning work as well.

23 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, do you think that's
24 enough?

1
2 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: I think that based on the
3 way in which we are developing and rolling out the
4 work, I think that that is a sound structure.

5 I would add that that's not the sum total of our
6 team, right? We you know have a Communications Team,
7 we have an Administrative Team, we have a chief of
8 staff, we're bringing on a general counsel, right?

9 Everybody plays a role in this work. But for the
10 team that are really the sort of tip of the arrow
11 that are working with agencies day to day, This is
12 ,you know, what we believe to be a good
13 infrastructure.

14 Obviously we ,you know, we'll continue to assess
15 our needs annually and also assess them as we ,you
16 know, start to implement the first plan.

17 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Where are you all located?
18 Like where is your office located?

19 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: We are right across the
20 street...

21 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay.

22 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: at 253.

23 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Do you have enough space?
24 That's ,like, it seems like you like ramped up with a
25 lot people...

1
2 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: We have ramped up. That's a
3 great question, Council Member.

4 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah...

5 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: We are quickly... (CROSS-
6 TALK)

7 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: (INAUDIBLE)

8 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: outgrowing our space...

9 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Mm-hmm?

10 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: and we are in conversations
11 with DCAS, our partners who are working with us to
12 ensure that we can find space that meets our needs.

13 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, okay, well keep us
14 posted.

15 I just, I don't know, maybe it's just me, I mean,
16 I'm the only one here, just, I don't want ya'll like
17 tucked away in a corner and not have ,like, the
18 resources and ,like, just physical space to do the
19 work you need to do.

20 So many city agencies are required to submit a
21 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report, and it
22 includes indicators that they use to track their
23 work. Have you or will you provide any advice to
24 these agencies as to indicators they could add to
25

1
2 track if they were reflecting racial equity
3 priorities?

4 So ,you know, that is like...

5 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Mm-hmm...

6 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Are you thinking about how
7 to incorporate racial equity into these other
8 structures and documents that these various agencies
9 produce on a regular cadence?

10 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Absolutely, so that's
11 certainly a goal and where we want to get long term
12 bringing more integration between those two reports.

13 One thing I will share is as part of this process
14 we've also been able to engage the Mayor's Office Of
15 Operation who manages the Mayor's Management Report.
16 They joined all of our training with trainings with
17 the Racial Equity Planning teams, uh, and gave a
18 really wonderful training on developing indicators
19 and outcomes.

20 And we've also worked to build some consistency
21 between the indicators that are in the Racial Equity
22 Plan and the indicators that are in the MMR, right,
23 so that there's not only streamline reporting for
24 agencies, but so that New Yorkers can sort of see the
25 big picture.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, so you talked about
3 how you've expanded the team on the racial equity
4 side. In general, overall are you currently engaged
5 in any process to expand your staff? If so, could you
6 share any information in regards to the number of
7 openings, titles, any other hiring timelines?

8 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Sure, so we, uh, our
9 headcount is 37 within our MOERJ Budget, that does
10 not include the Commission on Gender Equity and the
11 Young Men's Initiative. So just within our
12 overarching MOERJ budget we are at 37 headcount; we
13 have 25 positions filled. We have three candidates
14 who are in the pipeline as we speak, who hopefully
15 will be onboarded soon for roles, and we have 10
16 positions that are still in the hiring phase. So,
17 somewhere between interviews, offers. So our goal is
18 to complete all of our hiring by the end of this
19 fiscal year.

20 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you. That is all
21 questions - let me double check - I think I had for
22 you. And I just want to reiterate my support for your
23 work, and I look forward to working with your office
24 to advance the Racial Equity Plan to consider it, and
25 bring it up in upcoming hearings, budget hearings,

1
2 and, yeah just want to make things better for Black
3 New Yorkers and marginalized groups in our city.

4 So thank you for being here, and I appreciate the
5 work that you're doing.

6 COMMISSIONER SHERMAN: Thank you, Council Member,
7 and thank you for your commitment to this work.

8 (PAUSE)

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next we will be hearing from
10 Chair and Executive Director of Commission on Racial
11 Equity, Linda Tigani.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: All right, Chair, and I will
13 swear you in.

14 Please raise your right hand, Do you swear or
15 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
16 nothing but the truth, before this committee, and to
17 respond honestly to council member questions?

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: I do.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin.

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Thank you. Good
21 morning, Chair, Dr. Nantasha Williams, and members of
22 the Civil and Human Rights Committee. My name is
23 Linda Tigani, and I have the honor of serving at the
24 Chair and Executive Director of Commission on Racial
25 Equity.

1
2 I lead CORE in partnership with 14 commissioners
3 and 10 staff members. Today, I would like to provide
4 an overview of the role of CORE in the racial equity
5 planning process with a focus on our efforts in the
6 2024 Racial Equity Planning cycle.

7 I would also like to thank you for hosting this
8 hearing during Black History Month, a month where we
9 are celebrating the history of our ancestors while
10 also recognizing that we have a long way to go.

11 The New York City Commission on Racial Equity was
12 established in the November 2022 vote to hold New
13 York City government accountable to advance racial
14 equity in government operations and increase
15 community voice in government decision making.

16 Three of our five charter mandates speak to our
17 role in the racial equity planning process.

18 First, our commission must identify and propose
19 Community Equity Priorities and outcome indicators
20 relevant to the well-being of members for possible
21 inclusion in the citywide and agency Racial Equity
22 Plans in accordance with the Equity Planning
23 Schedule.

24 Second, following the release of Preliminary and
25 final citywide Racial Equity Plans, the Commission

1 shall make a public statement assessing the extent to
2 which the plan is responsive to Community Equity
3 Priorities and make recommendations on strategy
4 indicators and goals set forth in the plan.
5

6 Third, CORE will track and publicly report on the
7 agency and citywide compliance with the racial equity
8 planning process.

9 Government agencies must be held accountable to
10 the racial equity planning process and timeline
11 outlined in Chapter 78 of the New York City Charter.

12 The City's racial equity planning process set to
13 occur biannually starting calendar year 2023 begins
14 with CORE submission of Community Equity Priorities
15 and indicators due October 1st.

16 Due to significant delay in my hiring, CORE
17 missed the first deadline, thereby pushing back the
18 launch of the process by eight months.

19 According to the Charter, the Chair and Executive
20 Director and all commissions should have been in
21 place no later than August 1, 2023. My first day was
22 October 11, 2023 The Commission was not fully
23 appointed until October 30, 2024.
24
25

1 Once I came on board, I hired a team of six staff
2
3 members and supported elected officials to complete
4 their appointments to the Commission.

5 The second core staff member did not join until
6 March of 2024.

7 Simultaneously, I worked closely with the Mayor's
8 Office ff Equity and Racial Justice, also known as
9 MOERJ, to develop a revised timeline for the 2024
10 racial equity planning cycle, which was shared with
11 the public via the MOERJ website.

12 Commissioner Sideya Sherman of MOERJ and I agreed
13 to the release of a Preliminary Racial Equity Plan no
14 later than October 31, 2024 and a final plan no later
15 than December of 2024.

16 As of today, the plans are one 112 days late from
17 the October 31st deadline and 399 days late from the
18 original date in the Charter.

19 As a result of this delay, the Fiscal Year 2026
20 budgeting cycle has launched without the necessary
21 guidance Racial Equity Plans should provide to
22 understanding the changes in investment strategy the
23 City will take to ameliorate racial and social and
24 injustice.
25

1 I would like to now provide an overview of the
2
3 work CORE has done to move forward the 2024 racial
4 equity planning process.

5 The city's racial equity planning process begins
6 with CORE submission of the community equity
7 priorities and indicators. As defined in the Charter,
8 community equity priorities and indicators quote
9 "consider those needs and priorities that local
10 community members view as most relevant to their
11 well-being, giving particular consideration to the
12 priorities of groups or categories of community
13 members that have been historically underrepresented
14 in or underserved by government and its process." We
15 refer to these groups or categories of communities as
16 communities harmed by racism and social injustice. In
17 November of 2023, CORE began drafting community
18 equity priorities and speaking with partners across
19 government and the public to ensure that community
20 voices informed CORE's work early and in every stage
21 of the process.

22 CORE is committed to ensuring communities harmed
23 by racism and social injustice inform and guide all
24 of our work. On May 13, CORE released 16 draft
25 community equity priorities to city agencies and the

1 public. Prior to public release, CORE received
2 feedback on the draft priorities from 21 community
3 based organizations participating in the Task Force
4 on Racial Equity and Inclusion Neighborhood Network
5 Initiative and the New York City Participatory
6 Budgeting program. Priorities were also shared with
7 the Mayor's Office of Equity And Racial Justice as
8 well as the Deputy Mayor for Strategic Initiatives,
9 Ana Almanzar.
10

11 On May 13, 2024, CORE presented the 16 draft
12 community equity priorities at the Racial Equity
13 Planning training. We shared draft language, examples
14 on how agencies can operationalize these priorities
15 in their forthcoming plan, and strongly recommended
16 that each agency identify at least one priority in
17 each fundamental value that they would respond to in
18 their plan.

19 Community equity priorities were released in
20 draft form so that CORE can solicit feedback from
21 community organizations on the themes presented, add
22 themes they felt may be missing, and provide edits to
23 the language. Both the public and government partners
24 were able to provide feedback through any of the
25 following avenues: An online survey available in 12

1 languages; public testimony via email; host a CEP or
2 community equity priority community conversation led
3 by a community member; or invite CORE to lead a CEP
4 community conversation. We collected feedback from
5 May through August of 2024. At the close of the
6 inaugural engagement campaign, 16 community equity
7 priorities were finalized, and we added two new
8 community equity priorities, all of which are
9 reflected in the final two pages of the testimony.
10

11 Throughout our engagement, CORE worked with
12 community to better understand and identify who are
13 the communities harmed by racism and social
14 injustice. The New York City Charter identifies
15 following groups as marginalized: "Black, Indigenous,
16 Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, and
17 other people of color, women, religious minorities,
18 immigrants, and people who are LGBTQ+ and people with
19 disabilities."

20 Community members shared that they want CORE to
21 include the following groups to receive particular
22 consideration: youth, elders, people who are
23 incarcerated, and people who are unhoused.

24 Additionally, they requested that Middle Eastern
25

1 category be extended to include North African and
2 LGBTQ+ be extended to include intersex and asexual.

3 I would like to take this opportunity to
4 highlight that the New York City Charter, our city
5 constitution, upholds the LGBTQIA+ community as one
6 that has experienced racism and discrimination. The
7 Charter calls on us as government to stand firm in
8 our support and protection for the rights of the
9 LGBTQIA+ community, including their right to safety,
10 prosperity, and their right to receiving gender
11 affirming care from New York City Government and
12 government contractors.
13

14 Our organizing and engagement practice strives to
15 center communities harmed by racism and social
16 injustice. Over a four-month period, CORE received
17 feedback from 4,212 respondents. We partnered with 42
18 organizations across five boroughs, which yielded 220
19 CEP community conversations. In total, CORE spent
20 \$410,000 on the first cycle of community organizing
21 and engagement, \$390,000 went to community
22 organizations, and \$20,000 in administrative costs.

23 Now I would like to highlight the diversity of
24 our respondent pool which we believe is why community
25

1 equity priorities are in fact reflective of the New
2 York City population.
3

4 Out of 4,212 respondents, 35.5 identified as
5 Black or African American, 20.6% identified as
6 Hispanic or Latinx, 10.2% identified as Asian
7 American, 5.8 % identified as white, and 5.7%
8 identified as multiracial.

9 Less than 1% of respondents identified in each of
10 the following categories: Middle Eastern, North
11 African, American Indian or Alaskan, adopted or
12 unknown, and native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

13 With respect to diversity of age, 8% of
14 respondents are between 10 to 17 years old, 21.3% are
15 under the age of 25, 78.7% were 25 years or older,
16 17.4% are over the age of 65, and 86.2% are 65.

17 Women made up 55.7% of our respondents, men made
18 up 21.7%, and less than 1% of respondents identified
19 as non binary, genderqueer, trans man, trans woman,
20 agender, or multiple genders.

21 Respondents reflected a diversity of educational
22 experience, as well as disability and chronic
23 conditions.

24 With respect to diversity of education, 17.8% of
25 respondents' highest level of education was twelfth

1
2 grade, 17.6 reported having a high school graduate
3 or similar degree, 12.8% reported some college, 11.5%
4 percent reported having a bachelor's degree, 10.3%
5 reported having a postgraduate degree, and 5.3%
6 reported having an associate or trade school degree.

7 Upwards of 46.4% of respondents stated that they
8 have either a disability or chronic condition.

9 We offered respondents the opportunity to share
10 if they were multilingual and their ancestry and
11 ethnic origin. Respondents' ancestry included but not
12 limited to Caribbean, Chinese, Lebanese, Central
13 European, Jewish, and Filipino.

14 The preferred language of respondents includes
15 but is not limited to Arabic, Cantonese, Urdu, and
16 Wolof.

17 Bronx respondents made up 23.5% of the respondent
18 pool, followed by Brooklyn at 22.4%, Queens at 15.2%,
19 and Staten Island at 8%.

20 The Task Force on Racial Equity and Inclusion
21 neighborhoods made up 58.3% of the total response
22 pool. All questions were voluntary and respondents
23 were provided the option "preferred not to answer".

24 CORE organizing and engagement practices center
25 diversity, equity and inclusion to hold New York City

1 government accountable towards becoming a multiracial
2 democracy. We used a Likert scale which asked
3 respondents to identify their level of agreement or
4 disagreement with the proposed priority and open
5 ended questions.
6

7 Respondents shared additional requests including
8 but not limited to a call for reparations, lowering
9 the cost of living, ensuring students with
10 individualized education plans receive their services
11 on time, and increased childcare supports.

12 Over 80% of community members agreed with 13 of
13 the draft community equity priorities and 68 to 78%
14 agreed with three draft community equity priorities.

15 CORE worked with the Institute for State and
16 Local Governance to analyze 4,212 Likert scale
17 responses and 1,500 open end responses. To support
18 the developing Racial Equity Plan, CORE led briefings
19 on what we heard from community.

20 Two internal briefings were conducted for racial
21 equity planners representing city agencies
22 responsible for drafting plans. We held two public
23 virtual share outs for interested members of the
24 public, which was also open to government staff. For
25 more information on our virtual share out, please see

1
2 our recorded session available for the public via our
3 YouTube page at Commission on Racial Equity.

4 Following our briefings, CORE drafted updated CEP
5 language for the commissioners to workshop with the
6 public prior to finalizing.

7 In addition to 4,212 responses, CORE produced 16
8 draft community equity priority data profiles to
9 provide a baseline understanding of each priority
10 using publicly available data. We have begun
11 assembling existing data and data that offers
12 insights into the historical and current inequities.
13 Profiles can also be found on our website at
14 nyc.gov/core. The information provided was used by
15 CORE's commissioners to make final edits to the
16 language and vote to approve 18 community equity
17 priorities on November 20, 2024.

18 The Commissioner's vote on final community equity
19 priorities can also be found on our YouTube page
20 @CommissionOnRacialEquity. Community feedback on the
21 draft priorities is also outlined in a summary sheet
22 which is available via our CORE website.

23 I would like to now provide an overview of the
24 challenges we faced in the 2024 Racial Equity
25 Planning Process.

1
2 Despite CORE's success, we faced significant
3 challenges working to fulfill the New York City
4 Charter Mandate. We did not have sufficient staff to
5 support robust outreach throughout New York City or
6 conduct a more thorough analysis of existing publicly
7 available data pertaining to the community equity
8 priorities.

9 By June 2024, CORE had grown to a staff of six
10 with each area of work managed by one staff member.
11 CORE's success can be attributed to the dedication of
12 our staff who are not only committed public servants,
13 but who continue to demonstrate an unwavering
14 commitment to the fight for racial equity and social
15 justice for all.

16 CORE was intentional in its decision to only use
17 publicly available data to ensure transparency to all
18 communities. Unfortunately, we experienced
19 significant challenges due to limited data
20 accessibility and insufficient data disaggregation
21 within publicly available data sets. Publicly
22 available data sets allowed us to see how limited the
23 data was in its representation and acknowledgment of
24 communities harmed by racism and social injustice.
25 Much of our publicly available data is outdated, not

1 disaggregated, and inadequate for a thorough analysis
2 using a racial equity lens. Given our city's diverse
3 population, various races, genders, gender
4 identities, and ages, our research must reflect that
5 diversity.
6

7 These challenges are rooted in structural racism
8 and must be addressed to truly advance racial equity
9 and meet the needs of voters who overwhelmingly
10 called for these changes.

11 Our city pays lip service to diversity, but that
12 diversity is not reflected in the data used to make
13 decisions on policy laws and budgets that impact
14 communities daily.

15 In closing, I would like to refocus today's
16 conversation on our north star and the necessary
17 steps for Fiscal Year 2026 budgeting process.

18 Economic stability for all New Yorkers requires
19 that government be accountable for their actions,
20 whether it is to explain delays in their work,
21 changes in funding allocation to neighborhoods or
22 communities, or transparency in day-to-day work of
23 government staff such as child welfare, homeless
24 services, health services, or police officers.
25

1 The north star of racial equity planning process
2
3 as well as CORE's mission is to structurally shift
4 how our city institutions operate and invest in
5 communities harmed by racism and social injustice.

6 When the public voted for CORE, they envisioned
7 structural changes that would stop the killing of
8 Black people and communities of color by law
9 enforcement and those acting on behalf of law
10 enforcement.

11 Additionally, they were intentional about
12 pursuing a new way of life that would allow them to
13 thrive as opposed to just surviving. Charting a new
14 way of life included the ability to afford food,
15 housing, transportation, and the ability to fully
16 participate in community without having to live [pay]
17 check by [pay] check.

18 Structural change requires a sincere effort,
19 political will, and significant investments, all
20 imperatives that are made explicit by the Racial
21 Justice Commission when it introduced the City's
22 racial equity planning timeline.

23 Noting the importance of budgeting and resource
24 prioritization to racial justice process, the
25 Commission unambiguously expressed its intent for the

1 racial equity plan to intersect with the City's
2 budget process and prefaced the timeline with a clear
3 directive for the City's executive branch to develop
4 racial equity plans simultaneously with its
5 development of the citywide budget before the budget
6 is submitted to city council.
7

8 In departing from this aim, the City risks
9 undermining its capacity to ensure that all New
10 Yorkers enjoy the opportunity to thrive.

11 Finally, structural change requires
12 accountability, and over 80% of New Yorkers engaged
13 with CORE agreed that holding city employees and
14 their agencies, including police and social service
15 workers, responsible for any harm and abuse of power
16 is a priority for advancing racial equity in our
17 city.

18 Therefore, I would like to bring to your
19 attention the recent ruling, dated February 12, 2025,
20 by NYPD Deputy Commissioner of Trials Rosemarie
21 Maldonado, stating that Lieutenant Jonathan Rivera
22 should be terminated from his position for the murder
23 of Allan Feliz that took place on October 17, 2019.

24 I hope that the family of Allan Feliz can count
25 on you, Chair, and this committee to ensure that this

1
2 recommendation is upheld without interference and
3 that the Feliz family receives justice. Thank you.

4 (PAUSE)

5 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, thank you for your
6 patience. Thank you for your testimony. Thank you for
7 all the things you're doing for New Yorkers and New
8 York City. I'm actually quite amazed at all the stuff
9 you've been able to accomplish, and I feel like
10 you've answered so many of our questions.

11 I will if you can asterisk the one she didn't
12 answer while I random questions I had while you were
13 speaking.

14 So when you talked about your data, uh, the
15 question that I had is, do you have access to agency
16 data like from HRA or ,you know, a respective agency
17 to cross reference, or if you're looking for
18 something or trying to answer a particular question
19 about some type of something, do you have access to
20 agency data?

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: At this point in time
22 we do not have access to agency data. We would like
23 to set up MOUs with agencies to be able to pull in
24 their data, but we have not had the opportunity to do
25 that as of yet.

1 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, and do you have a
2 data person on your team?
3

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Our Director Of
5 Research And Policy serves as everything with respect
6 to data. So she has been creating partnerships across
7 city government but also with local organizations, as
8 well as national institutes like the Urban Institute,
9 to be able to identify data sets that are pertinent
10 to the community equity priorities. We also recently
11 brought on an associate within that particular team
12 that has a focus on quantitative data. So between the
13 both of them, we've been able to work with publicly
14 available data.

15 But I do want to underscore that in order to be
16 transparent, we want to use the data that is publicly
17 shared so that there is no questions by community on
18 how we got to our particular finding. But in that, we
19 want to further push the Administration and city
20 agencies to release more publicly available- to
21 release more data to the public, but also to make
22 sure that that data is disaggregated.

23 And Chapter 78 does call for standard
24 disaggregation guidelines to be used by all city
25

1 agencies so we look forward to receiving those when
2 they're shared.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, I also wanted to
5 thank you for your details. I'm like wow, you're
6 including your method - Likert scale. I'm like, oh, I
7 feel like I'm back in school.

8 Anyway, the other question I had had to do with
9 the same thing. You just you just kind of answered it
10 really, which is if you have any recommendations on
11 the data that you, one, feel should be publicly
12 available, and if any agencies are not disaggregating
13 said data, who are those agencies and what is that
14 data?

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Sure. So, as it stands
16 Chapter 78 does call for data disaggregation, and our
17 charter specifically also defines that term to really
18 uplift its importance, both in the racial equity
19 planning process, but also in the work of good
20 government and in the work of multiracial democracy.

21 So as it stands, there's no standard guidelines
22 across New York City government, whether it is for
23 city agencies or independent commissions or task
24 forces. That is something that MOERJ I know is
25 currently working on. When that gets released, then

1 we'll be able to see what agency, if any, is
2 complying or maybe not in compliance, what technical
3 assistance they need. However, that work, to my read
4 of the Charter, is the responsibility of MOERJ. We
5 worked with them closely on several things, and so
6 we're more than happy to work with them to move
7 forward data disaggregation guidelines but that
8 really is the first step. Uh...

10 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: So wait, you're saying
11 MOERJ is supposed to provide ,like, a template for
12 all agencies - explain that to me. What are they
13 supposed to do?

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: So according to the
15 Charter, my read...

16 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Mm-hmm?

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: is that MOERJ is
18 responsible for releasing standard guidelines that
19 all of government should use. I do want to note,
20 though, that prior to MOERJ's existence, there were
21 also New York City laws about data disaggregation,
22 that aligns with Local Law 174, that was really sort
23 of like a first early version of what racial equity
24 planning could be in the city, but that local law was
25 specific to just a few city agencies. Right? So

1 Chapter 78 really expands racial equity planning to
2 the entire - to all of city government - and with
3 that must come guidelines. And I know that that is
4 something that they're working on. And that's
5 something that we will be looking to see in the
6 racial equity plans.
7

8 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, I know ,you know,
9 here in the Council a lot of times we're preempted by
10 the state; we're preempted by the Admin, but what I
11 do feel a lot of people tend to do is ,like,
12 reporting bills...

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Mm-hmm.

14 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: and sometimes these
15 reporting bills kind of ,like, force the agencies to
16 disaggregate their data.

17 So it would be good to know what agencies either
18 maybe are not complying, because I feel like
19 enforcement is just a problem, like, we have these
20 laws already written, but compelling people to
21 actually follow the law is a different story.

22 So it would just be helpful to know because it
23 seems like you have a sense, or you could point out
24 specific agencies, the type of data that is
25 available, not available, disaggregated, not

1
2 disaggregated. It would just be some good information
3 to have.

4 You mentioned this line of much of the publicly
5 available data is outdated, not disaggregated and
6 adequate - various races, genders, gender identities,
7 ages, our research must reflect that diversity. Do
8 you have a sense of ,like, what research are you
9 talking about? Is it just ,like, general or, again,
10 can you ,like, pinpoint and say ,like, in Department
11 of Health ,you know, they released this report, and
12 this report didn't have XYZ, but the NYPD, they did
13 this, but it - like, do you have specifics?

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: No, we do not have
15 specific agencies that, uh, I would say are doing it
16 really great or not doing it at all. I think what we
17 have found across the board is when looking at
18 publicly available data, that there is a, uhm, I
19 would say mismatch on what demographic categories are
20 collected by city agencies and what are reported, uh,
21 what demographic characteristics requested and may be
22 listed as voluntary or not required.

23 We also in our work offered respondents to write,
24 "preferred not to answer" if they felt uncomfortable,

1
2 but even having some of that voluntary data was
3 particularly helpful.

4 I will say we heard the call for disaggregated
5 data during COVID-19, the early stages of COVID-19,
6 when a great number of our communities harmed by
7 racism and social injustice were dying at a higher
8 rate, were experiencing illness and hospitalizations
9 at a higher rate, but also impacted by all the social
10 determinants of health. And then we started to see
11 the Health Department shift also in how they were
12 reporting, so we're seeing that disaggregation. But
13 we do want to see that across the board. We want to
14 see that consistently.

15 So when we're talking about what reports, there
16 is no report. There is no data share that should come
17 from government that is not disaggregated. All of our
18 data must always be disaggregated for race,
19 ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, zip code,
20 chronic illness or disability.

21 This is essential information to being able to
22 make informed decisions that ensure that our policies
23 and our investments are addressing the people in the
24 greatest need and are impacted the greatest, whether
25 it be by natural disasters or climate change or a

1 disease or potential vaccine or remedy. We need
2 disaggregated data for every single report. Every
3 single reporting bill that comes out of City Council
4 should have specific instruction in the bill to
5 disaggregate the data.
6

7 And I would also say that we have a series of
8 preliminary hearings that are coming up for city
9 agencies, and when they are sharing their data we
10 should be asking them, "What is the breakdown? Where
11 is this investment going? Which communities? What are
12 the demographics?"

13 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: No, that's helpful, uh, and
14 it's...I appreciate you for bringing that up as like
15 a CORE issue because you know I often say ,like,
16 elected officials, we're reactionary, know, like
17 something happens, we want to do something about it,
18 we never really bothered to go back and see ,you
19 know, how the data is being collected, how various
20 groups, entities like you, can actually use the data
21 to effectuate change, at least the change that I know
22 I want to see.

23 So thank you for flagging that. I will be doing
24 some more digging into that, because that is quite
25

1 interesting, and personally fascinating for me on a
2 nerdy level.

3
4 So another question that I have, is CORE
5 currently fully staffed, and are there any plans for
6 further expansion hiring?

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Sure, so when CORE
8 started, we were approved to have 12 lines, seven in
9 the first year and five in the second year, the first
10 year being 2024 and the second year being 2025. Of
11 the 12 lines, 11 staff are in place. The twelfth
12 staff member was actually just recently secured her
13 start date which is March 10th. So we will have all
14 12 staff members by the middle of the month.

15 We were recently approved for five additional
16 lines in the January plan, and we are submitting the
17 PARs to OMB and we will be putting up the job
18 descriptions by no later than the March.

19 However, we are asking for more staff. So in the
20 Executive Plan, we will be asking for five more
21 staff, and this is to help ensure that the work for
22 Local Law 91 and 92, our New York City Study on
23 Reparations and Truth Healing and Reconciliation, can
24 in fact be done sufficiently, and that's why we need
25 more staff.

1 But we also need it to build our operations and
2 administration team, because we will be giving out
3 more money to community organizations through both of
4 these bills, plus we are starting the second cycle of
5 community engagement for the next Racial Equity Plan.
6

7 So we are in an interesting time where we are
8 still awaiting the preliminary plan. However, CORE
9 has already started planning for the second cycle,
10 which we hope to launch in March or early April at
11 the latest, so that we can help the City get back on
12 track with the original timeline in the Charter and
13 be able to deliver to the City community equity
14 priorities and indicators on October 1, 2025.

15 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Cool.

16 Will CORE be engaging in the budget process in
17 relations to its own budget?

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: We are currently in
19 conversation with OMB, and we're also gonna be
20 briefing City Council Finance on what requests we're
21 making for the Executive Budget and then what
22 potential requests are coming down the line.

23 I do want to reiterate that CORE is very much
24 still in a launch phase. We had to redo our
25 organizational chart, build out more roles. There are

1
2 plenty of compliance roles in city government, for
3 example, language access or disability access, EEO,
4 or just being able to fulfill all of the reports that
5 come out of City Council.

6 So we've had to create a chart that allows for a
7 strong infrastructure so that our Community
8 Organizing And Engagement Director, who managed to
9 work across all five boroughs, just themselves, with
10 of course the support from the team, but they have a
11 really big job, and they're responsible for robust
12 engagement and they have taken on language and
13 disability access. And so part of the work is to take
14 that off of their plate so that they can solely focus
15 on community, uh, as we have goals to reach more New
16 Yorkers in the next cycle.

17 We've reached 4,212 with a staff of six. We are
18 hoping to reach over 5,000 New Yorkers in the next
19 cycle since we have some more staff.

20 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

21 What about your engagement on the budget process
22 as a whole? I know you and I have been having
23 conversations around budget equity, so I don't know
24 if you just want to talk a little bit more about how
25

1
2 you envision playing a role in the budget process as
3 a whole?

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Yes, so our fifth
5 Charter mandate, according to Chapter 78, and our
6 section, indicates that CORE is to respond to
7 requests from the Speaker of Council and council
8 committees on matters related to racial equity. We're
9 going to be sharing some feedback with City Council
10 Finance when we meet with them about some concrete
11 questions. We are also planning for a forthcoming
12 event, which we're hoping to share with the public in
13 the next week, that will bring together community and
14 government, so both elected officials as well as city
15 agency staff, to think through what are measures and
16 processes that we can put in place to assess the
17 degree to which our New York City Budget is equitable
18 or is integrating equity into the decision making
19 process.

20 We do make ourselves available for all City
21 Council members to talk through potential pieces of
22 legislation as well as any key hearings that are
23 coming up. And we are happy to share with them our
24 data and what we've learned through community equity
25 priority engagement process to ensure that they have

1
2 what they need to talk city agencies during their
3 upcoming hearings.

4 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, no, I appreciate that
5 as a person who talks to your office pretty
6 frequently. But ,you know, I feel like these things
7 should be codified. It should be a requirement that
8 certain things happen for certain bills and things to
9 be passed, uh, whether it's ,you know, some type of
10 racial impact statement on our bills, or even ,you
11 know, racial impact statements or thoughts on our
12 budget.

13 It is quite interesting to me how ,you know, even
14 here at the Council we do not provide oversight on
15 the budget with an equity lens. You know it's
16 typically focused on these ,like, big issue areas and
17 respective agencies, whether it's over time as an
18 example. But we don't really go deeper into the micro
19 of like, well, how is this agency actually spending
20 resources across the boroughs, across different
21 demographics? For something that's not you know I
22 would say like a sexy topic like catch basins, ,you
23 know, for areas, communities of color that ,you know,
24 live in areas that typically flood. There has been
25 some thoughts and studies around the fact that catch

1
2 basins in certain communities aren't cleaned as
3 expeditiously as other communities. I mean I think
4 that level of analysis is very important, because
5 most of the issues that I feel people have in the
6 city have to do with quality of life. Like, people
7 just want to go home and ,you know, sleep well, and
8 they want to be able to sustain themselves. And in
9 the course of that, they're interacting and
10 interfacing with so many components of our city,
11 again, that aren't just ,you know, having to do with
12 NYPD as an example -which is very important- that I
13 think that the work that you're doing, that we're
14 doing I guess, around budget equity is going to be
15 important. And shoutout to Jimmy, too, who has been
16 really helpful in that thinking as well.

17 Has CORE been given any opportunities to consult
18 or give feedback on the development of a true cost of
19 living measure?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: We have not had the
21 opportunity to give feedback. We have been in
22 conversation with MOERJ as well as some of our
23 partners about the importance of the true cost of
24 living. We did alert MOERJ to the fact that many, if
25 not, I would say all, I would go so far to say all of

1
2 our respondents, all 4,212 respondents have said New
3 York City costs are too high. And for that reason, we
4 added a community equity priority that specifically
5 talked about the cost of food, transportation, and
6 housing.

7 I do want to note that when we talked about the
8 cost of living with community, we had originally
9 talked about the cost of high quality food, and we
10 had community members across New York City saying to
11 us, we're not at the point where we can talk about
12 high quality food, because we can't afford *food*,
13 because our pantries are our grocery marts.

14 And so when we're talking about the cost of
15 living, our community members who are living check to
16 check, who are just surviving, it's hard for them to
17 hear us come in and talk about, "What do you need to
18 thrive?" Because what they say to us is, "Can you
19 lower the cost of bread?" "Can you lower the cost of
20 fruit?" "Can you make it so that supermarkets and the
21 prices at supermarkets actually match what the
22 neighborhood has with respect to their financial...
23 access to finances?"

24 I also want to just uplift that people have
25 raised the high cost of transportation and feeling

1 that they have not heard New York City say enough
2 that \$2.90 is too high. In the conversation of
3 congestion pricing, we have heard a lot about what
4 that toll is, where that money is going, what's the
5 impact on drivers, what have we heard about the cost
6 of taking the train or the bus, and the cost of the
7 ticket if you are caught by NYPD for jumping the
8 turnstile - that there's a very serious economic cost
9 that, as we have seen, can cost some New Yorkers
10 their lives.
11

12 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

13 CORE allowed individuals and organizations to
14 submit input online via CORE's website. Could you
15 provide us with more information on the input
16 received in this manner?

17 Would you say received more public engagement on
18 these topics or do you believe this option has
19 allowed you to reach a wider audience?

20 Could you share how many responses you received
21 via the online forum option and what sort of outreach
22 CORE has done to inform the public of its opportunity
23 to provide input?

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Sure. So with respect
25 to our online option, community members have the

1
2 opportunity to either fill out a survey in one of the
3 12 languages, whichever language they preferred. If
4 an individual requested a different language, we did
5 work with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs to
6 get the survey translated that went for individuals
7 and or organizations that requested another language.

8 For our survey we used Microsoft Forms which
9 sometimes works for other people or their computers
10 or sometimes didn't.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: I hate Microsoft Platforms,
12 but I know it's like a government thing. I hate them.

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Well also...

14 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I just wanted to say on
15 record, like, Microsoft Platforms are just annoying
16 to me. Some of them. Most of them.

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Well for us we used
18 Microsoft Forms, because that was the most immediate
19 tool that was readily available to us.

20 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I understand.

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Thank you...

22 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I just wanted to say for
23 the record that I do not like these Microsoft
24 Platforms that you all are forced to use.

1 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Well, so through the
2 online survey we received over 535 responses. We
3 believe we did get people who were not able to come
4 to a community conversation. We had shared the survey
5 link across all of our social media pages. Many of
6 our staff also added the survey link to every email
7 that went out, whether it was to a government partner
8 or a member of the public.

9
10 So we had a fairly robust campaign; however, we
11 did not at the time use any paid advertisements,
12 which is something that we are planning to do in the
13 next round.

14 With respect to the feedback form, what we
15 learned was that it was long, and where people
16 struggled was in the way the draft community equity
17 priorities were written. And so a lot of the requests
18 that we received was to simplify the language which
19 we did for the final round.

20 We also received a lot of both added themes,
21 requests for changes that the public wants government
22 to make in the open ended section. And we had a range
23 of people that agreed and disagree with the community
24 equity priorities.

1 Some feedback was so specific, for example, we
2 had a draft community equity priority that started
3 out with, "Reduce the number of people of all ages in
4 jail, prison, and court monitoring, and transform
5 jails to rehabilitation centers." We had community
6 members say to us, *if you had started the priority*
7 *with transform jails into rehabilitation centers, we*
8 *would have been more likely to agree.*

9 And so we got very specific feedback that was
10 both the arrangement of the themes that we were
11 presenting in addition to what they would like to see
12 and how they would like to see the priorities be
13 operationalized by the city agencies.

14 We did receive, just to note back to Local Law
15 91 and 92, several members of the public say we need
16 *reparations now.* And so people wrote in any topic
17 that was important to them.

18 And we had young people also talk about the cost
19 of food and housing on behalf of themselves and their
20 families, and we had elders talk about what resources
21 are provided for young people. We had single mothers
22 talk to us about whether or not they felt the
23 community equity priorities was gonna make their life
24

1
2 in New York City as a single mom more manageable and
3 what we can do to support them as well as their kids.

4 And then we had again very specific requests for
5 *can we change this one specific operation in an*
6 *agency?* The primary example that comes to mind is
7 families saying, "Can you make DOE get our children
8 IEP services early in the year rather than at the end
9 of the year?" And so again it really ranged from
10 reparations, this long standing promise that
11 absolutely must be met, to let's dive into one
12 particular agency that was directly impacting that
13 individual at the time and raised that operation.

14 And as we know racial equity is both a process
15 and an outcome. So we needed to hear what are the
16 specific things impacting people and what feedback do
17 we need to give to MOERJ and city agencies to ensure
18 that it's in the plan.

19 And this is also - I know we just talked about
20 budgeting, but I just want to uplift that the
21 comment, the public comment that CORE is going to
22 make after seeing the plan is really going to help us
23 better understand how much of the city agencies work
24 is actually shifting structure. What are some early
25 signs of shifting structure and investment? And we

1
2 are gonna specifically be looking for which community
3 equity priorities are they sinking their teeth into
4 and how our feedback can not only help move that
5 process further along, but also provide City Council
6 with both content, as well as some ,like, content for
7 the hearings that are coming up, but also some
8 thought provoking questions that we hope you will
9 integrate into your preliminary hearings.

10 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, that sounds very
11 good, and I'm looking forward to it. You know, I
12 think, again, back to talking about myself, because I
13 guess I'm an elected official, you know, we say a lot
14 of like macro concepts, but we don't know ,like, the
15 how or the why, which is why I'm again just very
16 personally passionate about the work that MOARJ is
17 doing and that you're doing, because I think it gets
18 us to the how and why, and I don't think we focus
19 enough attention on that.

20 Again, we know these systems are inherently
21 racist, we say it all the time, but so much of the
22 work that you all are doing, whether it's the true
23 cost of living, the racial equity plans, the
24 engagement with the community provides the support
25 and foundation for us to understand how and why and

1
2 to work towards tangible solutions versus just like
3 rhetoric on the equities. So I appreciate that.

4 What sort of, I mean you kind of said it, but
5 what sort of language access or translation services
6 if any do you provide at the community organizing
7 events?

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: So we do provide
9 translation for anyone who requests it. I believe we
10 ask for at least 24 hours notice so that we can
11 ensure that those services are provided. We translate
12 all of our materials if requested by the public. What
13 we are starting to do is also include executive
14 summaries that are translated for some of our longer
15 documents, like for example our testimony today. And
16 we translate our newsletters so that the community is
17 able to see just sort of what our are updates for the
18 month.

19 We are excited to say that OMB has approved a
20 compliance officer line for CORE. And part of that
21 person's role, in addition to EEO and disability
22 access, will also be language access.

23 And what we want to do is also begin to shift to
24 get language translation support also from community
25 groups. What we learned is that there are differences

1
2 sometimes depending on the language, on the
3 translation we have, and how community members read
4 it. And so what we did in the first round was, one,
5 we learned about this discrepancy through our
6 partnership with the Civic Engagement Commission. We
7 have started to sort of double check some of our
8 translations with community members before making
9 them public. And then also identified the priority
10 languages that the City sets out for translation and
11 ensure that the online survey was able to be
12 responded to in the person's preferred language.

13 We do then, we'll translate any open ended
14 response that's written in a different language.
15 Sometimes we go back to the community organization
16 and say, can you translate this for us? Or we will
17 work with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs to
18 ask for their support, so that anyone who is
19 providing free response and their own personal
20 thoughts that that is able to be fully integrated
21 into our analysis.

22 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you. Because you had
23 such robust testimony, most of the questions you
24 answered, uh, and I always appreciate agencies who
25

1 just answered the question. It helps for us to
2 understand the work that you all are doing.

3 I have two more questions and hopefully they
4 don't get you in trouble.

5 During the last testimony, you know, to me I feel
6 like there's a lot of duplicity in the work, and I
7 feel like ,you know, it's bureaucracy, which I also
8 hate, but you know it's this idea of ,like - and not
9 to ,like, be on my Doge tip, but, like, government
10 is big sometimes for reasons that ,like, don't make
11 sense ,like, why are we doing these things? Like,
12 this is not actually demonstrating impact.

13 So I'm just wondering if you do feel there's any
14 duplicity in the work across the Administration given
15 the various you know like TRIE and MOERJ and CORE.

16 I mean it just seems like a lot of people doing a
17 lot of things, and I'm not sure that I actually see
18 the impact of all of this effort and maybe it just
19 takes time, right? That might be it. But just
20 wondering your opinion as well on like the duplicity
21 of the work.

22 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Thank you for the
23 question. I am also always looking for efficiencies
24 wherever possible. I do think that it's important to
25

1
2 note that MOERJ and CORE are still very much in a
3 launch phase. And so the efficiencies that we're
4 hoping to see really where - I think we're not going
5 to be able to see it until the second full planning
6 cycle has occurred and we've had the opportunity to
7 both see plans, respond to plans, but also track
8 investments and measure potential change.

9 I think having MOERJ and referred to in Chapter
10 78 as the Office of Racial Equity is a very important
11 stronghold for any administration, for any
12 government, as well as having an Accountability
13 Office.

14 Where I think that we could look to see where we
15 can be more efficient is in how we are thinking of
16 outcome indicators, measures, and data
17 disaggregation. So we know that the Charter already
18 calls for us to have standard guidelines. I think
19 that's going to be helpful in moving towards being
20 able to identify where we can be more efficient with
21 investments and programming.

22 But I also think that it's important to note that
23 we need more integration of racial equity across
24 government in order to see efficiencies, not only in
25

1
2 the way that we work but most importantly for the
3 public.

4 What we did hear from community members was does
5 the Health Department and the Education Department
6 talk to each other? Are they creating a plan
7 together? Does DOB and HPD talk to each other? Are
8 they creating a plan together?

9 The public wants to see us work more closely
10 together. We do think one of those ways is by having
11 more publicly available data shared, but it is not
12 the only way. We have multiple reports, as you
13 mentioned earlier, that say a lot of things. And so
14 we need to make sure that what they're saying is a
15 clear concise message that advances racial equity and
16 social justice for all.

17 We are not there yet, but I believe that the
18 processes that we have built into the equity
19 infrastructure will allow us to get there. And it is
20 absolutely my responsibility, as well as Council's
21 responsibility, to ensure that we are holding all
22 city agencies accountable to doing that work. And I
23 do believe that we'll be able to see that. But this
24 first cycle is, because of our delay, has not been
25 the best presentation of it, and I would encourage us

1
2 to just closely monitor and hold accountable agencies
3 as we move forward to make sure that they are doing
4 the work we need to be more efficient.

5 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you, Jen.

6 Just acknowledging, Hey, Mom, and, hey, Niece.
7 Hi.

8 This is my last question and once again you kind
9 of mentioned it, so just wondering your opinion on
10 the impact of the racial equity plans on the budget,
11 this year's budget cycle, given the delay, ,like, if
12 you feel like there would be any substantive impact
13 to the budget because of the delay.

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: I would say for me it
15 absolutely is an open question to assess what the
16 impact is going to be. I think not having the
17 Preliminary Racial Equity Plan does leave a lot
18 unknown, which is problematic.

19 I do want to just uplift Commissioner Sherman did
20 just speak to what - really New Needs is a small
21 percentage, and we really should be looking at how
22 agencies are shifting their internal budgets and that
23 some of the work in the plan speaks to that.

24 Unfortunately, we don't know that yet. What we do
25 know is that without significant investment in racial

1 equity, without a substantive conversation in the
2 budget process by all City Council members and City
3 Council Finance, we're not going to see the change or
4 the impact that we are expecting to see.
5

6 I think the Preliminary Plan is supposed to be a
7 guide and so going into a budget process without a
8 guide is concerning both from a government's
9 perspective but also concerning for the public who
10 have consistently raised the same challenges.

11 What I do want to also acknowledge is that there
12 are racial equity impact assessment tools that are
13 used in different parts of government. And what we
14 have learned seems to be the missing is that the
15 results from the tools are not raised in the decision
16 making conversations. And so while... (CROSS-TALK)

17 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, like make... (CROSS-
18 TALK)

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: I am a big proponent
20 of (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

21 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: the time and effort. Again,
22 I said that, it was like my biggest issue is that you
23 do all this work, it doesn't get implemented. That's
24 just the worst thing ever to me, because it's just
25 such a waste of time for government resources to do

1
2 all this work for there to to be no change or
3 implementation to me is just crazy.

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Well, is again why I
5 would say MOERJ is an important stronghold for New
6 York City, because there is a very critical component
7 of technical assistance that is not only looking at
8 data from a racial equity lens, using a racial impact
9 tool to assess a policy, a proposed policy or
10 legislation, it is also about how we are creating a
11 process that allows for community voice and racial
12 equity and social justice data to inform the actual
13 decision and what support does City Council need to
14 be able to be courageous in those conversations and
15 ask those questions?

16 Now more than ever is when we need more elected
17 officials stepping up for equity and stepping up for
18 using data for equity. We know that there are racial
19 equity planners across New York City, as well as
20 public servants across New York City, that are
21 committed to racial equity and social justice for all
22 and they need us to have their back.

23 And so we do that in preliminary hearings, but we
24 also do that by holding agencies and the
25 Administration accountable by saying we will be

1 looking to see when the plan is going to be released;
2 we will be looking to meet with MOERJ, take them up
3 on their offer for a briefing, meet with CORE, take a
4 look at our response, but also let's start to
5 schedule some more conversations so that City Council
6 has the support that they need to ask the critical
7 questions and make the hard decisions around funding
8 so that we can actually see shifts in our investments
9 - not only for the short term but also for the long
10 term.
11

12 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you. It's why I'm
13 holding this hearing because I'm very interested in
14 this topic. And I certainly think, more now than
15 ever, we can't be afraid to speak the words and have
16 the conversations and substantiate the words and the
17 conversations and the questions with actual data that
18 supports the work.

19 So I thank you so much for being here, and again
20 I thank you so much for the work that you do.

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: And now we will go to
23 public testimony.

24 Okay, so, I now open this hearing for public
25 testimony. I remind members of the public that this

1
2 is a formal government proceeding and that decorum
3 shall be observed at all times. As such, members of
4 the public shall remain silent at all times.

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

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

12 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please
13 fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms
14 and wait to be recognized. When recognized, you will
15 have three minutes to speak on today's hearing topic:

16 *Oversight - The State of Black New York and the*
17 *Racial Equity Planning Process.*

18 If you have a written statement or additional
19 testimony you wish to submit for the record, please
20 provide a copy of that testimony to the Sergeant at
21 Arms. You may also email written testimony to
22 Testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72 hours after the
23 close of this hearing. Audio and video recordings
24 will not be accepted.

1 And with that, I will call up and Jimmy and
2 Sharon.
3

4 (PAUSE)

5 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: You may begin. Sharon you
6 want to go first?

7 JIMMY PAN: Dr. Chair....

8 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Hi.

9 JIMMY PAN: and committee, happy Black History
10 Month, I am really pleased to be before the Committee
11 again.

12 You know, I come here in my personal capacity,
13 but I was obviously very privileged to be the Policy
14 Director of the Racial Justice Commission that put
15 these ballot measures into law. And I can personally
16 attest to the passion, the dedication, and the sweat
17 of all the public servants in this room in making
18 sure that we have structural change and that we're
19 abiding by the spirit of these ballot measures.

20 But I think we have to say what has to be said,
21 which is these ballot measures were put on the ballot
22 in 2021 and they were voted on in 2022. As mentioned
23 by Chair Tigani, we are 400 days past the original
24 deadline for the preliminary plans and well past the
25 postponed deadlines for the plans.

1
2 And I think given the chaos we all see across our
3 nation and in New York City, it's up in the air
4 whether we'll have plans by the anticipated
5 deadlines. And I'm sure everyone is offering those
6 deadlines in good faith, but I think we also have to
7 be realistic and say, we'll see them when we see
8 them.

9 And with that in mind, I want to draw a very
10 foundational question. I know we've talked a lot
11 about specifics and I know, Chair, you said you're
12 less interested in the macro, but I think at the
13 bottom of a lot of this, and as a lawyer, as a New
14 Yorker, someone speaking in my personal capacity, I
15 think we have to ask is New York City going to
16 continue to be a city of law? Is New York City going
17 to continue to be a city of law?

18 What we see in D.C. now is a challenge to law, a
19 challenge to the courts, a challenge to the
20 constitution, and I think we're starting to see that
21 ripple to New York City. New York City is the
22 greatest city in the U.S., and I think it's time for
23 us to decide as public servants, are we gonna be the
24 city that fights to uphold law, knowing that despite
25

1
2 in our nation's history law has often been used to
3 oppress and marginalize?

4 But we have our own laws, we have a Charter,
5 which every public servant swears to uphold. And we
6 have these racial justice ballot measures, which for
7 the first time in our city's history represents the
8 will of the people, right? Not just legislators, not
9 just past mayors, but New Yorkers, who came out in
10 the thousands and spoke, (TIMER CHIMES) who voted in
11 the tens of thousands overwhelmingly to change their
12 city's central document, their constitution that we
13 all uphold, and say we want a different form of
14 government. A government that works for everybody. A
15 government that has racial justice. A government that
16 at its bottom provides economic security for all.

17 I think this is a big question we all need to
18 answer in the coming days. It's not a theoretical
19 question. We all see what is starting to happen in
20 D.C. And I'm saying this not to lay this at the feet
21 of anyone in this room in particular, but I think it
22 goes all the way up to the Mayor, to the Speaker, to
23 all of our elected officials - On behalf of New
24 Yorkers, are we going to be the shield against the
25 degradation of rule of law?

1
2 I'll just be very quick here and make a point
3 since we're the Human Rights Committee. You know,
4 Eleanor Roosevelt and her international compatriots
5 really put human rights on the map. It's a pretty new
6 concept. But I think we saw after the rise of Nazism
7 and fascism in Europe, after the rise of the Great
8 Depression, they felt that human rights was something
9 that we actually need to put into law, create a
10 preamble, set a new set of values for government. And
11 meanwhile, her husband, FDR, came into office to
12 create economic security for all. Seeing the millions
13 of Americans suffering of hunger, waiting in lines,
14 and seeing that economic deprivation led to
15 authoritarianism across the world and to war.

16 And so those two together had the foresight and
17 vision to put these principles - human rights and
18 economic security - into law. And that's what led to
19 the creation of the middle class for the first time
20 in this country. And we know that many marginalized
21 and racialized people were excluded from that, but
22 they knew that these three pillars had to be upheld
23 for the first time in American history to really have
24 a middle class.

1
2 And so we see the middle class disappearing here
3 in New York City. We see it disappearing across the
4 nation. And we see the American dream dying. And I
5 know these sound like grand points, but I'm serious
6 when I say I think we're at an inflection point in
7 New York City. And this is not only about the ballot
8 measures, but truly about our commitment to overcome
9 administrative hurdles, to overcome staffing hurdles,
10 and to put really resources behind what New Yorkers
11 said they wanted to see. Otherwise our Carter just
12 becomes a suggestion.

13 And so with that I'll keep my remarks a little
14 bit short. I'm happy to answer any questions. We've
15 had, many years experience now trying to implement
16 these ballot measures, and so happy to comment on my
17 own personal perspective.

18 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, I see the same
19 question I asked Linda, which is, one, do you see any
20 duplicity in the work? And, then, two, you know given
21 that the true cost of living hasn't been released,
22 and the racial equity plans haven't been released,
23 both are significantly delayed.

24

25

1
2 I'll ask you a two part question on that - which
3 is, one, same question as Linda, do you think it'll
4 have a tangible impact on this year's budget cycle?

5 And the other question is, given the delays and
6 the things that you mentioned and the political and
7 social climate of this country and the state, the
8 city, do you feel the lack of said plans and said
9 true cost of living analysis is negatively hurting
10 the most marginalized New Yorkers because these
11 things are not have not been released?

12 JIMMY PAN: I'll start backwards.

13 Absolutely, I think that the failure to release
14 these plans and these measures is something that is
15 taking away our ability to address the core issues of
16 New Yorkers. Right? I think last time I was here with
17 the Chair Jennifer Jones Austin, we were making that
18 point that at the end of the day, these are
19 ultimately about economic security.

20 I think everything that's happened in our nation
21 in the past year reflects the desires of Americans to
22 have economic security, for New Yorkers to have
23 economic security. And I think by not having these
24 very fundamental tools, you know, the data, the
25

1 plans, the measures, we can't even begin to
2 understand what it is we need to do.

3
4 Of course we can think of big policy changes and
5 understand the structural roots of economic
6 deprivation. But it seems extremely misguided to me
7 to not prioritize what in some ways is low hanging
8 fruit, which is just measuring what we're doing.

9 After all, aren't we paid to improve lives for
10 people? Don't we want to be able to show that,
11 especially with elections coming up, to prove that
12 government actually has an impact on the lives of
13 people? So yes, absolutely, I think it hurts our
14 ability.

15 I don't want to speculate on the budgeting
16 process, but I have to say if I were a betting man, I
17 wouldn't put a bet that it would impact the budget
18 process. And I think it's just hard to imagine with
19 how tight timelines are that it would.

20 But to your question about duplicity, I have to
21 say firmly, no. I don't think there's any duplicity.

22 First and foremost, I think CORE provides an
23 extremely essential function of raising the public's
24 voice as a form of accountability. I think we heard
25 Chair Tigani's testimony today calling out the

1 delays, calling out lack of data. I think that, while
2 that's not an enforcement power, I think it's
3 necessary. I think you have to have a different voice
4 that actually helps all of us do better. I think we
5 all do better when we're held to account.
6

7 So I think, while some of the tasks may overlap,
8 I think their missions are completely different, and
9 if you hobble one, you hobble all of the efforts
10 towards equity in the city.

11 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

12 Have anything else you want to add?

13 JIMMY PAN: No, thank you.

14 NANTASHA M. WILLIAMS: Okay

15 SHARRON BROWN: Hello, my name is Sharon Brown.

16 Before I go, remember Israel, release the
17 hostages. Let Yahweh's people go.

18 Okay. For the bill measures, the data is
19 definitely needed, but we also need to make sure that
20 it's accurate. Sometimes there are delays in getting
21 data out, because after data has been released into
22 the public, they find out it's not as sure as they
23 thought it was. So sometimes the delays that we
24 experience with data collection and it being released
25 to the public is because, uh, by the time they

1
2 release something that, I guess the measure was in
3 '21 or whatever it was, by the time they release
4 that, we have new situations cropping up now.

5 So if they're going to release some data, they
6 need to find a way to get people together to make
7 sure the data is accurate. Because, like in the
8 medical field, you have data that says high blood
9 pressure runs in the Black community, and then five
10 or ten years later they say that data was completely
11 incorrect.

12 So in the racial equity sector, some of the
13 things that they are listing may not be accurate at
14 this time even though it's a short period of time. So
15 we need to make sure that our data is accurate.

16 So it might be a blessing in disguise that the
17 data and things are withheld and not released yet
18 because they need to make sure it's accurate. If they
19 have to go back and find a different way to do it and
20 it took some time, we would be grateful that they
21 have accurate data that we don't have to keep doing
22 this over and over again. I mean, there are gonna be
23 some issues to crop up, but if we can actually cure
24 some of the societal ills as far as racial equity and
25 the different bills that are, uh, there, if we can

1
2 find solutions and data that helps us out, then we
3 want the data forthcoming.

4 But there might be a reason that they're
5 delaying, especially understanding how the data comes
6 out and then many times it's inaccurate.

7 So the Civil Rights and Human Rights, we need to
8 make sure that everyone has the right to freedom of
9 religion. That's Judeo Christianity and Judaism. We
10 need to make sure freedom of speech abounds, and this
11 goes through the races. All races, all ethnicities,
12 everyone needs to be able to have the freedom of
13 religion, freedom of speech, they need to be able to
14 have housing, the right to self defense. The right to
15 self defense (TIMER CHIMES) is the right to bear
16 arms. We need to make sure that they are dealt
17 properly according to their race, not in a racist DEI
18 type of manner, but that they are dealt with the
19 sensitivities of their race. People should have food
20 and clothing and safety is a civil right.

21 If we are talking about civil rights, people
22 should be safe in their homes, they should be safe in
23 society. We need racial justice, and the bible is the
24 basis for constitution. There must be racial equities
25 for the Jews or no one else will have it. Yahweh

1
2 Elohim is the god of heaven and earth. I have dark
3 skin, and I want racial equity and all kind of
4 beautiful things for me. But, if the people of the
5 bible, the Jews don't have it, everyone else is gonna
6 find they won't get it. If we focus on doing the
7 right things by the Jews, who the whole world seems
8 to be focusing on, if we focus on them and get them
9 right, God says if we bless Israel, he will bless who
10 blesses Israel. If you, while we don't have the data,
11 (TIMER CHIMES) the things that we can do, help Israel
12 out, get their situation together, it will... it will
13 correct the problems in the races.

14 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 SHARON BROWN: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you so much.

18 Is anyone else in the Chambers or on Zoom
19 testifying? Last Call.

20 Okay, great. So, with that, this hearing is
21 adjourned. Thank you all so much for coming.

22 And Happy Black History Month, again. Power to
23 the People.

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 February 27, 2025