

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

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March 9, 2026
Start: 10:12 a.m.
Recess: 1:49 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - 8th Floor - Hearing
Room 3

B E F O R E: Elsie Encarnación,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Public Advocate Williams
Alexa Avilés
Gale A. Brewer
Kamillah Hanks
Rita C. Joseph
Shekar Krishnan

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

Faiza Ali
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs Commissioner

Melissa Chua
New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)

Lucia Goyen
Catholic Charities

Lauren Migliaccio
Immigration Justice Corps

Deborah Lee
Legal Aid Society

Sophie Dalsimer
Brooklyn Defender Services

Karla Ostolaza
Bronx Defenders

Juan Diaz
Children's Defense Fund

Sierra Kraft
ICARE Coalition

Pantea Nouri
The Door

Otto Heilmann
The Door

Khadijiatu Muhammad
African Communities Together

Van Xelo
Mixteca
Randy Ali
Arab American Family Support Center

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

Noelle Peñas
New York Lawyers for Public Interest

Rabbi Adam Graubart
Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ)

Zach Ahmad
New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU)

Dave Basnet
New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC)

Shelley English
Health Justice for NY

Jasmeet Sandhu
Health Justice for New York

Dr. Betty Kolod
Health Justice for NY

Dr. Steve Auerbach
Health Justice for NY

Brennan Peacore-Brink
Interfaith Center of NY

Gurvir Singh Sidhu
Sikh Coalition

Charles Brown
Lutheran Social Services of NY

Rabbi Marisa James
Congregation Beit Simchat Torah

Samantha Sanchez
Common Cause

Funmi Akinawonu
FPWA

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

Tania Mattos
UnLocal

Barbara Lopez
UnLocal

Joyce Wong
Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New
York

Mary Archana Fernandez
(Director: Family Support Services)

Stephanie Kuang
(Homecrest, Deputy Director of Social Services)

Nat Moghe
(Asian American Federation)

Ramin Seddiq
(Council of Peoples Organization, Staff Attorney)

Maryam Shuaib
(Arab American Association of New York, Coalition
Organizer)

Eduardo Antonetti
Internationals Networks

Esther Limb
HerJustice

Katia Skoko
Children's Law Center

Leslie Allen
The New York City Anti-Violence Project

Arlette Cepeda
La Colmena

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

Leidis De La Rosa
La Colmena

Alberto Oliart
Workers Strike Back

Mia Casera
Workers Strike Back

Vincent Hickey
Workers Strike Back

Naresh M Gehi
Immigration Attorney

Marilia G. Richards
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

Nila Rai
Adhikaar

Daniel Klein
JFREJ

Yasmine Farhang
Immigrant Defense Project

Husein Yatabarry
Muslim Community Network NY

Christopher Leon Johnson
Self

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2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Mic check, mic check. This is a
3 mic check for the Committee on Immigration. Today's
4 date is March 9th, 2026. Recorded by Tasia Sherman
and Walter Lewis in HR3.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and welcome to, to
6 today's New York City Council hearing for the
7 Committee on Immigration. At this time, I would like
8 to remind everyone to silence all electronic devices.

9 Also, at this point going forward, no one is
10 approaching the dais. No one. Chair, we're ready to
begin.

11 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: [GAVEL] I am calling
12 this meeting to order. Good morning, everyone. My
13 name is Council Member Elsie Encarnación, Chair of
14 the Committee on Immigration. Thank you for joining
us.

15 Today we will be examining New York City
16 sanctuary protections and the resources available to
17 immigrant communities. It is my pleasure to welcome
18 the new Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of
19 Immigrant Affairs, Faiza Ali. I look forward to
20 hearing your testimony and working with you to
21 strengthen protection for immigrant New Yorkers.

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2 I would also like to thank the representatives
3 from the Administration, members of the public, and
4 my Council colleagues who are here today, including
5 Council Member Alexa Avilés. This hearing is taking
6 place at a time when we are seeing harsh immigration
7 enforcement tactics from the federal government, from
8 arrests of noncitizens attending their required
9 immigration court hearings and ICE check-ins to
10 parents being taken off the streets of our
11 neighborhoods and students from their campus dorms.

12 Donald Trump continues to push a harmful and
13 extreme agenda on cities like New York, but New
14 Yorkers have made it clear they want ICE out of our
15 cities.

16 Across our neighborhoods, people are standing up,
17 organizing protests, sharing Know Your Rights
18 materials, and supporting immigrant-owned businesses.
19 Our communities are doing their part to protect one
20 another and stand against fear and division.

21 In the past, New York City has stepped up to
protect immigrant communities in moments like this.
In 2017, under the leadership of former Speaker
Melissa Mark-Viverito, the Council worked with the

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2 Administration of Mayor Bill de Blasio to strengthen
3 our sanctuary protections.

4 Together, we expanded the role of MOIA, protected
5 immigrant students and consumers, and safeguarded the
6 privacy of all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration
7 status. Because of these laws, the city cannot work
8 with ICE to carry out harmful policies like family
9 separation. New Yorkers need that same leadership
10 again today.

11 This Committee and the Council stand ready to
12 work with MOIA to push back against harmful
13 immigration policies, support our immigrant
14 neighbors, and protect the future of our communities.
15 We look forward to hearing about how our new Mayoral
16 Administration plans to restore MOIA's role as an
17 advisor and convener. This includes helping the city
18 agencies follow our local laws, providing resources
19 to our communities, working with other sanctuary
20 jurisdictions, and advocating for fair and humane
21 immigration policies.

22 New York City must not be complicit in Donald
23 Trump's deportation agenda. Our city has a long
24 history of investing in immigration legal services,
25 Know Your Rights trainings, and language access.

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2 These efforts help ensure that immigrants not
3 only survive in our city, but truly thrive. We look
4 forward to working with the Administration to make
5 sure of that, through both our words and our actions.
6 New York remains a city that protects families,
7 strengthens communities, and stands up for the
8 working people who make this city what it is.

9 Today, the Committee on Immigration will also
10 hear two bills that will strengthen our sanctuary
11 city protections. Introduction 59, sponsored by
12 Council Member Alexa, uh, sorry, 55, sponsored by
13 Council Member Alexa Avilés, will require the
14 Commissioner of MOIA, in consultation with the New
15 York City Law Department, to develop signage that
16 clearly explains key sanctuary protections under
17 local law.

18 The signage would also identify examples of
19 non-public areas on city property and explain the
20 rights people have when interacting with federal
21 immigration authorities.

While our nonprofit partners are working hard to
hold workshops, inform immigrant communities of their
rights, the city must also find ways to share this
information more consistently, not only with those

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2 directly impacted, but across all city agencies and
3 staff. I'm very proud to be a co-sponsor on this
4 bill.

5 Introduction 261, sponsored by Council Member
6 Shekar Krishnan, who has joined us as well- hello-
7 would prohibit New York City from entering into
8 contracts with entities that carry out immigration
9 enforcement actions that penalize someone for their
10 presence in, entry into, or reentry into the United
11 States when the city is providing goods or services
12 to those agencies.

13 These bills- these- this bill, excuse me,
14 recognizes the serious harm immigration enforcement
15 can cause to families and communities. It also gives
16 us the opportunity and the responsibility to
17 reevaluate how New York City interacts with ICE in
18 contractual relationships. I am grateful to both
19 Council Member Avilés and Krishnan for introducing
20 these bills and for the continued focus on safety,
21 fairness, and justice for immigrant communities and
all New Yorkers.

I would like now to thank my Committee Staff for
their work in preparing this hearing, including
Senate - Senior Legislative Counsel Nicole Catá,

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2 Senior Legislative Policy Analyst Rebecca Barrilla,
3 Principal Financial Analyst Nevdeep Bains, Assistant
4 Finance Director Florentine Kabore.

5 Finally, I would like to thank my staff, Deputy
6 Chief of Staff Stephanie Herrera, Legislative
7 Director Adam Bernstein and Legislative Fellow Winnie
8 Mora, and everybody working behind the scenes to make
9 today's hearing run smoothly, including the amazing
10 Sergeant-at-Arms. Um, did anybody else join us? Nope.

11 Okay, so I would like to now turn it over to
12 Council Member Avilés for brief remarks on her bill.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you so much, Chair,
14 and good morning everyone. Um, thank you for being
15 here, uh, for this hearing today, and, uh, Welcome to
16 Commissioner Ali.

17 Um, today we're hearing one of my bills that
18 protects and upholds New Yorkers' rights. Intro 55,
19 the New York City Know Your Rights Act. It makes sure
20 our city workers and residents know their legal
21 rights and responsibilities when it comes to federal
immigration enforcement. The bill requires MOIA to
create and hang signage on city property telling
people about their rights when engaging with federal
authorities.

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2 As federal immigration authorities engage in
3 increasingly aggressive and open lawless activity,
4 there should be no ambiguity about our city's
5 sanctuary laws. Clear signage detailing the rights of
6 both employees and individuals in these spaces will
7 give New Yorkers the confidence they need to assert
8 their rights in stressful situations.

9 In the words of, um, a community activist, the
10 signage will purely tell people that you are welcome
11 here, which is an important message to affirm to all
12 immigrants in New York City, regardless of even what
13 it says, which is an important thing for our city.

14 We'll also ensure that our city protects our
15 immigrant neighbors rather than bucking before
16 federal agents' ruses and intimidation tactics. Amid
17 the daily and innumerable horrors coming from this
18 Federal Administration, I'm heartened to see New
19 Yorkers come together to protect one another. Across
20 my district and the city, New Yorkers, including
21 folks in this room, are working tirelessly to lead
Know Your Rights trainings, assemble whistle kits,
run support hotlines, and do everything they can to
protect their people.

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2 It is time for a city to do its part in
3 supporting these grassroots efforts and make sure
4 that everyone entering our city property understands
5 their rights under local laws?

6 Well, one would imagine signage is just a sign,
7 the truth of the matter is we have to do everything
8 in our power to live in and actualize what it means
9 to be a sanctuary, to remind people that sanctuary is
10 not at your discretion or political views. Sanctuary
11 is what our city has leaned into as its own values.
12 And so whether it is signs on every single city
13 property, um, or the assertion by our investment in
14 making sure that people are getting trained and have
15 access. We have to do everything we can to make sure
16 our city is safe.

17 I thank everyone who joined us today to testify
18 and urge my colleagues to support the New York City
19 Know Your Rights Act. Thank you so much. Thank you,
20 Chair.

21 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you, Council
Member. I will now turn it over to Council Member
Krishnan for brief remarks on his bill.

COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you so much, Chair
Encarnación, for holding today's hearing and, um, my

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2 legislation as well. Good morning, Commissioner. It
3 is good to see you. Good to see you in this role. Um,
4 I'd like to take a moment to discuss my legislation,
Intro 261, which is being heard today.

5 Last Thursday, I held my first hearing in the
6 Oversight and Investigations Committee on our city's
7 sanctuary laws and the agency's compliance with them
8 to reaffirm that our city agencies work for us and
not for ICE.

9 We are at a perilous moment in our city right
10 now, and right here in New York City. Donald Trump
11 and the federal government are testing the limits of
12 our s- city sanctuary policies. This goes back to
13 last year when we saw the number of instances where
the Department of Corrections and the NYPD
14 egregiously violated the sanctuary laws or came very
15 close to doing so. An Administration with Mayor Adams
16 that was eager, sadly, to cooperate with ICE and
Borders Are Our Tom Home in any capacity.

17 Our sanctuary laws protect immigrant New Yorkers.
18 They help them feel safe coming to the city
19 government for services, from healthcare to help with
20 housing to care for their children. It's for that
21 reason that city agencies should be working for us,

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2 focusing on the needs of our city, delivering for New
3 Yorkers' needs, and keeping us safe. At a bare
4 minimum, the sanctuary laws make sure that our city
5 government is not cooperating with the enforcement
6 of, uh, federal immigration laws. But even more
7 fundamentally, our sanctuary laws keep New Yorkers
8 safe. They make them feel safe and comfortable coming
9 to city government for the services that they need,
10 not taking on federal immigration responsibilities,
11 not collaborating with ICE, and not increasing the
12 fear that we all feel every day.

13 But our protections against ICE are only as
14 strong as the paper they are— are strong— er, our
15 protections on ICE will only be as strong as the
16 paper they are written on if they are not enforced in
17 reality or strengthened in any way.

18 That's why we are hearing Intro 261 today. It
19 would prohibit New York City from entering into
20 contracts with entities that engage in immigration
21 enforcement and penalize a person's presence in,
entry into, or re-entry into the United States.

Our city agencies shouldn't be working hand in
hand with Donald Trump's deportation agenda, as our
Chair so powerfully said. We must do everything we

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2 can to end ICE's presence in our city and make sure
3 that City Hall is working to make New Yorkers' lives
4 safer and more affordable, not increasing fear.

5 Intro 261 would help do that. It would not only
6 f- end future contracts, but end current ones too,
7 allowing us to fully move on from an era under the
8 last Mayoral Administration where we saw egregious
9 collaboration with ICE and Immigration Enforcement.
10 The time is urgent. Thank you so much, Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you. I will now
12 turn it over to the Committee Counsel to administer
13 the oath before we hear testimony from the Mayoral
14 Administration.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair. We will now
16 hear testimony from the Administration. We will hear
17 from MOIA Commissioner Faiza Ali. Before we begin, I
18 will administer the affirmation. Please raise your
19 right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
20 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this
21 Committee, and to respond honestly to Council Member
questions?

19 FAIZA ALI: I do.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may begin when
21 ready.

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2 FAIZA ALI: Good morning. Um, thank you to Chair
3 Encarnación and members of the Committee on
4 Immigration for the opportunity to testify today. Um,
5 my name is Faiza Ali, and I'm the new Commissioner
6 for the New York City Mayor's Office of Immigrant
Affairs, or MOIA.

7 By way of introduction, and, um, for some, a
8 reintroduction, I am the proud daughter of immigrants
9 from Azad Kashmir in Pakistan. Growing up in an
10 immigrant household as a woman, as a Muslim, and as a
11 brown New Yorker, shaped my understanding of what my
12 role and responsibility is to the city that I serve.
13 It also shaped how I think about, um, what government
14 should be and the responsibility it carries to serve
all communities fairly and remain responsive to their
voices.

15 For nearly 20 years, I have worked in community
16 organizing and public service, guided by a simple
17 belief that everyone in the city deserves to be
18 treated with dignity and respect and that government
19 at its best meaningfully, meaningfully can improve
the lives of people if it chooses to.

20 I see my role at MOIA a continuation of that
21 work, but this moment requires more than words. It

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2 requires government that is coordinated, that is
3 responsive, and willing to stand clearly on the side
4 of immigrant New Yorkers.

5 At MOIA, our focus is turning values into action.
6 Aligning city agencies to deliver services
7 effectively, strengthening legal protections for
8 immigrant New Yorkers, and ensuring that the city's
9 sanctuary laws are real in people's daily lives. In a
10 time of federal uncertainty, New York City must be a
11 source of stability, dignity, and opportunity for the
12 families who help power this city.

13 As Commissioner, I believe our responsibility is
14 to listen to immigrant communities and ensure that
15 their lived realities shape how government operates.
16 We can build a city where all New Yorkers can lead
17 safe and dignified lives.

18 As federal immigration authorities continue to
19 destabilize and sow fear in our communities, it is
20 important that New York City reaffirms our status as
21 a sanctuary city by living up to our values. That
means reaffirming our sanctuary laws not just as
policy, but as practice, ensuring that immigrant
communities can live, work, and access services and
continue to participate in civic life without fear.

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2 All immigrants, regardless of their status, are part
3 of our city. It is our responsibility to ensure that
4 they can build lives of safety and opportunity here.

5 My testimony today will focus on the nature of
6 New York City's sanctuary city laws, the need to
7 ensure its strict adherence to these laws during
8 these times of chaos, and the programs that MOIA
9 operates to support our immigrant communities.

10 First, I want to reaffirm MOIA's fundamental
11 mission to protect all immigrant New Yorkers. The
12 data shows that by ensuring that all New Yorkers
13 regardless of immigration status— can access city
14 services, we can advance public safety and well-being
15 for everyone. Guided by our values and our Charter
16 Mandate, MOIA continues to lead the city's efforts in
17 support of this goal.

18 New York City does not control federal
19 immigration policy, but we can choose whether we let
20 fear guide our daily lives or focus on what we can do
21 to keep New York safe.

Under Local Law 228, all city agencies and
offices, um, including contractors and vendors, are
prohibited from assisting immigration enforcement or
utilizing city resources for those purposes, in most

1 cases. MOIA reports on all requests of, uh, from
2 non-local law enforcement for assistance with
3 immigration enforcement every fiscal quarter,
4 allowing both the public and the City Council to see
5 how the city's sanctuary laws are working and to
6 create an opportunity to address issues or answer
7 questions as needed.

8 Under the leadership of Mayor Mamdani and the
9 issuance of Executive Order 13, the city is committed
10 to review and strengthen implementation of sanctuary
11 laws, including Local Law 228. The executive order
12 requires public safety audits. It creates employee
13 and public education requirements on existing laws,
14 um, and forms an Interagency Response Committee.

15 The public safety audit, which must be completed
16 by early May, ensures that agencies like ACS, DOC,
17 DOHMH, DOP, DSS, and the NYPD are in compliance with
18 the city's laws and requires them to publish their
19 policies and protocols publicly. These agencies are
20 also responsible for training all employees,
21 officers, contractors, and subcontractors.

The order also outlines several important roles
for MOIA, including coordinating an education
campaign about our laws for our colleagues at sister

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2 agencies and the public. We will also work alongside
3 senior Administration leadership on the Interagency
4 Response Committee to provide guidance on preparing
5 and responding to crises.

6 MOIA has already, um, been expanding and
7 sustaining important lines of communication and
8 collaboration with city colleagues. The Interagency
9 Task Force on Immigrant Affairs, uh, meets on a
10 quarterly basis to ensure both ongoing instruction,
11 and communication regarding immigrants' rights issues
12 across city agencies. MOIA's, uh, Communication
13 Campaign is also focused on informing communities of
14 their legal rights under local, state, and federal
15 law, as well as encouraging New Yorkers to call our
16 legal immigration support hotline for immigration
17 help. The campaign is currently, um, hosted in 4,000
18 Digital Link NYC screens across the city on a 24-hour
19 cycle.

20 Since our last testimony to the Council on
21 sanctuary policies in January 2025, we created
several new materials in 10 languages, 10 languages
and counting, to respond to some of the immigrant
community's most asked questions, including Know Your
Rights information available in print and on our

1 website. Um, today we have our resources available
2 here for the Council and for the members of the
3 public to take with them as well.

4 In 2025, our external affairs team also made more
5 than 35,000 direct touchpoints through resource
6 fairs, Know Your Rights presentations, and
7 canvassing. Over the past 4 years, resources on
8 MOIA's website were also downloaded over 142,000
9 times by nearly 79,000 users.

10 MOIA is also continuing to work closely with
11 nonprofits to inform immigrant communities of their
12 rights and the availability of city services.
13 Immigrant rights workshops include information about
14 our sanctuary laws, um, our— their rights and
15 protections for immigrant New Yorkers under the New
16 York City Human Rights Law, and how individuals can
17 report violations of their rights. The presentation—
18 the presentations have also served as an additional
19 entry point for community organizations and their
20 clients to connect to free and quality immigration
21 legal services.

In FY25, this program delivered 455 presentations
that reached nearly 10,000 people, continuing our
critical role in outreach to immigrant communities.

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2 And while we cannot control the actions of the
3 federal government, we can and should be proactive in
4 our policies and programs to ensure that fear of
5 enforcement doesn't prevent workers from showing up
6 to their jobs, children from attending school, or
7 families from accessing healthcare and engaging with
8 their broader community.

9 MOIA has also created the necessary legal
10 infrastructure during this time of greatly increased
11 need. Last summer, we launched MOIA's immigration
12 legal support centers, supported by more than \$18
13 million in investments over 3 years to support up to
14 25 community-rooted organizations providing
15 culturally and linguistically responsive immigration
16 legal assistance. The network currently consists of
17 35 centers across the 5 boroughs.

18 This model was created to leverage the expertise
19 and experience of nonprofits and community-based
20 organizations that are already embedded in the city's
21 immigrant communities. This initiative provides
community members with a variety of legal and
non-legal navigation and support services and
maintains close outreach and referral partnerships
through local schools, hospitals, libraries, houses

1
2 of worship, and other local partners, meeting New
3 Yorkers where they are.

4 Since the program's July 2025 launch, the centers
5 have conducted approximately 7,500 comprehensive
6 legal screenings supporting immigrants on a variety
7 of legal needs. All MOIA Centers program providers
8 have free access to select online training and
9 webinars to a nationwide legal technical assistance
10 program through Catholic Legal Immigration Network
11 Incorporated, or CLINIC.

12 The MOIA Legal Technical Mentorship Program
13 provides dedicated support to the LSE network and in
14 FY '26, the immigration— the Immigrant Justice Corps,
15 or the IJC, is offering additional legal technical
16 support for LSEs. Having access to multiple legal
17 technical assistance programs and resources is
18 important for immigration legal professionals to
19 maintain their professional ethical duties, train and
20 support the professional growth of their staff and
21 volunteers, and to advance informed decision-making
on advocacy and program out— operations. Providers
are also connected to trainings and resources that
allow them to respond appropriately to federal policy
changes.

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2 Another critical resource available to, um,
3 immigrant communities is Um, MOIA's Immigration Legal
4 Support Hotline, which is also operated by Catholic
5 Charities Community Services and helps New Yorkers
6 explore their options to access comprehensive
7 immigration legal screenings.

8 In calendar year 2025, the hotline received more
9 than 26,000 calls. At the start of 2026, the hotline
10 expanded its service hours to include an additional 3
11 hours on Monday and Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00
12 p.m. Um, and New Yorkers can also call the hotline
13 and be connected to services on the last Saturday of
14 each month from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m..

15 Finally, during this distressing year, MOIA has
16 made substantial use of the Rapid Response Legal
17 Collaborative, or RRLC, which has provided legal
18 assistance to immigrant New Yorkers who are detained
19 or at imminent risk of detention or deportation.
20 Considering the current need, MOIA has increased our
21 investment in rapid response legal, legal efforts by
\$2 million in this fiscal year.

22 Additionally, MOIA is collaborating with New York
City Public Schools Project Open Arms to implement a
dedicated referral pathway and Know Your Rights

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2 training for New York City students and their
3 immediate family members who may be eligible for the
4 Rapid Response Legal Collaborative Services.

5 Turning to the legislation before this Committee,
6 MOIA supports Intro- uh, Introduction 55, and we look
7 forward to working with the Council and the sponsor
8 to refine the bill language to reflect the changes
9 recently announced by Mayor Mamdani. And while we
10 have made much progress in the last year, we
11 recognize that there is still much more work to do to
12 protect and support our, our diverse immigrant
13 communities.

14 MOIA stands ready to partner with the City
15 Council, with advocates and community organizations
16 and others to deepen our collaboration and collective
17 impacts in the months and years to come. We're proud
18 that New York City invests more in immigration legal
19 services than any other city in the country and we
20 will continue to explore ways to expand and improve
21 these critical services for our immigrant
communities.

I thank you and look forward to answering your
questions.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you so much,
3 Commissioner. Uh, before we go into questions, I
4 wanna, ah, allow the opportunity for our public
5 advocate who has joined us, uh, to say a few words.

6 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you so much, uh,
7 Madam Chair. Brooklyn-born Faiza Ali, it's great to
8 see you over here. Uh, as I mentioned, my name is
9 Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate for the City of New
10 York. I'd like to, uh, thank Chair Encarnación. Did
11 I say it right?

12 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Almost.

13 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Almost, all right, I'm,
14 I'll try, I'll keep working on it. My name is Jumaane
15 though, so I understand the feeling. Uh, and the
16 members of the Committee on Immigration for holding
17 this hearing today and for allowing me an opportunity
18 to give an opening statement in the middle of the
19 hearing.

20 Uh, New York City is home to more than 3 million
21 immigrants, and in the- And it is this diverse
22 tapestry of people that makes our city so very
23 special. Right now they are under an unprecedented
24 attack on their civil and human rights, and each of
25 us have a responsibility to protect them.

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2 Similar city sanctuary laws are also under
3 attack. New York City has had laws in place that
4 limit how the city can interact with federal
5 immigration enforcement since 1989, when Executive
6 Order 124 was enacted by then-Mayor Ed Koch. Our
7 sanctuary laws do not shield criminals, they never
8 have, as many claim. In fact, the city allowed to
9 honor detainer requests for individuals convicted of
10 more than 170 different crimes, including rape and
11 murder.

12 Despite all of the fearmongering about sanctuary
13 cities, these laws make us all safer. These
14 protections allow immigrants to report crimes, serve
15 as witnesses, and access schools and city services
16 without fear. These large-scale immigration
17 enforcement operations also divert resources away
18 from initiatives that actually promote safety. It's
19 not just the president leading attacks on our
20 immigrant communities. With the previous Mayor
21 Administration, the call for erosion of immigrant
rights came from inside the house as well.
Unfortunately, former Mayor Eric Adams issued an
executive order to allow ICE to establish an office
on Rikers Island and expressed a desire to change the

1
2 city's sanctuary laws to allow more collaboration
3 between the city and federal immigration enforcement
4 agencies.

5 Thankfully, our mayor— new Mayor Mamdani feels
6 differently and has issued his own executive order
7 reaffirming the city's immigration protections.

8 Still, we must remain vigilant and thoroughly examine
9 every area that may leave immigrants vulnerable while
10 accessing city services. One area of concern and
11 vulnerability is schools.

12 Schools are not permitted to open their doors to
13 immigration enforcement unless they have a signed
14 judicial warrant. Though we have not seen anyone
15 picked up by immigrant— immigration enforcement
16 either inside K-12 schools or while dropping off
17 their children, we have seen this take place in other
18 localities, and the fear around attending school is
19 real. Students at our colleges and universities,
20 however, have been particularly targeted by this
21 Administration. And just last week, federal agents
misrepresenting themselves as NYPD officers took a
Columbia student from their dorm and detained her.

 More importantly, lied about trying to find a
young woman who wasn't missing. Thankfully, she has

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2 released— she was released later that day, but the
3 incident exposes concerning vulnerability that
4 requires examination as well as collaboration to
5 ensure it does not happen again.

6 We have also seen immigrants targeted following
7 legal proceedings. When ICE consistently detains
8 people who have lawfully attended an immigration
9 hearing or check-in, it disincentivizes complying
10 with the law and attending these hearings. Federal
11 presence at municipal and state courthouses too can
12 deter people from participating in the legal process,
13 even when they are the one who was victimized or a
14 key witness in a crime. This is why protecting
15 sensitive locations, places like schools,
16 courthouses, hospitals, shelters and places of
17 worship is so important.

18 We must step up where the federal government has
19 stepped back. City agencies are for the people who
20 live and work in New York City, not to serve
21 dubious legal, dangerous, and wasteful immigration
officer enforcement operations. Every person in our
city and in our country has inalienable human and
civil rights, and we cannot let the humanity— the

1
2 inhumanity of this president erode our own humanity.
3 Thank you for giving me the opportunity.

4 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: You are welcome every
5 single time. Um, so first I'd like to say,
6 Commissioner, that I, I am really pleased to hear
7 some of the things that were said during your
8 testimony. Um, I really feel that it, it sounds like
9 we're aligned. And actually, before I keep going, I
10 wanna, um, recognize, uh, Council Member Gale Brewer
11 has joined us.

12 Um, but I do recognize that it seems that we're
13 aligned, right? Uh, you're aligned with the City
14 Charter, advising agencies, best practices for
15 immigrant inclusion, um, compiling quarterly reports
16 and, and things like that. But I want to take a step
17 just to kind of understand the, the world as it
18 stands today. And boy, with MOIA, you're new, I'm
19 new, so I'm kind of gonna get a, a grasp of what's
20 going on there.

21 So currently, how many staffers are on MOIA's
staff today?

FAIZA ALI: Yeah, we have a team of about 60
staffers, um, both from that directly come from MOIA
and other agency lines.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: So 60 staffers that come
3 from other agency lines, but just-

4 FAIZA ALI: In total.

5 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: In total, and just under
6 MOIA's, uh, staffing lines.

7 FAIZA ALI: The current direct staffing lines are
8 between 4 and 5.

9 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: 4 and 5, okay and is
10 that the, the total allotted for that? I believe
11 it's, it's more than that, right? It's just what you
12 have hired so far.

13 FAIZA ALI: Um, that is what is currently
14 allotted. Correct.

15 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay and do you have a
16 dedicated staff who advise on the city's detainers?

17 FAIZA ALI: So we have a pretty robust team
18 currently. We have a, um, a team that does ex-
19 handles external affairs. We have a team that handles
20 policy. Um, we have a legal in, uh, counsel in-house.
21 Um, so we do have the capacity currently to examine
whether it's detainer laws, sanctuary laws, um,
moving forward. Yes.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: So you will have a
dedicated staff member on this team?

1
2 FAIZA ALI: Currently have dedicated staff
3 in-house. Yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay, perfect, thank
5 you. Um, and do— since, and I know you've only been
6 there for a very short amount of time.

7 FAIZA ALI: This is my day 6.

8 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Day 6, so in the 6 days,
9 um, uh, are there plans, uh, to meet regularly with
10 NYPD, DOC, DOP regarding those detainer requests?

11 FAIZA ALI: That's an excellent question. So there
12 are 2, um, sort of avenues right now that are before
13 us that, that really, um, dictate our interaction
14 with agencies. So we have first the interagency task
15 force that has existed. It's, it's part of the
16 Charter. It's a Charter mandate. Um, it is where we
17 engage agencies like DOP, DOC, NYPD, but also more
18 broadly other agencies to learn more about any
19 changes to city services that impact immigrant
20 communities. So that is one bucket.

21 Um, and the other is, uh, the Interagency
Response Committee that I mentioned in the testimony
that comes from Mayor Mamdani's recent executive
order that actually, um, si— singles out 6 agencies,
including the 3 that you have mentioned, and calls on

1
2 them to, um, submit a audit. Um, so we have a better
3 understanding of, uh, how they are adhering to
4 sanctuary policies and laws.

5 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: So in the 6 days that
6 you've been there, have you had any one of these?
7 Have you had an interagency meeting?

8 FAIZA ALI: I have not in the last 6 days that
9 I've been there, no but we do on the Interagency Task
10 Force, they do meet on a quarterly basis.

11 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay. Um, and the
12 Response Committee is still in formation, but, um,
13 uh, I did have a preliminary conversation with a
14 member of the Mayor's Administration on the contours
15 of the, um, Response Committee.

16 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay. Um, I am going to
17 now shift gears a little bit, just talking about, um,
18 policy changes. I wanna understand how MOIA's gonna
19 be helping other agencies to prepare to respond to
20 the possibility of ICE agents, uh, waiting to
21 apprehend immigrants at or near hospitals, schools,
religious institutions, and shelters?

FAIZA ALI: Mhm. So I, I'll take a, maybe even a
further step back just to sort of give a sense of,
um, where, what MOIA under the new Administration

1
2 will look like and I think that it'll help answer,
3 um, part of your question.

4 Um, it's no secret that under the previous Mayor,
5 um, MOIA was constrained by an Administration that,
6 um, undermined the role of our office. And so we know
7 that that is no longer the case. Um, under Mayor
8 Mamdani, we've, you know, made it very clear that
9 immigration empowerment and, uh, protection is
10 actually a defining commitment of this
11 Administration.

12 So as I assume this role as Commissioner, um, uh,
13 under my leadership, I am looking to lead a more
14 vision-driven approach that really ensures that
15 immigrant New Yorkers are protected, um, that they're
16 heard and that they are in fact able to thrive.

17 So we are looking to build in-house capacity
18 within MOIA centered around a few key, um, areas,
19 protecting immigrants, um, uh, first and foremost,
20 but also looking at how are we advancing
21 affordability and worker protection and how are we
increasing the trust, frankly rebuilding the trust
between, uh, communities and, and government.

22 So, This is a new MOIA under, um, a, a new Mayor,
23 and we are using this time to really kind of examine,

1
2 um, the current program capacities that we have, the
3 current relationships that we have with agencies to
4 really rebuild and strengthen our work. So we're
5 actively looking to ensure that we have the
6 infrastructure to meet, uh, this moment.

7 Um, specifically to your question about how are
8 we preparing for, uh, ICE enforcement activities. And
9 so I've mentioned previously, um, you know, building,
10 uh, MOIA's capacity to, uh, to respond and, and
11 deepen our own rapid response work as one portion.

12 Um, we have capacity right now with our External
13 Affairs Committee that engages the public to make
14 sure that we are meeting the communities where they
15 are. But most importantly, or in addition, um, we are
16 not doing this work in isolation. The Interagency
17 Response Committee is really a, a, a body right now
18 that is looking to develop plans to co- like, for a
19 coordinated citywide response in the event that there
20 is, um, ah, an escalation in federal enforcement.

21 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: And does the in-house
capacity also mean hiring more staff or expanding
hopefully the budget of MOIA? Do you see the
Administration doing that?

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2 FAIZA ALI: So, uh, day 6, I'm still evaluating,
3 um, what our current capacity looks like, um, to make
4 those assessments. And, you know, we have a— another
5 hearing, lucky me, uh, in just a few short weeks to
6 really dig into what the needs are, um, and how we
7 want to build the capacity of MOIA to really meet
8 this moment, um, that, that the communities deserve.

9 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Now, I know in your
10 testimony you mentioned a lot of the Know Your Rights
11 um, both, uh, actual handouts but also trainings that
12 are being done. Is that something that agencies or
13 the public must request through you, and how do they
14 do that? How does someone access the resources that
15 you have? Is it only by the website? Are you
16 proactively looking to reach out to communities?

17 FAIZA ALI: Yeah, absolutely. That's a great
18 question. Um, there are a number of ways that our
19 Know Your Rights materials are both accessible and,
20 um, available to the public and agencies. So through
21 the Interagency Task Forces, that is where we sh— do
a lot of info sharing and material sharing. And so
agencies do have access to our most recently updated
materials. Um, they are available on our website in
multiple languages. We have, um, Know Your Rights

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2 flyers, we have palm cards, we have booklets that
3 really have been updated, um, to reflect what
4 communities are asking for. You know, what, what are
5 the sanctuary laws in New York City? Um, how do they
6 impact New Yorkers? If I am, um, if a family member
7 of mine or someone I know is detained, how do I
8 access services? These are all, um, information that
9 is in- available on our website at
10 nyc.gov/immigrants.

11 Um, and we are, um, also disseminating
12 information through our providers. So we have
13 providers who, um, conduct Know Your Rights
14 trainings, uh, throughout the city in multiple
15 languages. And so we are- they are also carrying that
16 material with them.

17 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: And how often does the
18 MOIA staff, like, go to those, uh, attend those Know
19 Your Rights trainings and, and be present there to
20 give out their own information or interface with, uh,
21 community?

18 FAIZA ALI: Um, we have staff that, uh, table at,
19 uh, most of these Know Your Rights workshops. We
20 have, um, staff that attend also events that are
21

1
2 unrelated to Know Your Rights workshops that are just
3 in the community.

4 So whether we get a request from an elected
5 official, from members of the Council, or
6 community-based organizations, we do have capacity.
7 We have organizers and, um, and liaisons, community
8 liaisons that actually go out there and table. So
9 that capacity exists and if folks would like, um,
10 additional resources or help, um, they can feel free
11 to reach out to MOIA's office directly.

12 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Now, I know that, um,
13 the unfortunate truth is that we are facing a time
14 where policy changes are happening at the drop of a
15 dime. Um, every time we turn on the TV, there's a new
16 policy. Um, how will MOIA rapidly disseminate
17 information amongst immigrant communities upon
18 possible immediate and devastating policy changes?

19 FAIZA ALI: So we— this is actually one area, um,
20 that I think is really critical for the future of
21 MOIA is really making sure we have a robust team that
is, um, monitoring, you know, policy changes on the
federal, state, and local levels. Um, and is able to,
you know, develop materials for both our

1
2 community-based organizations and the public to— in,
3 in a very digestible form.

4 We do currently have a, uh, er, a team that is
5 focused on policy and programs. In fact, our programs
6 are developed in response to a lot of the policy
7 changes. So they are— they do shift. Um, and so, but
8 one thing that I'm really hoping to get us back on
9 track to is having a really robust policy shop to do
10 just that work.

11 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: And this team, um, this
12 is, uh, in MOIA, or you mean with—

13 FAIZA ALI: Within MOIA?

14 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Within MOIA, okay,
15 perfect. Um, and, and do you know if the information
16 will be conveyed in plain language, especially since
17 a lot of this is like legal information? It's pretty
18 heavy and dense and hard to communicate, but—

19 FAIZA ALI: Absolutely. So our current materials,
20 if you take a look at them. They are in plain
21 language. They are in accessible language. I, I'll
say as a non-attorney, it is important for me to make
sure that we understand the information, um, and that
it is linguistically and culturally accessible, um,
as well.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: In the recent weeks,
3 have there been any, uh, state-level legislation that
4 the city has advocated for, um, that is immigration
5 related? Of course.

6 FAIZA ALI: Uh, that is something that I would
7 have to get back to you on.

8 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: All right, that thing is
9 tricky. Um, one of the questions that I had is, is,
10 do you plan on meeting with agencies from other
11 cities? Which cities? How often? For what purpose?
12 Um, Yeah.

13 FAIZA ALI: Um, so I, I'll say that, um, my
14 primary focus right now is to make sure we are
15 deepening our relationships with the city agencies in
16 our city right here. It is important that we have
17 open lines of communication with, uh, our agency
18 partners. Um, and there are, you know, the, the MOIA
19 is part of a, a national table, Cities for Action, as
20 well, where we, um, work with you know, other big
21 cities on, you know, immigration, uh, and immigrant
services that are available here in New York. We
share best practices.

Um, that is an important part of the larger sort
of conversation around how do— how are we building,

1
2 um, uh, you know, capacity in our cities to protect
3 immigrant New Yorkers? What are other lessons that we
4 can share and both learn? But my primary focus in the
5 next few weeks, um, will be to deepen the
6 relationships with other agencies um, within the
7 city.

8 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: And so the, the, the,
9 um, trainings that MOIA has conducted with the city
10 agencies, um, do you know how many trainings on
11 average in a year they conduct with the different
12 city agencies? And are you looking to increase the
13 number of trainings that happen with the city
14 agencies, or—

15 FAIZA ALI: So I know that, um, we have regular,
16 uh, communication with agencies. I don't know the
17 exact number and one example I can give is that we
18 are currently working with the New York City
19 Department of Education on Project Open Arms and
20 conducting sort of, uh, you know, an assessment there
21 on how do we ensure that students and their families
have access to, uh, Know Your Rights materials, but
also legal services through our Rapid Response Legal
Collaborative.

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2 So, um, I, I can get back to you, um, with an
3 exact number of how many trainings we've conducted
4 with agencies, but I know that that work is an
5 ongoing, um, uh, part of, uh, MOIA's work currently.

6 FAIZA ALI: Great and, um, do you know if the
7 future— so I'll say this, I know that, um, we, you
8 know, we held a roundtable with some of the
9 nonprofits and CBOs last, last week, and some of the
10 concerns with that, uh, you know, these meetings,
11 interagency with, with agency heads, it may not
12 always trickle down to the people that are
13 front-facing and forward-facing to the community.

14 So how do we ensure or how do you see ensuring
15 that the information that it's talked about in those
16 conversations and what comes out of those
17 conversations really gets to the people that are
18 gonna be interacting with community members every
19 day?

20 FAIZA ALI: So that is one thing that I'm really
21 hoping to bolster within MOIA's, um, capacity right
22 now is just really deepening the ties with, with
23 those front-facing community-based organizations, not
24 just the ones who are, you know, really doing the
25 heavy lifting of providing legal services as

1
2 contracted. Providers, but also, um, organizations on
3 the ground. It is really important that they have all
4 the information.

5 Um, one thing that I, I plan to borrow from my
6 time at the Council is, um, you know, having regular
7 roundtable meetings with community-based
8 organizations to better understand what their needs
9 are, what questions they have, and really trying to
10 bridge that gap. And if that means inviting agency
11 partners so they can directly communicate with
12 providers, we will make sure that we prioritize that
13 as well.

14 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Great, thank you. I am
15 going to actually take a quick break. I know that
16 some of my colleagues have questions. Uh, we'll start
17 with, uh, Council Member Brewer, then Avilés, and
18 then Krishnan.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much, Madam
20 Chair, and congratulations, Commissioner. We're very
21 excited about your job. Um, I have a few questions.
First of all, when you mention Open Arms, just how
many districts have such a Committee? I know
community school district. We meet in 3 every month.

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2 Sometimes 100 people are turning out. It's very, very
3 successful.

4 So I didn't know if other districts have such an
5 Open Arms because it's a great vehicle for students,
6 but also for the community.

7 FAIZA ALI: So on Project Open Arms, I'm gonna
8 come back to you and just get that information from
9 our team on exactly how many.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I think you find it--
11 It's very, very helpful. I didn't know if anybody
12 else even has such an Open Arms, uh, district
13 gathering.

14 Number 2, I'm concerned about storefronts and
15 like all the mom and pop businesses, but generally,
16 is that an outreach that you maybe you do with SBS or
17 others in terms of those? I find that, um, when I go
18 to places, 'cause most of the people on the West Side
19 know me and they have, oh, Gale, I have no green
20 card, panic.

21 FAIZA ALI: Mhm.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But they don't want their
bosses to know. So I just didn't know if you do
outreach to the storefronts.

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2 FAIZA ALI: Yeah, so that's something that, um, we
3 are exploring. You know, when we think of the
4 agencies that we want to prioritize building a deeper
5 partnership with, we're looking— we tend to look at,
6 you know, um, uh, the law enforcement agencies. And
7 so SBS is on our list. I, you know, I'm excited to
8 work with the new commissioner and their team on sort
9 of thinking through what what does outreach to
10 storefronts look like? We have the materials, we have
11 the resources, we have the expertise, and it's just a
12 matter of making that connection. And so we will
13 absolutely prioritize that.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'd love to work with you
15 on that. Hotline usage— I just know, are there any
16 numbers? I understand Catholic Charities runs it, but
17 are there— is it used, the hotline?

18 FAIZA ALI: The hotline is used, and I actually
19 should have a breakdown of the number of calls.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Because I just didn't know
21 if people know about it or do they call 311 or, you
22 know.

23 FAIZA ALI: So there, there are two ways you can,
24 um, access the hotline. Um, you can call 311 and ask
25 for immigration legal help. You'll get patched to the

1
2 Catholic Serv— the Catholic Charities Immigration
3 hotline. You can contact MOIA, um, as well. Um, so
4 there are multiple avenues for the members of the
5 public to access that.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, you can get back to
7 me about the usage.

8 FAIZA ALI: Uh yes, I actually think we may even
9 have that.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. All right. Um, audit
11 info, when is that due? I know you mentioned there
12 are 6 agencies that are supposed to be a part of the
13 EO.

14 FAIZA ALI: So the audits are due in early May.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Early May.

16 FAIZA ALI: May 6th or 7th, to be exact.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, alright and then,
18 uh, when we had the hearing, uh, last week with, ah,
19 O&I and criminal justice, uh, it was mostly about
20 correction, to be honest with you. And one of the
21 issues was that, you know, training had been lax. To
put it mildly and that's why we ended up with some of
these issues.

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2 So are you involved with training in the future?
3 The gentleman who spoke, general counsel, was pretty
4 clear that they are gonna do the training.

5 FAIZA ALI: Mhm.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But is that something that
7 you're involved with? He seemed to be doing it all
8 internally, which might be fine, but I just didn't
9 know if MOIA's involved.

10 FAIZA ALI: Yeah, MOIA is involved. We are— we're
11 playing a leadership role in the Interagency Response
12 Committee, um, that is dictated in the EO that
13 requires the agencies to do the audits. So we will be
14 receiving the reports and following up with, um, you
15 know, a review of those reports and recommendations.
16 So we are involved in that process.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so in other words,
18 they'll be doing the training and you'll be auditing
19 to see if it's working essentially.

20 FAIZA ALI: Right, part of the audit is to also
21 reveal where their gaps are on training and so we're
hoping to learn more information from that.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Because I would think
there might be in that situation. Okay. Um, the other

1
2 question I have is I'm a big fan, as you know, of the
3 Deliveristas and the work that they do.

4 FAIZA ALI: Me too.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know I have them in my
6 house, so I'm quite familiar with them. Um, so, but
7 they get jumped off of the platforms all the time. I
8 spend a great deal of time trying to get people back
9 on the platforms.

10 FAIZA ALI: Mhm.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So my question is working
12 with Workers Justice or other such organizations, is
13 that something, you know, I'm trying to find out how
14 do you work with some of these nonprofits that
15 desperately need legal assistance, desperately need,
16 ah, help when they're swamped. So, mhm, I know you
17 have a legal assistance focus, I wanna know if that's
18 gonna be, hopefully need more funding. How do you see
19 the legal assistance being helped specifically in my
20 case for, uh, deliveryists?

21 FAIZA ALI: Yeah. So we wanna make sure that the
resources that we have are actually reaching
communities. And so part of our engagement with, with
not, you know, nonprofits is to bring them in to
inform them of what, um, what, what services are

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2 available and to really understand better how do we
3 get, you know, that-those services to them. So we are
4 very much looking forward to working with our
5 partners, um, to, to make sure that they have that,
6 uh, that information.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. So are you- do you
8 think you need more money for the legal services, or
9 are you waiting to see what exists?

10 FAIZA ALI: We are currently looking at our
11 current capacity. Um, I will say I am not shy to ask
12 for more money, and I'm not shy to defend the, the
13 need. I just want to make sure, again, day 6, that we
14 are taking our time and looking at our program, our
15 capacity, what the needs are. Um, and that we're
16 listening to community organizations who are telling
17 us what, what do they need.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, thank you. I just
19 want to say I've been to two Know Your Rights forums
20 recently, uh, with Hands Off- 800 people at one, 400
21 at another. That's fantastic.

22 FAIZA ALI: That is.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

24 FAIZA ALI: Um, if I may, um, Chair, I just want
25 to get back to Council Member Brewer on, um, you

1
2 asked for a specific breakdown of, of how many calls
3 we received through the hotline. So as, um, from July
4 2025 to, um, up to February 2026, the hotline, um,
5 received 13,912 calls, um, and a total of 13,357 were
6 answered.

7 I have a full list of the breakdown of the most,
8 uh, languages that were requested, and I'm happy to
9 share that with you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Later on.

11 FAIZA ALI: Along with, um, what the top issues
12 were.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I would be interested.

14 FAIZA ALI: Okay.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

16 FAIZA ALI: Great, absolutely.

17 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Alexa.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great. Um, thank you so
19 much. Um, I guess I just, uh, delighted to hear that
20 the Administration is interested in working with us
21 on Intro 55. Um, just as a point of clarity, uh,
would MOIA consider H&H, um, a current, uh, er, ah, a
covered agency, uh, for Intro 55?

FAIZA ALI: Um, that is something that I will have
to get back to you on.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Okay. I actually- what
3 I'll do -

4 FAIZA ALI: H&H is covered?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: I wanna, I wanna
6 understand if that- if MOIA understands they would be
7 covered. Um, H&H, CUNY, NYPD precincts because my
8 understanding of the legislation is obviously we
9 stipulate DOE as one of the big agencies in the city,
10 but certainly all agencies where people are coming
11 into contact with should be, should be, agencies that
12 would be covered under Intro 55.

13 FAIZA ALI: And Council Member, we're looking
14 forward to continuing those discussions to kind of
15 hash out, um, you know, how expansive we need this
16 bill to be.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Got it. Um, no, definitely
18 look forward, uh, to working with you all on that.
19 Um, because what we have seen across the city is, um,
20 uh, justice by zip code or understanding or
21 discretion and what we'd like to see is universal
understanding that our city has adopted sanctuary
city policy, which means we want to protect our
immigrant neighbors and we want everyone to
understand that that is their obligation under the

1
2 law, whether they agree with it or not, is not of my
3 concern, um, but to make sure that there are clear
4 guidance for our employees and, and our residents
5 across the city.

6 Um, in terms of, uh, would love to understand, we
7 have had so many family members that have been, um,
8 abducted by ICE. Um, I, I wondered how MOIA is
9 preparing to support families in instances where the
10 members are the main source of income for their
11 families, um, who are detained. Is the— are— is MOIA
12 considering any particular types of programs, um, to
13 step into that situation?

14 FAIZA ALI: Yeah. Um, right now we are looking,
15 um, our current program capacity provides legal
16 assistance, um, to individuals, whether it's, um,
17 individuals that are, you know, imminently facing
18 detention or deportation.

19 Um, we are, uh, you know, this is like an ongoing
20 conversation about there are larger needs of
21 immigrant communities that are facing this crisis and
what does that look like? And we're really hoping to
sort of get that, uh, feedback from the community to
see if there are additional programming that MOIA can

1
2 provide or there are other agencies that can really
3 meet this moment.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Yeah, would love the
5 Administration to really, um, consider some sort of
6 emergency support. We are have— we have many, many
7 families in my district alone where the sole income
8 earner is detained, leaving children, um, without any
9 income earners at all.

10 So we have rent problems, we have purchasing
11 food, we have any manner of needs are currently be-
12 coming emergency, and no one wants to go and get
13 additional services because they are afraid of the
14 federal government.

15 So akin to COVID, akin to many of the
16 emergencies, we have responded to in the past, I
17 think we should really consider how we step into the
18 emergency situation that is now.

19 Um, also, um, in terms of, uh, another thing in
20 terms of Project Open Arms, I'm certainly interested
21 in, in learning more on how we may be revamping or
expanding Project Open Arms. One thing that was very
successful in the past was, ah, legal clinics in
schools. Uh, what we've seen is kind of a lopsided
balance of, like, legal services, obviously, for

1
2 people that are directly impacted, but very hard to
3 get even, um, a consultation with an attorney.

4 So I would— I, I had partnered with MOIA back in
5 the day under T1 to do legal clinics in schools
6 across— I would love to be able to partner with MOIA
7 to bring that back.

8 FAIZA ALI: Yeah.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Because families really
10 need it.

11 FAIZA ALI: So Project Open Arms is a coordination
12 body that works across schools across New York City,
13 and we're happy to sort of connect with our partners
14 at DOE and your office and other offices in the
15 Council to sort of, you know, reintroduce that to
16 schools in your, in your district.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Yeah, that's great. I
18 mean, they have been really relegated to just Know
19 Your Rights information. We need legal clinics uhm
20 and access to consultations for families in, in
21 schools. That would be amazing. Um, I guess she's
saying I could keep going on. Well, I'm teasing.
I'll, I'll, I'll ask one more question, um, which is
not exactly, um, in the bailiwick of Intro 55, but I
was curious about what formal and/or informal lines

1
2 of communication exist between MOIA and NYPD to
3 respond to federal enforcement actions?

4 FAIZA ALI: So, um, there are two, um, one through
5 our standing Interagency Task Force, um, um, but
6 specifically for an emergency or a crisis like this,
7 you know, specifically escalating federal enforcement
8 from ICE, um, it— that communication would rest with
9 the Interagency Response Committee.

10 And so, um, you know, uh, MOIA plays a leadership
11 role at the same table as the First Deputy Mayor who,
12 um, is a Chair of this, including the Mayor's Chief
13 Counsel and special advisor to the FDM. So that is a
14 vehicle that, um, where, you know, communication with
15 MOIA specifically on any rapid changes that happened
16 of increased enforcement by ICE.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great and, you know, I
18 think an ongoing concern, uh, I don't wanna entirely
19 spend our time litigating the past and the failures
20 of the previous Administration. Um, but it is an
21 ongoing concern that family members, um, community
members are seeing NYPD on the street, seeing ICE on
the street, and feeling like they are colluding with
ICE and not actually protecting New York City
residents.

1
2 So I think one of the things that we are, um,
3 wanting to really focus on is to understand those
4 communications, uh, to understand how the
5 Administration is holding our feet to, to the fire,
6 uh, holding NYPD's feet to the fire, where there are
7 bright lines so that residents can understand that
8 NYPD is here to protect us, not to protect ICE
9 breaking the law. Thank you, Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you, Council
9 Member. Council Member Shekar.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you, Chair. Sorry
11 about that multitasking here. Um, thank you so much,
12 Commissioner, for, um, your testimony today. I had a
13 few questions as well.

13 Um, you heard a bit from, from Councilman Brewer
14 about our hearing last week, um, and I wanted to just
15 focus on that a bit more. The hearing was, um,
16 constructive in a lot of ways and productive because
17 we've got a lot of information about where things
18 stand. I mean, obviously they were very serious, um,
19 violations under the last Administration, or near
20 violations, um, and as training became a big issue
21 that needs to be done, another one that came up was

1
2 we don't really know what we don't know in terms of,
3 uh, well, let's take DOC for example.

4 I think NYPD had accepted all the
5 recommendations, um, of the Department of
6 Investigations. Uh, DOC had rejected some, though now
7 they've, they've changed their position under the new
8 Administration and have agreed in the last hearing to
9 do a larger audit of um, the agency.

10 So we understand, um, with these individual
11 instances, um, these clearly were not isolated
12 instances, and how do we make sure it's not happening
13 more broadly?

14 So I know that also, um, the DOI report and the
15 executive order you mentioned before now kind of all
16 converge, um, to create a different, um, scheme that
17 we're under to make sure agencies are complying with
18 the law. And, you know, I, I was wondering if you
19 talk a bit more about how you would approach, um, and
20 what MOIA's role could be to approach agencies that
21 have had violations in the past where those
violations do raise the question of what else is
happening within those agencies.

We've asked the DOC to also provide their
training materials, but I do wonder if there— what

1
2 thought you you've given to working with agencies,
3 um, that do need more assistance, analysis, and
4 scrutiny, um, internally, department-wide, uh, when
5 it comes to our sanctuary law compliance.

6 FAIZA ALI: Yeah, thank you, Council Member. You
7 know, the- this is, you know, I, I hate to go back to
8 it, but it is a fundamental function of the
9 Interagency Response Committee is to wait until we
10 receive these reports and audits to better understand
11 um, where the gaps still exist, um, and what
12 resources we need to be providing as a city to
13 agencies to make sure that our sanctuary laws are
14 being upheld.

15 Um, one part, um, where I see, you know, where
16 MOIA is, is playing a role as part of the- a member
17 of this Committee is to help make those assessments,
18 to help review the findings and come up with
19 recommendations that we believe are going to be
20 enforceable. And I think, you know, um, I, I've said
21 this in, in, and have come to sort of, uh, talk to
our team about this, like sanctuary laws and
policies, they've been on the books for a very long
time and they're a very strong foundation. I think
the difference between the previous Administration

1
2 and the current one is how, um, is the
3 accountability, uh, mechanism. And we're really
4 looking to Executive Order 13 to serve as that
5 accountability measure.

6 Um, and, and really help create and build the
7 systems to ensure that, um, agencies are complying,
8 um, with, uh, with sanctuary laws and, and the
9 reporting requirements that come from both, um, you
10 know, the reporting requirements to MOIA and to other
11 agencies.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: So MOIA will have a role
13 in the accountability, um, and enforcement of those
14 regulations?

15 FAIZA ALI: Correct. That is, that is how I
16 interpret our role and as part of Executive Order 13.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Great.

18 FAIZA ALI: Um, you know, uh, is to ensure that we
19 have not only a voice at the table to, to talk about
20 how these policies and, and how the policies of
21 agencies really impact immigrant communities, because
that's an important part of what we offer in, in that
space, but also reviewing and making sure that there
are accountability measures in place to make sure
that agencies are upholding the law.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Okay. That's good to
3 hear because I think that is a key role that MOIA
4 could play that, that, you know, um, under the last
5 Administration, you know, given their lack of focus
6 and prioritizing of MOIA, uh, MOIA couldn't do but I
7 think that is very helpful. And you all will be
8 looking at, um, the training materials that are
9 created. I mean, I know the general counsels of, uh,
10 offices of each of these agencies will do so as well,
11 but I assume would be in collaboration with, with you
12 all too to make sure it's, it's, uh, accessible for
13 the, um, line, uh, staff and, and, uh, um,
14 implementable.

15 FAIZA ALI: Absolutely, we're hoping to learn more
16 through the audits on sort of the variety of
17 trainings, the content of the trainings, um, and the
18 efficacy, frankly, of the trainings.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Got it, okay. I would
20 also encourage you all— and the audits were, were,
21 you know, and I now— I know there's a new set of
audits being done with the EO, but the DOI reports
were very extensive, um, for, for those two agencies
in particular, um, with NYPD and DOC and given that
they have a probably, um, you know, the most

1
2 frequent, um, although it's— the, the number of, uh,
3 task forces is limited, but they do have a lot of
4 frequent interaction with the federal government
5 given the criminal task forces. And we're seeing the
6 way in which, um, the federal government is trying to
7 shoehorn immigration through, uh, criminal, uh,
8 enforcement, and then using criminal enforcement as a
9 way— as a front to really, you know, um, go around
10 the sanctuary laws.

11 Um, I just encourage there too— there is a great
12 starting point in the materials from DOI. Um, and to
13 give some thought to the agencies that we already
14 know were not in compliance. How can we tailor what
15 we're doing to correct that, as well as set new
16 standards going forward too?

17 FAIZA ALI: Understood, thank you, Council Member.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you, Council
20 Member. You actually asked one of my final questions,
21 um, which is really around the, uh, making sure that
there's accountability measures. I mean, if, if
there's no accountability, then they're just words on
paper. Um, but I did wanna follow up on, on, uh, the
Department of Investigations, DOI, uh, they released

1
2 a report on the NYPD's compliance with local laws
3 restricting city assistance with immigration
4 enforcement.

5 Among other policies and procedure
6 recommendations, DOI noted that the NYPD is subject
7 to recordkeeping and reporting requirements of Local
8 Law 228 of 2017. The NYPD accepted all of DOI's
9 policy and procedure recommendations, and so the
10 question is really, does MOIA agree with that
11 interpretation of Local Law 228? And if so, going
12 forward, as the new commissioner, will MOIA resume
13 collecting information from NYPD, DOC, and DOP?

14 FAIZA ALI: So, um, just to backtrack a little
15 bit, um, under Local Law 228, MOIA is responsible for
16 submitting quarterly reports to the Council Speaker
17 on all requests made to city, um, officers and
18 employees to assist with immigration enforcement and
19 their responses.

20 Um, to the question that you've posed directly,
21 um, our understanding and our position is that law
enforcement agencies are required to report to MOIA.
And I wanna note that, um, with Local Law 228, it
does not require MOIA to report on events that law
enforcement agencies separately report under detainer

1
2 laws, um, but they still must report other requests
3 to us. And we're happy to continue that conversation
4 with the Council if there are any discrepancies, um,
5 that we see.

6 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay. Before I, I
7 continue on, I wanted to, um, acknowledge my
8 colleague Council Member Rita Joseph for joining us.
9 Thank you so much.

10 Lastly, um, two things before I— she has some
11 questions as well. Uh, the DOI report, um, also
12 stated that NYPD is subject to Local Law 246 on
13 non-local law enforcement access to non-public areas
14 of city property. Do you agree with that
15 interpretation?

16 FAIZA ALI: Um, I will have to get back to you. I
17 think we do have a position, but we'll circle back.

18 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay and, uh, do you
19 ever receive 311 calls about ICE raids happening?
20 Does that information get to, to MOIA and like how
21 quickly is that information, um, conveyed to you?

FAIZA ALI: Yeah, so right now, if you call, if
you have an, any sort of question related to
immigration, whether it's for legal assistance or
there's an, an emerg— you know, an emergency incident

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2 taking place and you contact 311, you will be
3 connected to, um, uh, MOIA directly. Um, and in that
4 case, um, depending on, you know, the situation and
5 the specifics of the case, we will connect that
6 individual to our rapid response, uh, legal
7 collaborative or, um, you know, one of the other
8 program providers.

9 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay, um, Council Member
10 Joseph, you have the floor. You're welcome.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Good morning,
12 Commissioner. How are you? Good to see you. Um, you
13 know where I'm gonna go with this. Um, in terms of
14 New York City students, I know that, um, in the last
15 budget we made sure that we partnered with The Door,
16 Open Arms. We want to make sure those services are
17 still in place for young people as they go in to
18 check in. As you may know, Dylan is still in custody.
19 Uh, Mouctar Diallo, thank God they gave us— they gave
20 him back to us. But there's so many other young
21 people out there. We want to make sure that MOIA is
working with New York City Public Schools,
interagency and collaboration, to make sure we're
keeping our young people safe.

1
2 So how are you continuing to work as MOIA and the
3 new commissioner coming in, plan to assess, evaluate
4 what's working, what's not working?

5 FAIZA ALI: Absolutely.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Give me an idea of what's
7 the plan, especially for around New York City people,
8 young students, and also CUNY.

9 FAIZA ALI: Yeah, absolutely. Um, thank you,
10 Council Member. It's actually great to see you, um,
11 and not surprising that you would ask about our New
12 York City Public School students. Um, this is a
13 question that Council Member Brewer also touched on
14 earlier, just, um, you know, the Project Open Arms,
15 our collaboration and relationship with the
16 Department of Education.

17 You know, you know this better than I do, that
18 Project Open Arms is a citywide coordination body,
19 and so they do work in schools across, uh, New York
20 City. Um, we are, um, very much looking forward to
21 supporting, um, uh, the new Chancellor. Um, I haven't
had a chance to connect with him, but, uh, it is a
priority for us because this is a program that we
know works.

1
2 This is a program that's really a feeder into and
3 connecting students and their families who are
4 impacted by, um, immigration, um, connecting them to
5 the necessary legal services that they need.

6 So it is, uh, of utmost importance. It is an
7 effective program, and it is something that we're
8 looking forward to continue.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And on the higher
10 education level for CUNY students, how are you
11 working with the CUNY Chancellor to make sure there
12 are also supports in place for-

13 FAIZA ALI: So our, um, our outreach, um, to our
14 agency partners and, um, you know, throughout the
15 city, um, as, as I'm sort of like making my way, um,
16 as a matter of introduction to many of these
17 partners, includes our, our CUNY system. Um, you
18 know, we wanna make sure that students, um, at all
19 levels have the information that they need in the
20 event they, the, that they need, um, services.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And unaccompanied minors,
we knew that was taken off the table under the
federal government. How do we plan to still continue
supporting our unaccompanied minors?

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2 FAIZA ALI: So our, our unaccompanied minors still
3 have access to legal services, you know, through a
4 variety of programs, some that are operated obviously
5 out of MOIA, but others that, um, are outside of
6 MOIA.

7 NYFA, um, is one example and so we are, um,
8 looking forward to figuring out ways to communicate
9 the various services because they are there, they are
10 available, um, um, to make sure that everyone in New
11 York City understands where to go to for immigration.
12 help and support.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you so much. Thank
14 you, Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Of course, thank you.
16 Yes, um, we have a follow-up question from Council
17 Member Avilés.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Yeah, I just wanted to
19 follow up on, on Project Open Arms. Um, will, will
20 they be, uh, publishing written guidance, uh, around
21 kind of the scenarios, in particular the scenarios
of, um, when ICE is near school buildings, either
during arrival, lunchtime, dismissal, um, or if
they're outside when kids are getting ready for go-
to go to school trips or sports, extracurricular

1
2 activities. All of these things have actually
3 happened in my district, and there were no written
4 protocols around, I think we were kind of
fly-by-night figuring it out.

5 FAIZA ALI: Yeah, that is extremely important
6 information that we want to get out there, and it's
7 something that we hope to, um, have a further
8 conversation with our DOE Chancellor about.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great.

10 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: And, um, just lastly,
11 uh, Commissioner, you know, I know this will probably
12 come out as a result of the executive order and all
13 of the audits that are, are being, uh, taking place.
14 Um, and so you may not, you know, have the answers
15 now, but I do wanna emphasize that we really need to
16 ensure that there are stopgaps and guardrails um, in
17 place to ensure that NYPD's participation in various
18 joint task force, um, does not cross the line between
19 cooperation, obviously, and immigration enforcement
20 and violating those local laws.

21 Um, so do— to what extent do you know what Maya,
uh, MOIA— Maya— MOIA provide the NYPD and other
agencies, uh, specifically on that topic?

1
2 FAIZA ALI: Yeah, um, you know, I, I— we share
3 your concern. I know I certainly do too, just you
4 know, in talking to communities and community-based
5 organizations.

6 Um, you know, but I am also confident under the
7 new leadership and a new guidance of Mayor Mamdani
8 that agencies including the New York Police
9 Department will be playing an active role in both
10 our, you know, uh, Interagency Response, uh,
11 Committee, but also in just overall collaboration.

12 I think I, I see it improving, um, drastically
13 because we have the support of the Mayor. Um, and we
14 have, uh, the support of the Police Commissioner.

15 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay, if there are no
16 further questions, you are done. Congratulations, um,
17 and, you know, for 6 days in, you're doing amazing.
18 So we look forward to the collaboration and we look
19 forward to, to future hearings. Thank you so much.

20 FAIZA ALI: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay, I now open the
hearing for public testimony. I remind members of the
public that this is a government proceeding and that
the decorum shall be observed at all times. As such,

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2 members of the public shall remain silent at all
3 times.

4 The witness table is reserved for people who wish
5 to testify. No video recording or photography is
6 allowed from the witness table. Further, members of
7 the public may not present audio or video recordings
8 as testimony, but may submit transcripts of such
9 recordings to the Sergeant-at-Arms for inclusion in
10 the hearing record.

11 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please
12 fill out one of the appearance cards with the
13 Sergeant-at-Arms and wait to be recognized.

14 When recognized, you will have 2 minutes to speak
15 on today's oversight hearing topic, Sanctuary
16 Protections for Immigrant Communities or the
17 legislation on today's hearing agenda, Intro 55 and
18 Intro 261.

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

1
2 For in-person panelists, please come up to the
3 table once your name has been called. Now I will call
4 our first in-person panel. Melissa Chua from NYLAG,
5 Lucia Goyen and please excuse me if I'm
6 mispronouncing. I'm, I'm trying to read through
7 handwriting. Lauren Migliaccio- I'm gonna say
8 everything with a Spanish accent, I already know
9 this- and Sophie Dalsimer from Brooklyn Defender
10 Services.

11 Okay, for now we're gonna proceed with the 3 that
12 we have here. Lauren, Lucia, and Melissa. You can
13 choose your order and start when you're ready.

14 MELLISSA CHUA: I have the, uh, honor of going
15 first. Good morning, um, Chair Encarnación, Council
16 Members, and staff. Good morning, and thank you for
17 the opportunity to speak to you today about legal
18 services for immigrant New Yorkers.

19 My name is Melissa Chua, and I am the director of
20 the Immigrant Protection Unit for the New York Legal
21 Assistance Group, NYLAG. In addition to providing
affirmative and defensive immigration services to
thousands of New Yorkers every year. NYLAG's
immigration team is a proud member of the Rapid

1
2 Response Legal Collaborative and the Pro Se Plus, uh,
3 Collaborative.

4 Since May 2025, NYLAG's Pro Se Plus team has been
5 on the ground at 26 Federal Plaza, serving pro se
6 noncitizens who face often violent and illegal
7 detentions. Similarly, our rapid response team has
8 filed for and won numerous habeas petitions for
9 non-citizens detained by ICE in violation of their
10 constitutional and statutory rights.

11 In detention after detention, we at NYLAG have
12 seen ICE blatantly violate the basic protections
13 offered to every person in the United States
14 regardless of immigration status.

15 In one case, ICE illegally profiled a father and
16 grandfather of U.S. citizens who had been living in
17 the United States for 2 decades. Utilizing a search
18 for another noncitizen as a pretense to detain him
19 and, uh, interrogate Mr. P, ICE then disappeared Mr.
20 P without any individual inquiry as to the
21 appropriateness of his detention in violation of his
constitutional statutory rights.

As Mr. P was driven away in shackles in the back
of an ICE van, he saw his wife walk by outside

1
2 looking for him in vain so they could return home to
3 their children and grandchildren.

4 A night- another NILAG client, Mr. A, an Afghan
5 national who had been paroled into the United States
6 to seek asylum, was called into ICE as part of a
7 campaign of racially profiling and targeting Afghan
8 nationals in- after the United- after the November
9 26th, 25- 2025 shooting.

10 Since being allowed into the United States, he
11 had followed every regulation required of him, um,
12 and while his application for asylum was pending, had
13 worked diligently to support himself.

14 Regardless, like many other New Yorkers, Mr. A
15 was detained at an ICE check-in while simply doing
16 what he had been told and held in violation of ICE's
17 regulations and policies. I know my time is up.

18 And so just to say, in light of these ongoing
19 illegal and inhumane disappearances, Bills such as
20 the New York City Know Your Rights Act are crucial as
21 it has never been more important for New York
residents, noncitizens and citizens alike, to fully
understand all of their legal rights as they relate
to ICE.

In addition to-

1
2 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: I'm, I'm gonna have to
3 ask you to stop. So, so sorry. There's a long list.
4 So I just don't wanna, um, you know, take anybody's
5 time away towards the end. So, gonna move on, but I
6 did, um, just wanna ask really quickly.

7 So in terms of you seeing it, we know what ICE is
8 doing in these streets. We know that they're illegal
9 and stuff like that but I wanted to know specifically
10 around the sanctuary city policies, how you have seen
11 in terms of our legal services, where have you seen
12 that there needs to be a gap in addition to signage,
13 in addition to people knowing their rights? How do
14 you see that we can really fill in that gap to
15 provide people with the security that they need in
16 seeking legal assistance?

17 MELISSA CHUA: Yeah, I think, um, uh, er, in terms
18 of signage, I think signage would also send a strong
19 message to ICE that we, um, care about our sanctuary
20 city policies and, um, people's rights.

21 So what we have seen is that ICE, um, often will
misrepresent the rights that an individual has in a
detention. And so simply understanding those and what
rights one has when encountering ICE would be

1
2 incredibly powerful, especially for the street
3 detentions that we're seeing now.

4 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you so much. Any
5 other questions for— no? Okay, I'm gonna go on. I'm
6 so sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt the panel.

7 LUCIA GOYEN: Good afternoon, um, or morning,
8 good— hmm, Council Member Encarnación and members of
9 the New York City Council Committee on Immigration.
10 My name is Lucia Goyen, and I am the director of the
11 Day Labor Program at Catholic Charities Community
12 Services, Archdiocese of New York. Thank you for the
13 opportunity to testify today.

14 Catholic Charities has a long tradition of
15 welcoming immigrants and refugees in New York City.
16 Our services have a tremendous impact on immigrant
17 communities across New York City, including in East
18 Harlem and St. Cecilia's and our Mott Haven, South
19 Bronx Day Labor Center in St. Luke's.

20 In recent months, fear and uncertainty have
21 spread through the immigrant communities as
aggressive immigration enforcement actions disrupt
daily life. In our work, Council— Catholic Charities
staff consistently see how fear of interacting with
government authorities prevents families from sending

1
2 children to school, accessing healthcare, seeking
3 mental health support, and even calling 911 to report
4 crimes or emergencies.

5 When people are afraid to seek help, the entire
6 city is left unsafe and less healthy. Immigrant New
7 Yorkers become more vulnerable to violence,
8 exploitation, hunger, homelessness, illness—
9 precisely the challenges that city services are meant
10 to address.

11 Despite growing need, we are seeing reduced
12 engagement with essential services, fewer legal
13 consultations, lower participation in workplace
14 safety trainings, and workers withdrawing wage theft
15 and labor rights complaints out of fear of
16 retaliation. Sanctuary policies are essential to
17 maintaining trust in city services, public
18 institutions, and local law enforcement. They ensure
19 that all New Yorkers can access basic protections
20 without fear.

21 We respectfully urge the City Council to maintain
and enforce existing sanctuary protections, ensure
city workers receive clear training on interactions
with federal immigration authorities, and pass Intro

1
2 055-2026 to require signage informing New Yorkers of
3 their legal rights.

4 Catholic Charity stands ready to work with the
5 Council to ensure that all New Yorkers, regardless of
6 immigration status, can safely access the services
7 that keep our community strong.

8 Thank you for your leadership and commitment to
9 protecting the wellbeing of immigrants in our city.

10 LAUREN MIGLIACCIO: Good morning, Chair, and good
11 morning to the Committee on Immigration. My name is
12 Lauren Migliaccio. I am the training and legal
13 technical assistance director of the Immigrant
14 Justice Corps, and proud partner for the LTM MOIA
15 Services.

16 Immigrant Justice Corps supports New York City
17 Council's proposed amendment to New York City
18 Administrative Code in relation to signage describing
19 certain constitutional and legal protections.

20 The Immigrant Justice Corps proudly has over 50
21 corps members currently serving in New York City.
Over the last year, we have seen deeply troubling
trends in militarized federal civil immigration
enforcement in cities and states across the United
States.

1
2 These incidents include arrests and detention of
3 many different status- people of many different
4 statuses, including U.S. citizens, lawful permanent
5 residents, and valid visa holders, as well as people
6 who are undocumented. Mass agents have unleashed many
7 different types of chemical irritants and, um, have
8 harassed bystanders in violent protests and raids and
9 other immigration enforcement operations.

10 New York City has always been cognizant of the
11 needs of its vibrant but vulnerable immigrant
12 populations. Over the past decade, the City Council
13 has enacted a comprehensive statutory scheme
14 regulating when and how city agencies may interact
15 with federal immigration enforcement. Yet the work of
16 IJC fellows on the ground makes clear that many
17 immigrants, city employees are not fully aware of
18 these legal protections.

19 Fellows routinely hear from community members who
20 are unsure of their rights when encountering federal
21 immigration authorities and frontline workers who
22 want clearer guidance on how to respond appropriately
23 if agents appear at city facilities.

24 At a time when immigrant communities face
25 heightened fear and misinformation the city must be

1 proactive in affirming its legal framework.

2 Transparency builds trust. When immigrant New Yorkers
3 know their rights, they are more likely to seek
4 healthcare, enroll their children in school, and
5 cooperate with law enforcement, and participate fully
6 in civic life.

7 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you so much. I
8 know that, uh, Council Member Brewer has a question.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much for,
10 uh, NYLAG, thank you, because you're picking up cases
11 that others are not. We really appreciate it. What
12 would you like MOIA to focus on? And the same
13 question for Catholic Charities. What, in other
14 words, a new commissioner, um, to me legal assistance
15 is paramount, but may, there may be other issues that
16 you think they should focus on.

17 MELISSA CHUA: Um, I appreciated the question
18 about further supports when a family has somebody
19 who's been disappeared because that is definitely
20 what we're seeing. It's often the primary breadwinner
21 and there are, um, many other supports in addition to
legal services that a family often needs that we
really can't. And so I, I thought that was a really

1
2 insightful, um, addition because that's certainly
3 something we're seeing in the community.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. Catholic
5 Charities.

6 LUCIA GOYEN: Yes, agreed and as we know, much of
7 the legal services across the city and the state have
8 been gutted because of federal cuts. And so obviously
9 funding is an important piece to bring back very much
10 needed legal services, um, as well as making sure to
11 support a whole person.

12 So I work directly with the day labor program.
13 Things like worker trainings, making sure there's
14 robust-

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Are people showing up for
16 that?

17 LUCIA GOYEN: They are, but at lower levels.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Or not enough.

19 LUCIA GOYEN: Of course. Yes and of course it's
20 desperately needed. They're still working and they're
21 still going to face injury and death if they are not
properly trained, uh, to work on construction sites.
So it's making sure that they feel safe enough to
come out to take to those trainings and making sure

1
2 to think about all of the pieces that are needed to
3 support a family.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you so much, uh,
6 to this panel. We're gonna call up our next panel,
7 Deborah Lee, Karla Ostaloza, and Sophie Dalsimer.
8 Awesome. You may begin.

9 DEBORAH LEE: My name is Deborah Lee. I'm the
10 attorney in charge of the Immigration Law Unit at the
11 Legal Aid Society. Thank you, Chair Encarnación and
12 Committee Members for this opportunity.

13 New York City's sanctuary framework is built on a
14 sim- simple, non-negotiable principle: everyone who
15 lives here is entitled to safety, dignity, and equal
16 access to our institutions. For decades, city law has
17 drawn a firm boundary between municipal agencies and
18 federal civil immigration enforcement so New Yorkers
19 can work, study, seek services, and get help without
20 fear.

21 That separation is not charity. It is a core
obligation of government and central to public safety
but that boundary is under attack now. Federal
authorities have collapsed the distinction between

1
2 civil and criminal immigration enforcement and ramped
3 up information sharing that targets noncitizens.

4 Branding detained noncitizens as criminals is not
5 about public safety. It is a ruse to justify
6 enforcement and detention rooted in bias rather than
7 risk. Recent reporting shows detained New Yorkers
8 being falsely portrayed as dangerous, even though
9 ICE's own data shows most people arrested in our city
10 have no criminal convictions or pending charges.

11 Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Justice is
12 recruiting deportation judges rather than immigration
13 judges, signaling a clear abandonment of neutral
14 adjudication. These federal shifts make strict
15 adherence to New York City's sanctuary laws
16 essential. When DOC, NYPD, or other city agencies
17 share prohibited information or grant access without
18 a judicial warrant, they do more than violate policy.
19 They erode public trust, undermine their core
20 missions, and funnel New Yorkers into a federal
21 system that increasingly treats civil immigration
22 matters as criminal threats.

23 That is why the New York Immigrant Family Unity
24 Project, NYFUP, is indispensable. Established in 2013
25 as the nation's first public defender program for

1
2 detained immigrants, NYFUP, a partnership with Legal
3 Aid, Bronx Defenders, and Brooklyn Defender Services,
4 provides universal free representation so no detained
5 New Yorker faces deportation alone simply because
6 they cannot afford a lawyer.

7 We cannot wait for more New Yorkers to be
8 detained by ICE. Prevention must be our focus.
9 Keeping people— excuse me. Keeping people out of the
10 deportation pipeline. Intros 55 and 261 strengthen
11 our city's defenses by ensuring no agency contractor
12 or staff member in— inadvertently or intentionally
13 assists ICE.

14 These protections must be paired with a
15 reinvigorated Know Your Rights education effort and
16 transparency whenever federal authorities seek city
17 access or data. Community advocates have led this
18 work for years, but now this must be scaled citywide
19 again. Thank you to City Council for its longstanding
20 investments such as NYFUP.

21 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: I'm sorry, I have to cut
you off. I hate doing it, um, especially because I'm
new to it, but I gotta keep it moving.

DEBORAH LEE: Thank you, thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Sophie.

1
2 SOPHIE DALSIMER: Ah, thank you to the Committee
3 and Chair Encarnación for the opportunity to testify
4 today. We are grateful to the City Council for your
5 enduring support to the NYFA program, which allows us
6 to advance the rights of immigrant New Yorkers and
keep families and communities together.

7 The gravity of the situation for immigrants in
8 New York City is almost beyond comprehension. As
9 deportation defense advocates, we know that New York
10 City sanctuary laws are an essential tool to protect
11 immigrant New Yorkers and families from increasingly
12 cruel and severe harms that result from an ICE
13 arrest. These harms have always been devastating but
are now more extreme than ever, and I'd like to
describe some of those consequences.

14 To start, ICE Officers regularly deploy ruses to
15 stop and detain New Yorkers on the street or forcibly
16 gain entry into private spaces. Once stopped, many of
17 our clients have been subjected to violent and
18 aggressive arrest tactics, often leaving them, uh,
injured and in some cases permanently disabled.

19 After an arrest, ICE is rapidly transferring New
20 Yorkers to detention facilities across the country
21 where they lose access to their family and counsel.

1
2 Notably, this tactic undermines NYFUP's ability to
3 represent every detained New Yorker if they are
4 transferred before we learn about them, or if we're
5 not able to access them at those facilities. The lack
6 of access is just the beginning of the horrors that
7 immigrant New Yorkers face in these detention
8 centers. We frequently hear our clients report the
9 conditions include freezing cold temperatures,
10 blinding bright lights at all hours, rotten food,
11 unhygienic spaces, and consistent deprivation of
12 medical care. Leading many of our clients to face
13 deteriorating physical and mental health conditions.

14 In the past, many of our clients have been
15 eligible for release on bond while they fought their
16 cases, but now our government is keeping most people
17 detained without the possibility of bond, prolonging
18 their detention for months and even years, unless and
19 until we're able to secure release through complex
20 federal court litigation.

21 When immigrant New Yorkers do manage to have
their day in court, they must contend with the
Administration's new strategies to curtail due due
process, to cut off rights to asylum for verifiable
asylum seekers, to limit the ability to appear-

1
2 appeal their cases. And even if we win protection,
3 ICE is consistently seeking to send our clients to
4 third countries where they've never been before and
5 have no ties.

6 Now more than ever, the city sanctuary laws must
7 be upheld, strengthened, and meaningfully implemented
8 to ensure that no more New Yorkers face these dire
9 consequences and to keep our immigrant communities
10 safe. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you so much,
12 Sophie.

13 KARLA OSTOLAZA: Good morning, and thank you for
14 the opportunity to testify today. My name is Karla
15 Ostolaza, and I'm the managing director of the
16 immigration practice at the Bronx Defenders.

17 For more than a decade, our attorneys, legal
18 advocates, and social workers across our immigration,
19 criminal, family, and civil action practices at the
20 Bronx Defenders have represented New Yorkers whose
21 lives and families depend on whether this city
actually follows its own sanctuary laws.

New York City has strong laws limiting
collaboration between local and law enforcement and
ICE. And while they can always, uh, be improved and

1
2 their, uh, information disseminated, those laws exist
3 to prevent, uh, exactly the harms we continue to see
4 today. Unlawful coordination, people being pushed
5 into the deportation system, and immigrant
6 communities losing trust in the very agencies meant
7 to protect them.

8 Just last week, the Department of Correction told
9 this Council that it still interprets the sanctuary
10 laws in a way that permits collaboration with ICE
11 without a judicial warrant. That interpretation is
12 flatly inconsistent with the law, yet DOC has
13 promoted it for years, resulting in New Yorkers being
14 unlawfully transferred to ICE custody with no
15 consequences for these violations.

16 We see the same disregard for sanctuary
17 protections in the use of joint task forces. One
18 example is the case of our teenage client Kelvin
19 Servita Arocha. Kelvin was accused of kicking a
20 police radio laying, laying on the ground as he
21 walked away from an altercation initiated by NYPD
officers against a group of young Venezuelans in
Times Square.

While his criminal case was pending and without
any violations of his release conditions, NYPD

1
2 officers working alongside ICE agents stormed his
3 apartment in the middle of the night, detained him,
4 and sent him to immigration detention.

5 That is precisely the kind of conduct New York
6 City sanctuary laws are meant to prevent. Yet Kelvin
7 was funneled directly into ICE custody through
8 unlawful local-federal collaboration.

9 Kelvin later spoke publicly about what this did
10 to him and his family. His life was un- upended. His
11 family was traumatized, and there was no
12 accountability for the agencies involved. This is to
13 say, um, we need the New York City Trust Act. Uh, it
14 is critical now to close these accountability gaps
15 and to have some remedy for violations and deter
16 future violations. Thank you so much.

17 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you. Uh, Council
18 Members, any questions? Okay, thank you.

19 PANEL: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: The next panel being
21 called up, uh, Children's Defense Fund, Juan Diaz,
Sierra Kraft from ICARE Coalition, Otto Heilmann from
The Door, and Pantea Nouri also from The Door.

JUAN DIAZ: Thank you, Chair Encarnación, and
members of City Council Committee on Immigration for

1 holding today's oversight hearing. My name is Juan
2 Diaz. I'm the policy manager at the Children's
3 Defense Fund New York.

4 CDF is a national multi-issue advocacy, advocacy
5 organization working to improve the overall
6 well-being of children and youth, with particular
7 attention to those living in poverty. More than 1 in
8 3 New Yorkers are immigrants. And half of the New
9 York City children have at least one immigrant
parent.

10 Immigrant and mixed status families'
11 contributions are essential to the city's
12 socioeconomic fabric. These families are experiencing
13 fear, uncertainty to the evolving federal
14 enforcement, uh, and eligibility modifications to
access essential programs and services.

15 Um, today, CDFNY would like to highlight
16 recommendations that have brought support from
17 advocate- advocacy partners. We're grateful for the
18 \$55 million allocation for legal immigration
19 assistance in last year's executive budget. However,
20 the urgent need for immigration legal assistance
21 calls for significant increase. Ensure that fam-
immigrant families have access to universal free or

1
2 affordable childcare and that the childcare
3 workforce, which has a large immigrant presence, is
4 compensated accordingly. Also support expansion of
5 City FHEPS housing vouchers, which will help reduce
6 housing insecurity, especially among children.

7
8 Additionally, CDF New York supports Intro 55 and
9 Intro 261. We also urge the City Council to continue
10 strengthening collaboration across city agencies to
11 ensure that, to ensure that all New Yorkers,
12 regardless of immigration status, language, and
13 cultural backgrounds, have access to essential
14 services and opportunities to thrive.

15
16 Lastly, as the state legislature is discussing
17 this year's budget, we ask the City Council to
18 support New York for All and the Right to
19 Representation Act. Both legislations would further
20 increase protections and opportunities for immigrant
21 and mixed-status families in New York City. My
written testimony has more detailed recommendations.
Thank you.

SIERRA KRAFT: Hi, good morning, Chair and members
of the Committee. Thank you so much for holding this
hearing and for your leadership in protecting

1
2 immigrant New Yorkers. My name is Sierra Kraft and
3 I'm the executive director of the ICARE Coalition.

4 ICARE expands representation for unaccompanied
5 immigrant children and we lead a coalition of 13
6 legal service providers through the Unaccompanied
7 Minors and Families Initiative and the SIJ
8 Initiative. So thank you for that continued support.
9 Um, we work with about 2,000 young people each year
10 offering free legal assistance, and we're the
11 coordinating body for the, those services. And right
12 now what we're seeing is the profound impact of the
13 current climate of fear that is having on young
14 people and their families.

15 Every week we're receiving calls from youth and
16 caregivers asking the same question: is it safe to go
17 to court? The immigration court is already a very
18 complex and -intimidating system, but the level of
19 fear right now is fundamentally changing how families
20 interact with public institutions.

21 Young people are living with constant anxiety
about what could happen to them or their parents.
Many are struggling to focus in school. Some are
having panic attacks and living with the daily fear
that one of their parents may not come home. And at

1
2 the same time, youth are being pushed to, uh,
3 represent themselves in individual hearings now in
4 immigration court, the stage where a judge decides
5 whether they will be deported and increasingly
6 they're not showing up. Not because they don't care,
7 but because they're afraid of what will happen by
8 simply traveling to court.

9 For young people navigating this, um, you know,
10 will result in deportation and it's— could be
11 life-threatening to them.

12 So we're, we're also seeing that family court
13 cases where youth must obtain a guardianship under
14 the Special Immigrant Juvenile Status to pursue
15 protection, that parents and caregivers are not
16 coming forward to serve as guardians for the same
17 fear. Our youth need better and deserve better and
18 what we need is a public education campaign to push
19 Intro 55 and 261 forward.

20 Sanctuary protections are very critical in this
21 moment, and they must also be enforceable. So passing
the New York City Trust Act will also ensure that
immigrant children and families can safely engage
with our city courts and city institutions. Thank
you.

1
2 PANTEA NOURI: Good morning. My name is Pantea
3 Nouri. I am with The Door. The Door is a youth
4 development agency that has been supporting
5 vulnerable youth in New York City since 1972. I'm a
6 paralegal with The Door's Legal Services Center, and
7 in fiscal year 2025, we handled 2,538 immigration
8 matters for young people between the ages of 12 to
9 24.

10 Many of the young people we represent express an
11 interest in going back to school and seeking higher
12 education because it is difficult to do so back in
13 their home countries due to family, cultural, or
14 economic constraints.

15 Going to school here represents an accessible
16 means to pursue their passions and give back to their
17 communities. The unlawful presence of ICE in certain
18 sanctuary spaces, however, has made students fearful
19 of attending school. Many of the students we work
20 with have either dropped out of school or have chosen
21 to miss classes out of fear of being deported or
separated from their loved ones.

We therefore welcome multilingual signage
explaining the rights of students within, uh,
educational spaces and believe such action would help

1
2 alleviate their fears and allow students to learn in
3 peace. Thank you for your time.

4 OTTO HEILMANN: Good morning. My name is Otto
5 Heilmann, and I'm also a paralegal with the Doors
6 Legal Services Center.

7 Many of the young people we work with apply for
8 Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, or SIJ. This legal
9 status applies to minors who have been abandoned,
10 abused, or neglected by their parents, offering
11 crucial protection to the young people who need it
12 most.

13 To be granted SIJ, a young person needs to find a
14 supportive adult willing to be their legal guardian.
15 This can prove challenging, especially for youth who
16 arrived in the United States as unaccompanied minors
17 and do not have family members present. When a young
18 person does find a relative, friend, or mentor
19 willing to be their legal guardian, fear of the
20 presence of immigration enforcement in family courts
21 presents another barrier to obtaining legal status.
Status.

My clients and their potential guardians often
express fear of immigration enforcement in
anticipation of their family court hearings. In one

1
2 instance, my client's mother, who was seeking to be
3 appointed as the legal guardian of my client, refused
4 to attend an in-person family court hearing, which
5 meant her daughter's family court proceedings would
6 be dismissed and would ultimately prevent her
daughter from filing for SIJ.

7 The pressure on immigrant communities and
8 families is immense. Young immigrants, their
9 relatives, and friends are forced into an impossible
10 situation where pursuing legal status entails the
11 risk of becoming dangerously visible to immigration
authorities.

12 Clear multilingual signage on New York City
13 sanctuary laws, particularly in family courts, would
14 ensure that young people and their guardians will
15 feel safer attending hearings as part of the SIJ
process.

16 In the interest of protecting young people's
17 right to obtain legal status, I urge the City Council
to adopt today's proposed bill.

18 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you so much. I
19 really appreciate it. Juan, I really would like to
20 hear more of your testimony in regards to the budget
and our budget, uh, Preliminary Budget hearing
21

1 that'll be happening towards the end of this month.

2 Um, I really, uh, appreciate you saying that here
3 today too. Thank you.

4 Uh, the next panel, um, would like to call up
5 Randy Ali, Khadijatu Muhammad. This one has tiny
6 handwriting. I want to say it's Carissa Kuntz (SP?),
7 possibly from the Arab American - oh, I can't read it
8 - Family Support Center. You were the backup for-
9 okay, all right and then Van Xelo from Mixteca.
10 Mixteca- Van. Um, we'll give it a few minutes. So
11 wait, so this is Van. Oh, I see. Thank you, when
12 you're ready.

13 KHADIJIATU MUHAMMAD: Good morning. Um, good
14 morning Chair - hmm, okay, we're gonna say the name-
15 mhm Encarnación.

16 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Yes, perfect. Thank you
17 so much.

18 KHADIJIATU MUHAMMAD: And members of the Committee
19 on Immigration, thank you for the opportunity to
20 testify today on sanctuary protections for immigrant
21 communities.

I am Khadijatu Muhammad, and I am the program
manager for language access at African Communities
Together. Um, African Communities Together is an

1
2 organization founded by African immigrants for
3 African immigrants dedicated to ensuring that our
4 communities and all New Yorkers can live with
5 dignity, safety, and opportunities within the city.

6 Um, every day we work directly with newly arrived
7 and longstanding African immigrant community— uh,
8 families, and we routinely support people who are
9 afraid to go to school, file a police report, or seek
10 medical care because they do not trust the city
11 agencies will protect their information.

12 We see employees and families intimidated by
13 employers and landlords when immigrant— when
14 immigration enforcement is too closely tied to city
15 systems. For these reasons, we support Intro 10, um,
16 Intro 55, and Intro 61 that would require the Mayor's
17 Office to develop signage that clearly describes the
18 legal protections about sanctuary rights. This is
19 essential to ensure that sanctuary laws are real and
20 enforceable.

21 Our community members need to know they can
safely access city services without fear. To further
strengthen the city's sanctuary laws, we urge that
the Council— we urge the Council to close existing

1
2 loopholes and codify stronger accountability
3 measures.

4 This includes prohibiting all city agencies and
5 contractors from sharing not public personal
6 information with federal, um, immigration authorities
7 without a judicial warrant, limiting the collection
8 and retention of immigration-related data unless
9 legally required, and extending sanctuary protections
10 to city-funded nonprofits and subcontractors.

11 ACT stands ready to partner with the city to
12 operationalize these protections and we recommend
13 increased investment in community-based Know Your
14 Right trainings delivered in multiple languages
15 tailored to high-impact sectors such as housing,
16 labor, healthcare, and education.

17 And ACT can provide certified interpreters for
18 outreach events, assist with culturally responsive
19 material

20 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay thank you.

21 KHADIJIATU MUHAMMAD: And facilitate listening
sessions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you, go ahead Van.

VAN XELO: Hi everyone, thank you so much for
giving us the time to speak to you today. Um, my name

1
2 is Van. I'm the community organizer at Mixteca, a
3 community-based organization in Sunset Park, Brooklyn
4 that has served immigrant and Latinx and Indigenous
5 communities for over 25 years.

6 As an organization that provides direct services
7 to the immigrant and Indigenous communities, we see
8 the need to to preserve our sanctuary laws and to
9 inform our community members of their rights.

10 Last year, Mixteca was able to serve 1,000
11 community members in legal services with only 2 staff
12 members on our legal team, and we were able to inform
13 over 5,000 people of their rights when interacting
14 with ICE.

15 With New York City sanctuary laws being under
16 attack and under threat, we need to remind our
17 immigrant communities that they are still protected,
18 that they still have rights and this city is a
19 sanctuary city. That's why we urge you to accept this
20 local law, um, Intro— uh, Intro 20— Intro 55, um,
21 that would provide us with clear signage and
description of the rights that people have in
non-public government spaces, which would ease minds
and create safety for our immigrant communities,
especially when many of our community members are

1
2 unaware that this type of protection protection
3 exists.

4 As an organization that facilitates Know Your
5 Rights workshops, we have witnessed firsthand impact
6 in the effectiveness of our outreach efforts. I've
7 heard from several community members, from neighbors,
8 um, continuously asking if it is safe to go to
9 certain places in the city.

10 We see the fear that they even— that they have to
11 even go to the grocery stores. So they shouldn't have
12 to fear going to the hospital, their children's
13 schools, food pantries, or to community-based
14 organizations like Mixteca.

15 We are ready to do the work in informing our
16 communities about these non-public government spaces
17 and to remind them that New York City is a place that
18 they can call home. All we just need is for you guys
19 to support us in this. Thank you.

20 RANDY ALI: Good afternoon, Chair and members of
21 the Committee. Uh, my name is Randy Ali. I'm the
executive director of the Arab American Family
Support Center, known as AFSC. Um, AFSC serves
roughly 20,000 people each year across New York City.
Over 70% of our clients were born outside of the

1
2 United States, and many come from historically
3 underserved communities.

4 AFSC is a MOIA-established legal support center.
5 We create safe and supportive spaces and are a
6 trusted resource— resource for immigrants in a new
7 city. We work with families who are experiencing
8 language barriers, cultural differences, and mistrust
9 of systems that have historically targeted them.

10 That is why trusted community-based organizations
11 like AFSC and our partners play such a critical role
12 in making sure immigrant New Yorkers have access to
13 Know Your Rights information. Since I started in this
14 position in September, I've witnessed our staff, many
15 of whom are also immigrants, respond to a surge in
16 fear, need for basic assistance, and mental health
17 challenges in the communities we serve.

18 The gro— this growing need comes from from
19 inhumane federal immigration policies, hostile
20 anti-immigrant rhetoric, cuts to public benefit,
21 rising food and housing insecurity, and a spike in
22 anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant hate.

23 Our communities are increasingly being targeted.
24 We see this in incidents like the recent attack on
25 young Muslim women in Bay Ridge. Fear in our

1
2 communities is profound. Mixed-status families are
3 increasingly choosing to self-deport rather than risk
4 detention or separation by ICE, tearing families
5 apart, even those in the middle of a family
6 reunification process.

7 We have seen a sharp decline in community members
8 applying for naturalization. Uh, this year we did not
9 host our annual citizenship celebration, usually a
10 joyous occasion, because so few members of our
11 community took the exam. Some were afraid to take the
12 test and others had their scheduled test paused due
13 to new restrictions.

14 For families traumatized by conflict in their
15 home countries and concerned about growing conflict
16 in the Middle East, seeking legal help can feel like
17 an additional threat to safety. Families also face
18 rising application fees, long wait times, and
19 widespread misinformation.

20 Our community needs to know their rights and to
21 know their city is protecting them. This legislation
will empower them to make the right legal decisions
to protect their families. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you. Thank you
all.

1
2 RANDY ALI: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: The next panel will
4 consist of Dave Basnet from NYIC, Rabbi Adam
5 Graubart, Zachary Ahmad, New York Civil Liberties
6 Union, and Noelle Peñez from the New York Lawyers for
7 the Public Interest. Hi, oh my God.

8 NOELLE PENAS: Um, and the members of the
9 Committee for holding this public hearing. My name is
10 Noelle Penas, and I'm the health justice community
11 organizer at New York Lawyers for the Public
12 Interest.

13 At NYLPI, my colleagues and I work to address the
14 human rights crisis in immigration detention and to
15 advocate for healthcare for all New Yorkers
16 regardless of immigration status. We have heard
17 repeatedly from clients who need and are eligible for
18 life-sustaining medical care but are hesitant to seek
19 healthcare for themselves and their family members at
20 local hospitals due to this fear of immigration
21 enforcement, including disclosure of their private
information.

We have also heard from medical providers about
the lack of guidance and support within their
institutions as they endeavor to provide necessary

1
2 care to their patients, particularly those who are in
3 civil immigration custody.

4 It is difficult for clients to feel safe seeking
5 care when ICE repeatedly enters our public hospitals
6 without warning or public acknowledgement to the
7 community or clear guidelines to medical providers.
8 This mistrust is compounded when the community learns
9 that our public hospital system has longstanding
10 contracts with Palantir, a technology company with an
11 active \$30 million federal contract to identify,
12 track, and deport our immigrant neighbors.

13 This is why we support Intro 55 and 261 and other
14 sanctuary policies like the New York City Trust Act.
15 These actions are critical to preserve access to
16 healthcare for all New Yorkers. We express our
17 support for legislation that would empower our most
18 vulnerable community members with access to
19 information about their rights, and we also support
20 the Trust Act, which would prohibit collaboration
21 between the city immigration authorities. This is
essential to maintaining trust in our institutions,
supporting public health measures, and ensuring the
safety of all New Yorkers when seeking care.

1
2 We urge the Council to pass these critical
3 policies, and we also further suggest passing bills
4 that would mandate hospitals to enact safeguards for
5 patients in ICE custody and their medical providers.

6 Given the rising disappearances from ICE, it is
7 now more important than ever to rebuild the bridges
8 of trust between immigrant communities and city
9 government. Thank you again for your support of our
10 work and our clients, and we look forward to
11 continued partnership protecting our communities and
12 their health.

13 RABBI ADAM GRAUBART: Hello, I'm Rabbi Adam
14 Graubart. Today I'm speaking on behalf of myself and
15 not as a representative of a synagogue. I'm also a
16 proud member of Jews for Racial and Economic Justice.
17 The federal Administration's treatment of immigrants
18 constitutes a moral crisis, and I reject our city
19 government playing any role in the violence happening
20 to our immigrant neighbors.

21 I appreciate the existing restrictions against
collaboration with ICE, but the City Council must
swiftly pass the TRUST Act to ensure that we are
protecting immigrant New Yorkers in our fullest
capacity. We've seen numerous violations of our

1
2 current laws, and immigrants have taken the hit.
3 Jewish tradition teaches about accountability. In
4 fact, Jewish communities dedicate an entire season
5 each year towards Cheshbon HaNefesh, accounting of
6 the soul, in which every person evaluates their past
actions against what is kind and just.

7 In Leviticus, the Israelites receive the charge,
8 tochiach et amitecha, reprove your fellow when they
9 have done wrong. These particular principles shape my
10 view of how to achieve universal justice. When harm
11 occurs, each of us can name it and work to address
12 it. In this way, the individual may learn and grow
while the society avoids repeating the negative
consequences of the behavior.

13 When government workers endanger immigrants, we
14 need to empower individual New Yorkers to call out
15 violations of the law and prevent perpetual harm.
16 That's why we must pass the TRUST Act now. Jewish
17 texts and history also teach me that everyone is
18 better off when we embrace the migrants in our midst
and what they have to offer our society.

19 Therefore, in addition to advancing the
20 TRUST Act, I ask the City Council to close loopholes
21 in existing sanctuary protections by passing

1 Introduction 55 and Int- Introduction 261 as soon as
2 possible. Thank you.

3 ZACH AHMAD: Good morning. My name is Zach Ahmad.
4 I'm a senior policy counsel at the New York Civil
5 Liberties Union, and we are a member of the ICE Out
6 NYC Coalition.

7 The NYCLU has long been a defender of and an
8 advocate for strengthening our city's sanctuary laws.
9 New York City's laws and policies keeping the city
10 out of the business of immigration enforcement are a
11 proud distinction for our city, which has always been
12 a magnet for immigrants from across the world.

13 Our city is in a moment of hopeful transition as
14 we move from a Mayoral Administration that actively
15 sought to undermine our sanctuary laws to a new
16 Administration that has already begun to take
17 tangible steps towards ensuring these laws are
18 properly implemented through the issuance of
19 Executive Order 13 and the establishment of the
20 Interagency Response Committee.

21 It is welcoming and encouraging that this
Committee, under new leadership, chose to begin its
work by examining the state of our sanctuary city

1
2 protections and considering legislation to bolster
3 them.

4 We are grateful for the council's continued
5 oversight to ensure that New York City is keeping its
6 promises to the millions of immigrants who call the
7 city home. Hopeful as this moment is, It is— as the
8 Committee undertakes that task, it must be clear-eyed
9 about the many instances that advocates and the
10 city's own Department of Investigation have uncovered
11 where sanctuary laws were clearly violated.

12 Some of those examples were discussed at length
13 in a separate Committee hearing just days ago, and it
14 is safe to assume that there are many other examples
15 over the years that simply never came to light. The
16 Committee must also not overlook the significant gaps
17 in the way that our loopholes and vaguely worded
18 exceptions undercut the effectiveness of sanctuary
19 laws.

20 As meaningful as New York City sanctuary
21 protections have been over several decades, they
remain beset by exceptions that allow for collusion
with ICE based on a person's past criminal legal
system contact, and that permit opaque task force
arrangements to continue to keep— that continue to

1
2 keep local officers in contact with federal
3 immigration enforcement.

4 Two bills on today's agenda, Intro 55, er, and
5 Intro 261, uh, are a positive step in that direction,
6 but we still need more. The Council must prioritize
7 passing the New York City Trust Act, Intro 209, and
8 create a mechanism to hold key city agencies
9 accountable that violate our laws for misconduct and
10 incentivize them to take those laws seriously.

11 The Council must also revisit legislation to
12 remove the confusing and crim- and, and the confusing
13 and misguided criminal carve-outs that exist in our
14 city's detainer laws which not only impose double
15 punishment on people who satisfied their sentences,
16 but also invite mistakes that then unlawfully punish
17 people- funnel people into ICE custody. Thank you

18 DAVE BASNET: Good afternoon, Chair Encarnación
19 and members of the Committee. Uh, thank you for the
20 opportunity to testify today on the key legislation,
21 uh, and critical steps that this body has to take to
make sure that New Yorkers are both aware of their
rights and ensure that mechanisms for accounting
accountability are created for New Yorkers if city
agencies violate their rights.

1
2 My name is Dave Basnet, and I'm the senior
3 immigrant- immigration rights policy manager at the
4 New York Immigration Coalition, a coalition of more
5 than 200 immigrant and refugee organizations
6 advancing access to public services, inclusion, and
7 justice.

8 Today's hearing and proposed legislation
9 recognizes that laws alone are not enough and that
10 New Yorkers must know their rights in order for those
11 protections to have any real meaning. New York City
12 has reliably been a national leader in upholding our
13 municipal protections for immigrant communities
14 through our longstanding sanctuary laws, fought for
15 by this very same body. But those protections only
16 work when New Yorkers, uh, city workers, and
17 institutions clearly understand them.

18 At a time when fear and confusion about federal
19 enforcement increases, New York's NYIC hopes that
20 this hearing leads the Council to take necessary
21 steps to strengthen transparency, rebuild trust
between immigrant communities and city government,
and ensure that accurate information about legal
rights and city policies is consistently accessible
across our public institutions.

1
2 By focusing on education and visibility, the
3 Council can help ensure that those protections that
4 are already written into city law are fully realized.
5 Today, NYIC, alongside the ICE Out NYC coalition, is
6 testifying on behalf of Intro 55, the New York City
7 Know Your Rights Act, and calls for the swift passage
8 and action by this body on Intro 209, the New York
9 City Trust Act.

10 We offer our strong support for Intro 55, uh,
11 this bill would require the Commissioner of MOIA in
12 consultation with the city's law department to
13 develop signage that identifies in non-public areas
14 of city property and outlines the rights individuals
15 may invoke when interacting with federal authorities.
16 In NYIC, the- steers the Education Collaborative,
17 which is a coalition of more than 30 grassroots
18 organizations and practitioners working to improve
19 these things. And from an education perspective,
20 Intro 55 would strengthen trust with school
21 communities by ensuring that all students, families,
and staff clearly know their rights.

Uh, we look forward to the Council acting on the
New York City Trust Act and the New York City Know
Your Rights Act. Thank you so much.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you, thank you
3 all. Our next panel, I'm calling up Shelley English,
4 Jasmine Lately, um, just- hmm, oh, Sandhu too? I'm so
5 sorry, I thought that was an L. It's this- it's the
6 handwriting. Uh, Dr. Betty from Health Justice for NY
7 and Dr. Steve from- also from Health Justice, uh,
8 and- oh, there you go. Thank you. When you're ready,
9 you may begin.

10 SHELLEY ENGLISH: Hi, my name is Shelley English.
11 I'm here with other members of Health Justice for New
12 York in support of Intros 55 and 261 with amendments.
13 I'm the daughter of an immigrant. I'm a former city-
14 New York City employee, and I currently serve as a
15 New York State licensed mental health counselor.

16 A doctor in France and a doctor in Italy in the
17 early 1940s prevented the Gestapo from arresting and
18 deporting my grandmother and mother to their deaths.
19 Because of these doctors, I'm here today helping
20 neighbors and patients I care for and care about in
21 the city I call home. I'm honored to be surrounded by
today's healers and to speak on behalf of Health
Justice for New York.

Immigrants and refugees in New York City and our
nation are vital and irreplaceable part of our

1
2 history, our communities, and our economy. Immigrants
3 create economic opportunity for those of us born
4 within and outside the United States. Immigrants pay
5 more in taxes than received in services, including
6 healthcare.

7 Immigrants are essential workers from building
8 construction to food delivery to childcare, and
9 immigrants are a cornerstone of healthcare workers,
10 including doctors, nurses, hospital aides, homecare
11 attendants, and facility maintenance workers.

12 Under the guise of immigration enforcement, more
13 and more people are being lawlessly snatched off the
14 streets by anonymous armed bullies in masks and
15 brought injury to our emergency departments. Our
16 family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors are
17 increasingly fearful as patients or workers traveling
18 to or spending time at healthcare facilities.

19 As a trauma specialist who conducts psychological
20 evaluations of immigrants seeking asylum, I'm an
21 eyewitness to the fear and anxiety of patients afraid
22 that ICE agents might show up at any time, anywhere
23 to handcuff them and take them away to deportation
24 centers.

1
2 We urge that federal immigration enforcement
3 agents and agencies stay out of all healthcare
4 facilities except for limited access in narrow
5 circumstances with verified legal documents. All
6 patients and healthcare workers deserve privacy and
7 safety in healthcare, including physical and mental
8 safety and data protections.

9 When federal immigration agents are present in
10 healthcare facilities, they interfere with the
11 privacy, safety, and care for all patients and staff.

12 JASMEET SANDHU: Good afternoon, my name is Dr.
13 Jasmeet Sandhu, member of Health Justice for NY
14 Doctors Council Union. For Intro 55, we believe
15 signage is important. Public healthcare facilities
16 should be explicitly included, and existing worker
17 tenant rights signage should be expanded so that the
18 information is widely distributed in public and
19 private settings.

20 Our members work in healthcare facilities across
21 the city, including public hospitals that have had
federal immigration agents on premises. These events,
including detained people brought in by agents who
injured them, have sown fear among patients and staff
because we still lack clear policies and procedures

1
2 in our facilities and the signage and information to
3 communicate these policies and procedures.

4 We support Intro 55, including across all public
5 healthcare facilities; this is including H&H. At
6 Elmhurst Hospital, the facility that I work at, our
7 facility is proud of our diverse staff, many who are
8 immigrants. Elmhurst is also an academic hospital
9 whose trainees include medical students on visas.
10 Members are asking me what require- what areas
11 require a warrant for an agent to enter? What is a
12 valid warrant? It is vital for our- to make sure our
13 staff and patients know what areas are public versus
14 private, protecting our sick patients and their
15 privacy.

16 Members have also voiced clear signage would
17 avoid confusion and prepare staff to follow the
18 appropriate protocol for that designated area. The
19 presence of ICE agents in our facilities does impact
20 the care we can provide. Patients are delaying care,
21 ending up in critical conditions because they are
worried that they'll encounter an agent. Family
members are too afraid to visit their sick loved ones
for the same reason.

1
2 Health Justice for NY has developed comprehensive
3 guidelines for healthcare facilities. We urge the
4 Committee to review them. We also believe companion
5 legislation is necessary to create more specific
6 policies and procedures that are reflected in
7 signage. Thank you.

8 DR. BETTY KOLOD: Good afternoon. I'm Dr. Betty
9 Kolod, a primary care physician in East Harlem and a
10 member of Health Justice for New York, also Chair of
11 the Board of Physicians for our national health
12 program, New York Metro. I'm speaking in support of
13 Intro 261.

14 To protect the safety and privacy of patients and
15 staff in healthcare facilities, the city must cancel
16 and never initiate contracts with immigration
17 enforcement entities. I'm particularly troubled that
18 New York City Health and Hospitals contracts with
19 Palantir, known to be heavily involved in federal
20 immigration enforcement.

21 My patient Carmen has liver cancer. Her devoted
son is a mama's boy and takes her to chemotherapy and
palliative care visits for the searing pain in her
stomach. She has lived in Harlem for 35 years, so he
was shocked to discover that Carmen does not have

1
2 legal status. I was unaware too, because all
3 low-income persons over the age of 65 in New York are
4 eligible of Medicaid- eligible for Medicaid
5 regardless of their immigration status.

6 Now that this understanding has emerged, Carmen
7 has been missing appointments and has decided not to
8 pursue a cure for her cancer. She cannot risk having
9 her protect- protected health information, including
10 immigration status, unlawfully shared with federal,
11 federal agencies directly or via private entities,
12 and has decided to die at home with dignity instead.

13 Intro 261 would protect Carmen and it could be
14 made stronger. Public healthcare facilities like H&H
15 and its Gotham affiliates should be named explicitly.
16 The bill language should also be explicit that the
17 city shall not procure goods or services from
18 contracted entities engaged in immigration
19 enforcement.

20 Language should be added that existing contracts
21 will be canceled if in violation of the Intro, and
that all existing contracts will be reviewed prior to
renewal. Additional legislation should require public
healthcare institutions to create clear policies and

1
2 procedures for interactions with federal immigration
3 agents.

4 As Health Justice for New York, we will provide
5 our policy recommendations in writing. Thank you for
6 protecting us and our patients.

7 DR. STEVE AUERBACH: My name is Dr. Steve
8 Auerbach. I am also a member of Health Justice for
9 New York. I'm a retired US Public Health Service
10 officer with Federal Health and Human Services and
11 also on the board of B&HP New York.

12 We're healthcare workers speaking for over 1,000
13 members of Health Justice for New York in support of
14 Intros 55-261, though we do have some, uh, urged
15 amendments. Health Justice for New York grew out of
16 multiple organizations, including New York Doctors
17 Coalition, founded in 2016 after that year's
18 election.

19 We're an informal collective of health workers
20 and advocates providing expertise drawn from our
21 lived experience and solidarity with social justice
movements and our patients. We would urge that Intro
55, uh, have some additional language explicitly
naming, perhaps in Section C, explicitly naming
Health Hospitals and its Gotham affiliates. Uh, we

1
2 would also ask that Intro 55 or other, uh, city, uh,
3 legislation go further to include the private
4 healthcare facilities, the so-called, uh, private
5 voluntary hospitals and the clinics and the FQHCs and
6 the rest to protect health workers, what, and help
7 patients regardless of whether they are public or
8 private.

9 Um, we, uh, urge this Committee along with
10 others, um, appropriate City Council Committees, uh,
11 such as Committee on Hospitals, the Mayoral offices
12 and agencies working on immigration to continue
13 actively engaging health workers and advocates. We
14 are here today because management at Health AND
15 Hospitals and management at the private hospitals
16 have refused, uh, to, uh, protect their pa- uh,
17 patients and their providers. They refuse to engage
18 with, uh, activist employees who, um, are aligned
19 with the goals of this Committee. Um, and we are
20 asking that, uh, the city government, uh, at all
21 levels engage with hospital management, both public
and private, uh, to make sure that the sanctuary, uh,
laws are actually applied. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: And, um, the policies
3 that you have, you have copies for— to leave with us?
4 Okay, perfect. Thank you so much.

5 Uh, we're now calling up Charles Brown from
6 Lutheran Social Services of New York. Guvir Singh
7 Sidhu. Yes, please. Thank you and Rabbi Marisa James.
8 Oh, sorry and Brennan Peacore-Brink from the
9 Interfaith Center of New York. Hello. Once you're
10 ready, you can begin.

11 BRENNAN PEACORE-BRINK: Good afternoon, and thank
12 you to the Committee on Immigration for the
13 opportunity to testify. My name is Brennan
14 Peacore-Brink, and I serve as the director for
15 migrant outreach at the Interfaith Center of New
16 York.

17 Founded in 1997, the mission of the Interfaith
18 Center is to overcome prejudice, violence, and
19 misunderstanding by activating the power of New
20 York's grassroots religious and civic leaders and
21 their communities. I want to attempt to tell two
brief stories that illustrate the need for Intro 55
and Sound Know Your Rights trainings.

An Imam in our network called me. A congregant
had just rushed into the mosque and headed straight

1
2 to the restroom, uh, because he was sick to his
3 stomach. The imam wasn't calling me over a simple
4 stomach bug or food poisoning. No, the Imam conveyed
5 to me that the congregant had a sharp, urgent pain,
6 like his stomach was splitting in two. I said, Imam,
7 I think you need to take the individual to an H&H
8 hospital. There will be low or no cost.

9 I know, the Imam replied to me, but you don't
10 understand, Brennan. He's too scared. He's scared ICE
11 will be there or that the hospital will let ICE get
12 him.

13 While I could point to New York's sanctuary laws,
14 I couldn't point to visible signs that the hospital
15 had actually been trained on their rights and would
16 exert them. So we didn't go to the hospital.

17 The second story: grassroots organizations now
18 working with Hands Off New York have distributed Know
19 Your Rights materials to over 7,000 NYC businesses.
20 In my neighborhood, parents want to take the same
21 model to distribute Know Your Rights signs and
information to their schools. However, their schools
aren't sure if they can accept and display these
signs. They need guidance— simple, obvious guidance
that affirms that our schools can tell every student

1
2 they will be safe and that the school will work to
3 keep them safe.

4 In both of these stories, clarity and leadership
5 from the city in the form of Intro 55 would support
6 New Yorkers. It would give those sick the assurance
7 that they can seek the care they need, a key public
8 health support not only for immigrant New Yorkers but
9 all New Yorkers who want— who benefit from healthy
10 neighbors.

11 Intro 55 would do the same in our schools, give
12 students and families more confidence that their
13 schools will properly understand and exert their
14 rights and the rights of students.

15 Again, this strengthens not only our education
16 system for immigrant students but all students. Thank
17 you.

18 GURVIR SINGH SIDHU: Good afternoon, Chair
19 Encarnación and members of the Committee on
20 Immigration. My name is Gurvir Singh Sidhu. I serve
21 as a state policy manager at the Sikh Coalition, uh,
the nation's largest Sikh civil rights organization.
I'm also here as the son of immigrants.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in
support of Intro 55 and 261. The Sikh Coalition was

1
2 founded in the aftermath of September 11th, 2001. To
3 defend the civil rights of Sikh Americans and to
4 ensure that people of all faiths and backgrounds can
live free from discrimination and fear.

5 Today, many Sikh New Yorkers, including asylum
6 seekers, immigrants, and mixed-status families, are
7 directly affected by immigration enforcement policies
8 and the growing confusion about their legal rights in
9 interactions with immigration authorities. Indro 55
10 addresses this gap by helping ensure that immigrant
11 New Yorkers clearly understand their constitutional
rights.

12 When federal immigration authorities appear in or
13 near city facilities, many individuals don't know
14 what protections apply, what city policies allow, or
how to assert their rights.

15 Clear multilingual signage explaining these
16 protections and identifying the boundaries between
17 public and non-public spaces helps ensure that
18 residents, families, and city employees understand
the law and can act accordingly.

19 We hope to see continued expansion of materials
20 available in various languages spoken by our
21

1
2 immigrant communities. Intro 261 is equally
3 important.

4 New York City resources shouldn't be used in ways
5 that undermine trust between immigrant communities
6 and local government. When immigrant New Yorkers fear
7 that accessing local services could expose them to
8 immigration enforcement, they're less likely to seek
9 healthcare, send their children to school, report
10 crimes, or access city programs.

11 Sikhs who have experienced hate crimes or whose
12 children experience severe school bullying should
13 have the confidence in the respective institutions
14 not to endanger them further.

15 This erosion of trust harms families, weakens
16 community stability, and ultimately undermines public
17 safety. These issues carry particular significance
18 for Sikh communities. Many Sikhs are visible- ident-
19 visibly identifiable because of our articles of
20 faith. Um, thank you for uh, your leadership and the
21 time to speak here today. We hope you pass this
legislation to protect the civil rights of
individuals.

CHARLES BROWN: Uh, good afternoon. Thank you,
Chair Encarnación, and to the Committee and staff for

1 holding today's hearing. My name is Charles Brown.
2 I'm the director of the Immigration Legal Program at
3 Lutheran Social Services of New York, and I'm here to
4 testify in support of Intro 55.

5 The Immigration Legal Program at Lutheran has
6 provided high-quality legal services to New Yorkers
7 for over 25 years. We have a focus in humanitarian
8 relief, including assisting New Yorkers seeking
9 asylum and special immigrant juvenile status.

10 In our experience, federal immigration law is
11 complicated and confusing. When you add the
12 intersection of local, state, and federal laws, it
13 can be nearly impossible to understand when it is
14 legal or what is legal when it comes to immigration
15 enforcement. Confusion about the law is then a
16 breeding ground for disinformation and
17 misinformation.

18 As a result, community members, immigrants, and
19 otherwise often lack accurate, clear, and current
20 information about the state of the law. This
21 misinformation can both create fear and can embolden
questionable and illegal immigration enforcement
tactics.

1
2 This bill aims to remedy that information gap by
3 providing clear signage in multiple languages and
4 age-appropriate throughout the city, informing the
5 community about key rights around immigration and
6 enforcement, city property, and city resources.
7 Community visiting buildings with the signage and
8 those working in the same building stand to benefit
9 from clear information.

10 The signage will also help ensure that New
11 Yorkers understand the law, the first step in
12 empowering them to assert their rights. For these
13 reasons, Lutheran Social Services of New York
14 supports this bill and its aim. Meanwhile, we urge
15 the City Council to provide sustained investment in
16 organizations on the ground serving our immigrant
17 families, friends, and neighbors, such as through the
18 Aslan and, and Pro Se Plus initiatives and through
19 the ICare Coalition, where legal service
20 organizations such as Lutheran are expanding access
21 to legal representation throughout the city. Thank
you for your time.

19 MARISA JAMES: Good afternoon. Uh, my name is
20 Marisa James. I am one of the Rabbis at Congregation
21 Beit Simchat Torah, CBST. Where our ARC immigration

1
2 clinic is one of the largest pro se clinics in New
3 York City and we are the conveners of the New York
4 City Pro Se Collaborative.

5 I wanna offer gratitude to the City Council for
6 their consistent support. It's very good to be
7 testifying to partners in this work rather than
8 adversaries.

9 We are an LGBTQ Jewish community with members who
10 are immigrants and the descendants of immigrants, and
11 the majority of the immigrant friends our clinic
12 serves are LGBTQ+ and/or HIV positive. Because of who
13 we serve, we hear stories every day from some of the
14 most vulnerable immigrants in this city. As asylum
15 seekers from countries where LGBTQ+ people are
16 discriminated against or attacked, they can
17 experience the same bigotry here that they faced at
18 home and don't always trust organizations that
19 support people from their country of origin or
20 ethnicity.

21 Many cannot even tell their community or their
family the reason why they are seeking asylum here.
They come here because of our protections of their
rights. But if you don't know your rights, then you
don't have access to your rights. Signs in simple,

1
2 clear language that explain and reinforce the rights
3 and protections immigrants have in New York City are
4 important in as many languages as possible, in as
5 many places as possible.

6 Our staff often reassure immigrant New Yorkers
7 that city government workers are mostly restricted
8 from collaborating with immigration enforcement, but
9 some of them are skeptical and as a result forgo
10 benefits that all New Yorkers, regardless of
11 immigration status, are eligible to receive.

12 The clear official signage in every possible kind
13 of city building would go a long way to help convince
14 some immigrant New Yorkers much more than our
15 reassurances.

16 On top of this, many in our community are afraid
17 to even leave home given the current immigration
18 enforcement context and how they see this in the
19 media. Signage in shelters, schools, and other New
20 York City buildings that people pass through every
21 day could make a real impact in reducing these fears.
Um, and just to say, my great-grandparents came to
New York City and did not face this kind of a massive
bureaucracy in a language they did not know. They
never really became fluent in English, and yet they

1
2 were New Yorkers who raised 3 more generations of New
3 Yorkers.

4 Um, so I hope that what we can do and what you
5 can do can help reduce that wall, or at least help
6 people pass that wall so that this generation of
7 immigrants can raise the next 4 generations of New
8 Yorkers. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you. Um, I will
10 now call up, uh, Samantha Sanchez from Common Cause,
11 Tanya Matos from Unlocal, Barbara Lopez also from
12 Unlocal, Funmi- Funmi Akinawonu. Ake- sere? Say it
13 again? Akinawonu. Oh, I like that.

14 Yep, you had it the first time. There you go.

15 SAMANTHA SANCHEZ: Sorry. Good afternoon, Chair
16 Encarnación and members of the Committee. Thank you
17 for the opportunity to testify today. My name is
18 Samantha Sanchez, and I'm the policy manager with
19 Common Cause New York.

20 Common Cause is a nonpartisan watchdog
21 organization dedicated to strengthening democracy,
protecting constitutional rights, and ensuring
government accountability.

We appreciate the Council for holding this, this
oversight hearing today and considering Introductions

1
2 55 and 261 at a time when immigrant communities in
3 New York City are facing heightened fear and
4 uncertainty due to increased federal immigration
5 enforcement activities.

6 New York City's sanctuary laws exist for a
7 fundamental reason: local government should serve its
8 residents, not function as an extension of federal
9 immigration enforcement.

10 When residents fear that accessing services,
11 entering government buildings, and interacting with
12 city agencies could expose them to immigration
13 enforcement, trust and government deteriorates.

14 That erosion of trust discourages people from
15 seeking services, reporting crimes, or engaging with
16 public institutions, ultimately undermining public
17 safety and effective governance. Intro 55 is an
18 important measure for transparency and
19 accountability.

20 By requiring signage explaining constitutional
21 protections, this legislation helps clarify the legi-
the legal boundaries of governing access to city
facilities.

Intro 261 addresses another important gap. A city
that has committed itself to sanctuary protections

1 should not use taxpayer dollars to contract with
2 entities engaged in immigration enforcement
3 activities. Public procurement decisions should align
4 with the city's legal commitments and policies.
5 Aligning contracting practices with sanctuary policy
6 strengthens the credibility of these protections and
7 ensures that public funds aren't used in ways that
8 undermine the city's own laws.

9 Legislation alone won't solve these challenges,
10 unfortunately. Effective sanctuary protections
11 require clear agency protocols, proper training for
12 city employees, and strong oversight for compliance.
13 New York City has long been a leader in protecting
14 immigrant communities, but real leadership goes
15 beyond laws. It demands implementation. Thank you for
16 the opportunity to testify.

17 FUNMI AKINNAWONU: Good afternoon, Chair
18 Encarnación, members of the, um, Immigration
19 Committee. My name is Funmi Akinawonu. I'm a senior
20 policy analyst at the Federation of Protestant
21 Welfare Agencies.

 We are an organization that advocates for
economic security for New Yorkers, and we have a
membership base of over 170 organizations who are

1 human services agencies and members of faith-based
2 institutions. And so we are here today to support
3 Intro 55 because having prominently displayed signage
4 that informs New Yorkers of their rights is essential
5 to protecting all individual rights of New Yorkers
6 across New York City, and particularly immigrant
7 communities.

8 Um, and we are heartened to hear earlier today
9 the Commissioner talk about all of the public
10 information campaigns that do exist through MOIA.
11 And, um, but we are urging the city to make sure that
12 we are educating immigrant communities both about
13 their rights and protections as well as their
14 privileges within, um, ah, through New York City
15 government.

16 And so we are advocating for an increase in
17 funding for immigration legal services as well as
18 increasing Know Your Rights campaigns and for our
19 human services agencies. Our members of both the
20 faith-based institutions and the human services
21 agencies are where people find community, practice
their faiths, and receive direct services. And the
changes in immigration policy as well as funding, uh,
for example, for, um, both the removal and then the

1
2 restoration of funding for organizations like
3 entities like AmeriCorps, which are instrumental to
4 building up our human services sector, have had a
5 huge impact on those agencies and their ability to
6 provide direct services, uh, as well as, um, the
7 constant fear within those organizations and the
8 anxiety around having to address what they would do,
9 um, if CBP or ICE showed up at their doors.

10 Um, we are also advocating for increased public
11 education, particularly around changes to public
12 charge, which could have a chilling effect for
13 immigrants when it comes to, um, utilizing public
14 benefits and for increased funding to CCHR in order
15 to operationalize a lot of public information
16 campaigns through the city. Thank you very much.

17 TANIA MATTOS: Good afternoon, Chair, uh,
18 Encarnación, um, and members of the Immigration
19 Committee. My name is Tania Mattos and I'm the
20 executive director of Unlocal, uh, a nonprofit
21 organization dedicated to serving New York's
immigrant communities through immigration legal
services and community education.

Our team of lawyers, advocates, organizers, and
social workers provide free services to, to immigrant

1
2 communities across the 5 boroughs, including Know
3 Your Rights workshops, New York State Dream Act
4 application support, legal representation, social
5 work services, and community events. Through our work
6 in the Pro Se Plus project and the Rapid Response
7 Legal Collaborative and our anti-detention approach
8 that focuses on legal representation, equipping
9 immigrant communities with the tools and emergency
10 preparedness resources that, that need to respond
11 safely and effectively in the event of federal
12 immigration enforcement.

13 Today I'm here to express my strong support for
14 Intro 55 and Intro 261. Through our work, uh, uh,
15 through the Dreamer Center, uh, we are distributing
16 Know Your Rights information and deportation defense
17 materials. We have seen firsthand the value of our
18 city's sanctuary protections and the resources
19 available for immigrant communities. But these
20 protections only work if people know they exist and
21 all agencies follow the law.

22 In recent months, we have heard increasing
23 concern from community members about the presence of
24 ICE in their neighborhoods and uncertainty about the
25 role of the NYPD Police Department. Our communities

1
2 deserve clear, visible information about their
3 rights. Access to this information should be treated
4 as a right, not a privilege and Intro 55 ensures that
5 people are informed of their protection in a clear
6 and prominent way.

7 It helps prevent the risk of unlawful
8 collaboration between local agencies and federal
9 immigration enforcement. I also strongly support
10 Intro 261, which would prohibit New York City from
11 contracting with entities engaged in immigration
12 enforcement.

13 The current deportation agenda is tearing
14 families apart, and I, I thank you for introducing
15 these bills. Uh, thank you for the opportunity to
16 testify.

17 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay, the next, uh,
18 person will have interpretation services, so there'll
19 be 2 minutes and then 2 minutes added for the, uh,
20 interpretation as well.

21 BARBARA LOPEZ: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
149:43-151:21] Mi comunidad empeora cada día más. Hoy
estoy aquí para darle fe de lo que está sucediendo en
mi comunidad de Sunset Park. Y lo importante que es
que aprueben las medidas necesarias y protección de

1 los inmigrantes. La actividad de ICE en mi vecindario
2 ha aumentado en los últimos meses. El 25 de febrero,
3 por ejemplo, los agentes de ICE entraron a mi, a mi
4 edificio a las 4:15 de la mañana, tocando de una
5 manera horrible. Tocaron todos los timbres. Como no
6 les abrimos, patearon y empujaron la puerta. Subieron
7 corriendo y gritando por los pasillos. Por suerte
8 nadie salió. Como, como pude salir después, ellos
9 estaban encubiertos. Los agentes continuaron
10 realizando ese, el, de la misma manera el operativo
11 por las en las calles. Todos estaban— los
12 apartamentos estamos muy asustados. Seguimos temiendo
13 a que regresen. No es justo que nos traten como
14 delincuentes, que nos ataquen, que nos persigan. Solo
15 somos emigrantes, trabajamos y contribuimos a la
16 economía, damos vida a nuestras— a estas calles. Si
17 no tenemos protección, nuestra comunidad
18 desaparecerá. Necesitamos más protección, educación,
19 Respetenme, respetenos, somos seres humanos. Gracias.

17 INTERPRETER: Thank you. I'm interpreting for,
18 um, for her. Uh, thank you for your time and
19 attention. I have been an immigrant for 48 years and
20 a citizen for 26, and the situation in my community
21 is getting worse every day.

1
2 Today I'm here to testify about what is happening
3 in my community of Sunset Park and why it is
4 important to pass more measures to protect
5 immigrants. ICE activity in the neighborhood has
6 increased in recent months.

7 On February 25th, for example, ICE agents entered
8 my building at 4:15 a.m.. They rang all the
9 doorbells, and when we didn't open the door, they
10 kicked and pushed it. They ran upstairs and shouted
11 in the hallways. Luckily, no one came out.

12 When I was able to leave, I saw them on the
13 street and they were in plain clothes. The agents
14 continued to conduct operations in the area that day.
15 All of us in the apartment were very scared and
16 continue to fear that they will return. It is not
17 fair that they treat us like criminals, that they
18 attack and persecute us just because we are migrants.
19 We are migrants who contribute to this economy and
20 bring life to the street.

21 If we do not have protection, our community will
disappear. We need more protection and education
about our rights. Please treat us like human beings.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you so much.
3 Gracias por venir y por hablar hoy. Ojalá que te veo
4 pronto también, ah, en otras, okay? Bye.

5 Okay, next up we have Mary Fernandez. They know
6 people. Okay, Maryam. Uh, okay, Maryam, come on down.
7 Joyce Wong, Nat Moghe, Stephanie Kuang and Ramin
8 Saddiq. Ramin Saddiq. 1, 2, 3, 4. One more. Oh, she's
9 here. All right, I think we're ready now. You may
10 begin.

11 JOYCE WONG: Yes, good afternoon, Chair
12 Encarnación and members of the Committee on
13 Immigration. Thank you for this opportunity to
14 testify. My name is Joyce Wong. I'm the immigration
15 program coordinator at the Korean Community Services
16 of Metropolitan New York, KCS.

17 Since 1973, KCS has served as a vital resource
18 for immigrant New Yorkers, providing culturally and
19 linguistically tailored services in public health,
20 mental health, education, workforce development, and
21 immigration legal services.

22 We are proud members of the RISE Network, a
23 coalition of nearly 20 Asian-led organizations
24 serving our city's immigrant community. Through our
25 immigration and legal services department, we see

1
2 firsthand how language barriers and misinformation
3 dictate whether community members feel safe accessing
4 public services. Many of our Asian Americans, um,
5 community members, particularly seniors, are hesitant
6 to enter city buildings because they cannot
7 distinguish between public and restricted areas.

8 In a time of heightened national enforcement,
9 providing clear information regarding constitutional
10 rights is not just helpful, it is a necessity for
11 public safety. To address these challenges, KCS
12 supports the following measures: Intro 055 provides
13 essential translation transparency regarding the
14 city's legal landscape.

15 This bill establishes clear protocols that reduce
16 the risk of unintended interactions with immigration
17 enforcement. And also, we support Intro 261, ensuring
18 that public trust is a foundation of strengthening
19 city-community relations. This bill maintains a clear
20 boundary between city operations and immigration
21 enforcement, allowing the city to manage its local
programs without outside interference.

In closing, KCS and the Rise Network are vital to
the city's Service Network. Our cultural and language

1
2 expertise ensures that public resources reach our
3 communities effectively.

4 We look forward to continuing this essential work
5 together. Um, thank you for your leadership and your
6 commitment to protecting our immigrants and
7 communities.

8 MARY ARCHANA FERNANDEZ: Thank you, Chair
9 Encarnación, and other members of the Committee on
10 Immigration for holding this hearing and providing us
11 with the opportunity to testify at this time when
12 immigrant New Yorkers feel extremely vulnerable. I'm
13 Mary Archana Fernandez, Director of Family Support
14 Services at SACS, South Asian Council for Social
15 Services, a community-based organization located in
16 Flushing, Queens.

17 I'm here to testify with partners from the Rapid
18 Immigration Support and Empowerment, RISE, a network
19 of nearly 20 Asian-led and Asian-serving
20 organizations that provide immigration case
21 management and legal services to New Yorkers.

SACS works to empower immigrant communities
through services in the areas of healthcare access
and education, senior support services, food

1 security, mental health services, and connection to
2 benefits.

3 We also have a workforce development program. All
4 our services are free and provided by culturally
5 competent staff that speak 20 different languages. In
6 the last 25 years, we've built a relationship of
7 trust with our clients by continuously adapting
8 services during crises, be it 9/11 or the COVID-19
9 pandemic.

10 Most of our clients are immigrants with limited
11 English proficiency, fixed incomes, often living in
12 isolated communities and reluctant to access services
13 due to language barriers. CBOs such as ours are
14 places that immigrants trust and come to seek
15 life-affirming services.

16 We've been providing in-person legal services
17 since 2021 through the CUNY Citizenship Now
18 initiative. Through this initiative, we've been able
19 to assist community members seeking a range of
20 immigration and natural- and naturalization-related
21 services, from renewing their green cards to FOIA
requests.

While CUNY provides the legal assistance, our
staff assists clients with translations, arranging

1 documents, and looking for additional resources.
2 However, in the past 1 year, given federal-level
3 immigration policies and enforcement, we've seen a
4 rise in clients asking for help for a variety of
5 issues. Much of this includes reading and
6 understanding correspondence received from USCIS.

7 Our clients do not know— not only need the
8 assistance of an immigration lawyer, but they also
9 need in-language support for doing things like
10 opening a USCIS account, paying an online fee.

11 I've submitted a written, uh, uh, testimony. I
12 hope you get to it. Thank you.

13 STEPHANIE KUANG: Good afternoon. Thank you, Chair
14 Encarnación and members of the Committee on
15 Immigration for holding this hearing and for the
16 opportunity to testify. My name is Stephanie Kuang,
17 Deputy Director of the Social Service at Homecrest
18 Community Services.

19 Homecrest provides community-based social
20 services to low-income, limited English proficient,
21 AAPI older adults, families, and immigrants across 4
centers in Southern Brooklyn.

Today we're testifying alongside our partners at
the Asian American Federation RISE Network, a

1 coalition of nearly 20 Asian-led and Asian-serving
2 organizations that provide immigration and legal
3 support to New Yorkers. At Homecrest, we provide
4 hands-on immigration case management. Our staff help
5 immigrant clients complete green card renewal and
6 naturalization applications, gather supporting
7 documents, provide language support, follow up
8 throughout the application process, and connect them
9 with trusted legal partners when needed.

10 For many limited English proficient older adults,
11 this kind of support in overcoming administrative
12 barriers can mean the difference between missing
13 critical deadlines and successfully moving forward in
14 immigration process, maintaining their status and
15 building greater stability for themselves and their
16 families.

17 We also conduct multilingual outreach and
18 tabling, including Know Your Rights education to help
19 community members understand their rights and
20 protections in situations involving immigration
21 enforcement and stay informed about changing
immigration policies.

We thank the Committee on Immigration for its
continued leadership in protecting immigrant New

1
2 Yorkers. To sustain and strengthen this work, we
3 recommend that the City Council first expand
4 investment in language-accessible legal services that
5 include case management; second, ensure that local
6 and state agencies fully comply with sanctuary laws.
7 We also support Introduction 55 sponsored by Council
8 Member Alexa Avilés to require multilingual signs
9 clearly outlining immigrants' constitutional rights.
10 Thank you!

11 Yes, I heard the buzzer— I was like, ah.

12 NAT MOGHE: Thank you, Chair Encarnación, and
13 members of the Committee on Immigration for holding
14 this hearing and for providing us with the
15 opportunity to testify today. My name is Nat Moghe,
16 my pronouns are they, he, and I am the advocacy
17 coordinator with the Asian American Federation, where
18 we proudly represent a collective voice of over 70
19 member organizations serving 1.5 million New York—
20 Asian New Yorkers. I'm honored to testify alongside
21 our Rise Network today, um, and would love to talk
about the current immigration legal landscape for
Asian New Yorkers.

So the current presidential Administration has
implemented significant policy changes affecting

1 immigration at all government levels. In New York
2 State, 24% of unauthorized immigrants are from Asia,
3 with arrests rising dramatically, 1,044% for Chinese
4 Chinese immigrants and 1,000% for Bangladeshi
5 immigrants between 2024 and 2025.

6 ICE's aggressive tactics have disrupted families
7 and inhibited access to essential services, and as
8 threats escalate, local and state agencies must avoid
9 supporting the federal deportation agenda and develop
10 solutions to inform immigrants of their rights.

11 Additionally, support for CBOs, community-based
12 organizations is crucial to protect and serve those
13 at risk of wrongful detention.

14 We thank the Committee on Immigration for its
15 continued support and leadership when it comes to
16 protecting immigrant New Yorkers, and we support
17 Intro 0055 as well as Intro 261. We also recommend,
18 um, the Council to protect and expand funding for the
19 following initiatives: legal services for AAPI
20 communities, legal services for day laborers and
21 domestic workers, and the immigration legal services
for survivors of violence and gender-based harm.

We also support the passing of the New York City
Trust Act and, um, suggest the expansion of

1
2 investment in language-accessible legal services. Um,
3 we also would love, uh, for the Council to continue
4 support, um, AAF's coordination of the Rise Network.
5 Thank you so much.

6 RAMIN SEDDIQ: Madam Chair, members of the
7 Committee, good afternoon. My name is Ramin Siddiq.
8 I'm a staff attorney at the Council of Peoples
9 Organization, also known by the acronym COPO. I
10 appear today on behalf of COPO, which is a nonprofit
11 organization that serves low-income immigrant
12 families and others across New York City and endows
13 them to reach their full potential as productive and
14 healthy members of the community.

15 COPO supports Introduction 55 for the following
16 reasons. First, the bill enhances constitutional
17 awareness and serves a critical due process function.
18 Second, the bill contributes to operational
19 transparency by mandating the development and posting
20 of standardized signage identifying non-public areas
21 of city property. The bill provides clear boundaries
for both the public and city staff.

Third, the bill promotes administrative
consistency and combats misinformation in a period of
heightened enforcement and shifting federal policies.

1
2 Official city-sanctioned signage would provide
3 reliable guidance to New Yorkers.

4 Fourth, the bill delivers language justice,
5 ensuring that New York's diverse immigrant population
6 can benefit from the signage protocol.

7 Fifth and finally, Introduction 55 is a
8 common-sense measure that requires no new substantive
9 legal powers. It simply ensures that the laws of-
10 the, the laws this Council has already passed are
11 effectively communicated. COPA also supports
12 Introduction 261 and does so for the following
13 reasons. First, as a market participant, New York
14 City has the legal right to decide which entities it
15 will and will not conduct business with. This bill
16 does not regulate federal immigration law. Rather, it
17 dictates the use of the city's own proprietary
18 resources.

19 Second, the council has the authority to ensure
20 that municipal assets, personnel, and services are
21 used in a manner consistent with the city's values
and the welfare of its residents.

Third, engaging with immigration enforcement in
the manner prohibited by Introduction 261 may create
a chilling effect that erodes public trust and deters

1
2 immigrant New Yorkers from accessing essential city
3 services, reporting crimes, or cooperating with local
4 law enforcement.

5 We at COPO have witnessed firsthand the terror
6 instilled in the hearts of our neighbors, friends,
7 and fellow New Yorkers as a result of the recent
8 aggressive, destabilizing, and unnerving immigration
9 enforcement tactics and policies. Introductions 55
10 and 261 build upon New York City's established
11 sanctuary policies by reducing the informational
12 asymmetry between New Yorkers and immigration
13 enforcement agencies and by addressing the financial
14 and contractual side of interagency cooperation.

15 We urge the Committee to recommend and the
16 Council to pass Introductions 55 and 261. Thank you.

17 MARYAM SHUAIB: Thank you. Good afternoon Chair
18 Encarnación and the rest of the members of this
19 Committee, for holding this hearing and giving us the
20 opportunity to testify. My name is Maryam Shuaib. I
21 am the coalition organizer at the Arab American
Association of New York based in Bay Ridge.

Um, since 2001, we have been proudly supporting
migrants and ensuring that they— their rights are
protected. I want to highlight the importance of

1
2 Intro 55-2026, which asks the Mayor's Office of
3 Immigrant Affairs to create signage that clearly
4 distinguishes between public and private spaces,
5 including the rights community members are entitled
6 to in both spaces throughout the city.

7
8 Recent raids highlight a total lack of
9 accountability as federal agencies continue to act
10 with impunity across New York City streets,
11 indiscriminately abducting and aimlessly arresting
12 many, quote, immigrant-seeming individuals as
13 possible.

14
15 Our streets have morphed into an unpredictable
16 battleground for our community members with
17 absolutely no accountability in sight. This must be
18 stopped now. Install- installing conspicuously clear
19 signage in multiple languages, including Arabic,
20 Cantonese, and Spanish, three of the most spoken
21 languages in Bay Ridge, serves as an absolute bare
minimum for ICE and other federal agencies agencies
to be held accountable while also making our most
vulnerable community members aware that they will be
prot- that they will be protected in public and
private spaces.

1
2 For many years, we have worked with the New York—
3 with the City of New York to provide resources to
4 community members across the city. There is a mutual
5 understanding of the urgency of protecting immigrant
6 rights. Inter— uh, Intro 55 leaves absolutely no room
7 for interpretation on the logistics of a detainment.
8 While this bill ensures that targeted communities are
9 made aware of their inalienable rights in a given
10 interaction with federal agencies, it also puts
11 federal agencies' impunity on full display if they
12 choose to neglect those rights.

13 It is vital for the City of New York— of New York
14 to take the necessary steps to protect its residents
15 from unlawful attacks by ICE and other federal
16 agencies by codifying measures that prevent collusion
17 between federal, between federal immigration
18 authorities. Thank you so much for speaking, and I
19 really hope you do take the steps necessary to
20 protect all New Yorkers. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you so much. Thank
you all. The, uh, next, uh, panel that I'm calling up
consists of Leslie Allen, Eduardo Antonetti, Esther
Limb, and Katia from the Children's Law Center. We're

1 missing one, right? Oh, there she is. Okay, perfect.

2 You may begin.

3 EDUARDO ANTONETTI: Esteemed Chair Encarnación and
4 members of the Committee on Immigration, my name is
5 Dr. Eduardo Antonetti and I'm the Senior Director of
6 Advancement for Internationals Network.

7 Internationals Network is a education nonprofit
8 organization with more than 20 years of success in
9 supporting immigrant and refugee students in New York
10 City public schools and based on 40 successful years
11 of New York City International High Schools. There
12 are 17 international schools in New York City and we
13 have supported an additional 20 schools with their
14 newcomer population since 2024.

15 Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony
16 on sanctuary protections for immigrant communities. I
17 speak to you today as an educator and wanna focus our
18 attention on our immigrant students, their families,
19 and our school communities.

20 We see firsthand that current federal immigration
21 policies are fueling fear, trauma, and instability
for immigrant and refugee students across our partner
schools. Many students are afraid to attend school
because they and their families are afraid of being

1 detained, separated from loved ones, or deported.

2 Many families have been forced to move between
3 shelters and have had their lives disrupted. Teachers
4 and school social workers report that students who
5 make it to school often break down in tears, unable
6 to concentrate and focus on learning, putting their
7 graduation and future plans at risk.

8 This crisis is devastating to the mental health
9 and well-being of our school leaders and educators
10 who are trying so hard to protect and care for their
11 students. We commend the members of this Committee,
12 our partners at the New York City Department of
13 Education and Project Open Arms, for establishing
14 policies and procedures and for providing training
15 and resources to our schools so they know how to meet
16 the needs of our immigrant students but it is still
17 not enough.

18 The level of awareness and readiness across the
19 system is uneven, and the legal and emotional support
20 demands of our students and families far exceeds
21 supply. It is imperative to ensure that all school
leaders are provided clearer guidance on ICE
enforcement around schools and that schools and the
New York City Public School System plan actively for

1
2 safe passage for students to and from schools and on
3 trips, and more explicit guidance on the
4 shelter-in-place in case of ICE activity at dismissal
5 time, keeping in mind the complexity of co-locations.

6 Please count on Internationals to be your partner
7 and to support you in your efforts. Thank you.

8 ESTHER LIMB: Good afternoon, Madam Chair and
9 Council Members on the Committee. Thank you for the
10 opportunity to testify today about the implementation
11 of New York City's sanctuary local laws and the
12 critical role of immigrant, immigrant legal services.
13 I'm Esther Limb, the director of the immigration
14 practice at Her Justice, a nonprofit organization
15 that has advocated for women and gender minorities
16 living in poverty in New York City for over 30 years.

17 In 2025, Her Justice provided legal assistance to
18 more than 4,000 women and their children in family,
19 matrimonial, and immigration matters. 92% of our
20 clients are women of color, and 85% are survivors of
21 domestic violence. Three-fourths of our clients were
born outside the United States, coming from 103
countries around the world.

Our immigration practice provides free legal
assistance to survivors of domestic violence, sex

1
2 ensuring that immigrant survivors can stabilize their
3 status and rebuild their lives.

4 Her Justice is responding to heightened
5 immigration enforcement and evolving federal policies
6 by expanding outreach and Know Your Rights education
7 to ensure immigrant survivors understand their rights
8 and know where they can safely seek help.

9 Her Justice supports Intro 55 and Intro 261,
10 requiring clear, requiring clear multilingual signage
11 explaining legal rights and prohibiting city
12 contracts with entities involved in immigration
13 enforcement will help reduce fear and reinforce trust
14 so survivors can safely access, um, services and
15 legal protections. We thank the city for your
16 initiative.

17 KATIA SKOKO: Good afternoon. I would like to
18 express my gratitude to Chair Encarnación and to the
19 Committee on Immigration for holding this important
20 hearing and for the opportunity to testify today. My
21 name is Katia Skoko. I am a youth guardian paralegal
at the Children's Law Center, CLC, a nonprofit law
firm in New York City that has represented over
185,000 children in child protective legal
proceedings in a family court, um, since 1997.

1
2 I appear before you today to say that CLC
3 supports the decision to pass both Intro 255 and 261.
4 Our position is based on our experience in
5 representing New York City youth who are seeking
6 special immigrant juvenile status in the United
7 States.

8 Uh, increased arrests at courthouses are eroding
9 trust in institutions that are meant to protect
10 immigrants. For example, our clients' guardians are
11 reluctant to complete necessary pre-hearing
12 procedures such as fingerprinting out of fear that
13 they will encounter ICE agents at the courthouse,
14 leading to delays in long-awaited safety and justice
15 for immigrant children and youth.

16 Promoting awareness of constitutional rights and
17 how to respond in encounters with these immigration
18 officers through adopting Intro 55 can help address
19 the widespread, widespread fear and misinformation
20 that are negatively impacting such processes.

21 We urge the Committee to ensure that all signage
is age-sensitive and accessible to children and youth
with all disabilities. Passing Intro 261 can send a
strong message that the increase in immigration
enforcement is not an opportunity for financial gain,

1
2 but rather a chance for New York City to be
3 courageous and to defend its status as a sanctuary
4 city. Financial resources should be used to do
5 everything we can to protect immigrant children and
6 youth, especially to ensure access to free legal
resources for obtaining documentation.

7 With funding from the New York City Council, in
8 less than 6 months, we have represented more than 140
9 immigrant youth with 100% success rate, helping them
10 obtain the necessary order from family court, our
11 first and crucial step toward lawful immigration
status.

12 In this critical time, we hope we can rely on the
13 Committee to continue advocating for financial
14 support and accessible legal representation for New
15 York City's immigrant children and youth. Thank you
16 for this opportunity to contribute to the Committee's
17 decision-making on these important matters and to
share our work. Thank you.

18 LESLIE ALLEN: Good afternoon to the Committee. My
19 name is Leslie Allen, pronouns she/hers, and I am the
20 director of legal services at the New York City
21 Anti-Violence Project. I want to express my gratitude
for your ongoing support of our work as we lead New

1
2 York's LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of violence.
3 AVP has long been at the forefront of our fight
4 against hate and oppression, offering critical
5 support for the LGBTQ survivors of violence.

6 Our legal services focus on immigration, and we
7 offer our voice on behalf of queer immigrant
8 survivors. We thank the Mayor and Council for
9 standing up to protect our immigrant communities. For
10 too long, city agencies, especially the NYPD, have
11 colluded with ICE enforcement behind the scenes
12 despite the city's sanctuary policies.

13 AVP runs a 24-hour crisis hotline for queer
14 survivors of violence. We hear stories every day of
15 how the fear of ICE is preventing domestic violence
16 victims from seeking government resources to enable
17 leaving their abusers, of how it's keeping sex
18 workers who are being exploited from stepping
19 forward, and how it's keeping LGBTQ survivors of
20 violence pursuing their winnable immigration cases
21 because they rightfully see the potential for any
governmental system, any government support to be a
hidden trap.

The coming months and years will likely see new
waves of ICE activity in New York. Many of our

1 clients are deeply terrified and see themselves as
2 lacking protection, but they do have rights.

3 Rebuilding trust will be a long process, but the
4 journey starts with simple steps. By creating better
5 signage and a private right of action, immigrants can
6 learn to trust New York City as a place where justice
7 is still possible, while nationally respect to due
8 process is corroding.

9 AVP is bringing these threatened communities into
10 engagement with city government and social services.
11 Recently, we've begun outreach in Jackson Heights and
12 Corona as part of a grant from the Mayor's Office of
13 Nightlife, trying to reach queer immigrants at their
14 places of work.

15 We're also collaborating with Transpacific health
16 clinics to reach survivors where they already receive
17 support. The passage of the NYC Trust Act is a
18 tangible, meaningful step that we can highlight to
19 empower our fearful ex- our fearful clients to access
20 the services they need to improve the conditions of
21 their lives. Thank you for the opportunity to
testify.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you and thank you
all for your work. Uh, the next panel, I believe, is

1
2 the last in-person panel. Arlette Cepeda. You made
3 it! Leidis De La Rosa, Vincent Hickey, or Rickery,
4 not sure, H-I-C-K-E-Y, Hickory, Mia Casera, and
Alberto Oliart.

5 If anyone is here who has not filled out a
6 witness form, please do so. You can do so right now
7 with the Sergeant at Arms. When you are ready, you
can begin.

8 ARLETTE CEPEDA: I'll start. Okay, here we go.
9 Hello, uh, good afternoon, Chair Encarnación, as
10 member- and members of the Committee. My name is
11 Arlette Cepeda. I am the interim executive director
12 of La Colmena, an immigrant workers center, uh, based
13 in Staten Island. Uh, we have been serving immigrant
workers and their families since 2014.

14 First, I want to welcome Um, Commissioner Faiza
15 Ali that was here earlier, uh, this morning. And I
16 want to make sure that we express that we are super
17 excited to work together to ensure immigrant
communities across New York City remain protected.

18 La Colmena works directly with immigrant workers
19 and families every day. Our center provides job
20 training, Know your Rights education, and community
organizing that helps immigrant New Yorkers navigate

1
2 systems while building collective power. Staten
3 Island is often overlooked in citywide conversations
4 about immigration and ICE enforcement. Yet our
5 borough has experienced the fastest growth, ah, in
6 foreign-born residents in New York City over the last
7 two decades, with the population increasing more than
8 35% between 2000, uh, between 2000 and 2020.

9 Today, one in three Staten Island residents are
10 foreign-born, with large communities from Mexico,
11 Central America, West Africa, Sri Lanka, and Liberia,
12 many concentrated in the North Shore where we work.
13 Despite this growth, Staten Island has far fewer
14 immigrant services and legal resources than any other
15 borough. As immigration enforcement has intensified
16 nationally, fear has also increased locally.

17 Last year, when ICE, uh, agents, uh, were
18 reported in Port Richmond, La Colmena mobilized
19 volunteers and community members to make sure that we
20 had an ICE watch. We ensured residents had accurate
21 information and understood their rights.

22 Around the same, um, the same, uh, time, we were
23 helping a rally for, um, local- around local- ah,
24 anyhow, thank you so much. We did submit our
25 testimony in writing. Thank you for listening.

1
2 LEIDIS DE LA ROSA: Good afternoon, Chair
3 Encarnación and members of the Committee. My name is
4 Leidis De La Rosa and I am the organizing coordinator
5 of La Colmena in Staten Island.

6 Uh, La Colmena's mission is to empower immigrant
7 workers through organizing, education, culture, and
8 equitable economic development. Ensuring that our
9 community knows their rights is a key part of, of
10 this mission, and we are committed to sharing that
11 information with the workers and the families that we
12 serve.

13 So for this reason, we encourage the Council to
14 pass Intro 55 and Intro 261. We must work together to
15 ensure that New York City is a safe place for
16 immigrant communities- communities, encouraging them
17 to interact with city agencies without fear of
18 deportation. Public resources should be used to serve
19 and support our communities, not to assist
20 immigration enforcement in intimidating them.

21 New York City should not financially support
22 systems that criminalize people based on their
23 immigration status. At La Colmena, we have seen the
24 impact that immigration enforcement has had on our
25 communities in Staten Island. Many, many parents and

1
2 community members are afraid to reach out to their
3 children's school counselors, report crimes, or seek
4 resources, uh, and support from the immigrant— from
5 the community because they do not feel safe.

6 Immigrants often do not know their rights when
7 approached by federal agents, and clear signage in
8 multiple languages will help, uh, them, um, immigrant
9 New Yorkers better understand their legal protections
10 and feel more confident accessing city spaces and
11 services.

12 When immigrants feel safe, they are more likely
13 to report hate crimes, seek support from community
14 resources, and engage with local institutions and
15 services. These protections help make our city safer
16 and more inclusive for everyone.

17 We urge the, the New York City Council to pass
18 Intro 55 and Intro 261 to ensure immigrant New
19 Yorkers are informed of their rights and protected
20 from harmful immigration enforcement. Thank you for
21 the opportunity to testify.

ALBERTO OLIART: Hello, I'm Alberto Oliart, a
tenant organizer and member of Workers Strike Back, a
nationwide organization of —of working people
fighting to shut down ICE and military aid to Israel

1
2 and win free healthcare for all by taxing the rich.
3 As a tenant organizer, I have witnessed long lines,
4 lines outside of housing court in all boroughs, and
5 I've talked to many undocumented immigrants that are
6 being completely abused and harassed by their
7 landlords.

8 Our undocumented neighbors face the combined risk
9 of homelessness with the risk of being targeted by
10 ICE. Mayor Mamdani claims to be a socialist. The fact
11 is that a socialist would stop this situation
12 immediately. This is why we are here to demand
13 citywide eviction moratoriums to protect immigrant
14 families.

15 The Democratic-controlled state legislature and
16 City Council, including all of the so-called
17 progressive and DSA representatives, have been
18 shamefully passive around this issue, doing next to
19 nothing to stop ICE. The pathetic,
20 self-congratulatory, and bureaucratic conversation
21 that just took place with the MOIA Commissioner is
actually an example of this.

Over the past year, 9 memorandums of agreement
have been signed between New York State and Trump's
ICE. This is why workers' strike back is demanding

1
2 that all city agencies be banned from sharing any
3 information with ICE, with serious penalties such as
4 firing heads of agencies.

5 We also demand the rolling back of the repressive
6 Domain Awareness System, a surveillance system that
7 sends data from CCTV cameras, license plate readers,
8 and facial recognition technology installed in all 5
9 boroughs directly to the phones of NYPD cops, and for
10 which Mamdani has included a shocking \$98 million in
11 his budget.

12 Mamdani has refused to build working-class
13 movements that will materialize his demands and go
14 even further in attending to the urgent needs of the
15 working class.

16 Instead, he endorsed strikebreaker Kathy Hochul,
17 kept a billionaire Zionist police commissioner who is
18 not our friend. He is continuing to— he is continuing
19 with the biggest demolition of public housing in New
20 York City history, among other betrayals.

21 This, along with the shameful inaction of
progressive and DSA Democrats with regard to all of
these questions is why the working class needs the
kind of leadership that independent socialist and

1
2 Workers Strike Back founder Kshama Sawant brought to
3 the Seattle City Council.

4 Kshama Sawant is now running for Congress, and
5 her victory would represent a nationwide opportunity
6 for the working class to implement the strategy that
7 won Seattle the nation's highest minimum wage and the
8 Amazon tax to fund affordable housing.

9 We need a general strike to stop ICE.

10 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you. Next.

11 ALBERTO OLIART: When immigrants are under attack,
12 what do we do? Stand up, fight back!

13 AUDIENCE: Stand up, stand up, fight back!

14 ALBERTO OLIART: Shut down ICE! S

15 AUDIENCE: Shut down, shut down ICE!

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Can we have it quiet in the
17 room please.

18 MIA CASERA: Hello, my name is Mia Casesa and I'm
19 a UX designer and a member of Workers Strike Back. As
20 a tech worker I understand the critical role
21 technology plays with regards to how law enforcement
aids and abets ICE agents to surveil and track
immigrants and other vulnerable populations.

Democratic Mayor and Democratic Socialists of America
leader Zoran Momdani recently announced a budget that

1
2 included \$94 million to maintain the New York Police
3 Department's Domain Awareness System.

4 This is a sprawling Microsoft-based surveillance
5 network that blankets all 5 boroughs so thoroughly it
6 is dubbed the Ring of Steel.

7 The network integrates CCTV cameras, license
8 plates readers, and facial recognition technology,
9 transmitting data directly to NYPD's phones. This
10 system is one of the largest of any major city and
11 was stewarded by Mamdani's appointed police
12 commissioner, billionaire Zionist Jessica Tisch. Data
13 reveals that ICE heavily relies on local agencies and
14 ICE arrests are sub- substantially greater in states
15 where city, county, and state police licensing and
16 other departments cooperate with and share data with
17 ICE.

18 I'm here to demand New York City Council and
19 Mayor Mamdani roll back the city's massive
20 surveillance network, ban all local agencies from
21 sharing any data with ICE, and enforce the law with
serious penalties like firing agency heads, and
enacting a citywide eviction moratorium to protect
families targeted by ICE.

1
2 This is the bare minimum elected representatives
3 can and should do. Working people need courageous
4 leadership and a true fight back that revolutionary
5 socialist Kshama Sawant brought in her decade as the
6 City Council Member in Seattle, Washington.

7 Instead of funding police surveillance or Know
8 Your Rights signage during the 2020 BLM movement,
9 Kshama's office also won a historic one-of-a-kind ban
10 on police use of chokeholds and the so-called crowd
11 control weapons.

12 Kshama's opponent, Adam Smith, is bankrolled by
13 Palantir, the dystopian corporation that contracts
14 with ICE. Smith and the Democratic Party have paved
15 the way for Trump's attack on immigrants and working
16 people. This is why I'm a volunteer with Kshama
17 Sawant's independent socialist anti-war campaign for
18 Congress against Adam Smith. Electing Sharma to
19 Congress will also be a historic step toward building
20 a new party for the working class, and I urge working
21 people at NYC to join us.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you. Next. Okay,
there's one more.

VINCENT HICKEY: All right, testing. Okay, Know
Your Rights this, Know Your Rights that. Hello, ICE

1
2 is murdering people. Rights mean nothing down the
3 barrel of a gun. Hi, name's Vincent Hickey, not
4 Hickory and I'm a member of Workers Strike Back.

5 All my life I lived in New York City, and I have
6 my grandparents to thank for that. Through the 1950s,
7 my grandparents immigrated from Ireland to send money
8 back to their families and to build their future
9 here. Without them and their hard work, I wouldn't
10 have had— I would not have had the safe home and
11 childhood that I did.

12 I want safe, quality housing for all
13 working-class families and their children, which is
14 why Workers Strike Back is demanding an immediate
15 eviction moratorium for undocumented immigrants.
16 However, a home is only as useful as your ability to
17 return to it. ICE is terrorizing undocumented
18 immigrants and American citizens.

19 How many news reports and social media coverage
20 of people getting kidnapped and murdered do the
21 Democrats of the City Council need before they are
willing to actually protect immigrants? Cut back on
surveillance, full stop.

New York City's Ring of Steel is a surveillance
system supposedly intended to mitigate terrorism.

1
2 What the Ring of Steel is actually used for is to
3 collect data on ordinary working people, Americans,
4 the undocumented, and activists for the purposes of
5 state repression.

6 My question to Mayor Mamdani, the count- the
7 Council Members before me, and the cowards that left
8 when public comment was opened is: do you really
9 think strikebreaker Governor Hochul and Zionist
10 police chief Tisch have the best interests of the
11 American people in mind? Hmm.

12 They're the ones enabling ICE to run rampant in
13 not just our city but our state. Hochul may say she's
14 against ICE, just like you, all the while expanding
15 the corporate-owned surveillance system ICE uses
16 every day to torture whoever they feel like. Which
17 leads me to my last demand: banning all agencies and
18 their associates from sharing information with ICE.
19 If you actually care about standing up for immigrants
20 against Trump's ICE, then taking away their access to
21 data would go a long way in protecting not just
undocumented and citizens alike, but it would also be
protecting the expression of our First Amendment
right.

1
2 Get out, ICE. Get out, ICE. Get out, ICE. Thank
3 you.

4 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you. Thank you.
5 Just checking in one last time with our Sergeant at
6 Arms to see that no one else, uh, put in a form to do
an in-person testimony.

7 Seeing none, we will now turn to our virtual
8 panelists. For virtual panelists, once your name is
9 called, a member of our staff will I will unmute you
10 and the Sergeant at Arms will set the timer and give
you the go-ahead to begin.

11 Please wait for the Sergeant to announce that you
12 may begin before delivering your testimony. I will
13 call our first virtual panelist, Naresh M. Gehi.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

15 NARESH M. GEHI: Good afternoon and, uh, a big
16 thank you to the Committee for having me here today.
17 My name is Naresh M. Gehi, and I've been a practicing
18 immigration lawyer for nearly 25 years.

19 I've handled 27,000 immigration cases, and I'll
20 just hit the nail on the head and move on quickly
21 about the missing links of how we can bridge the gap
and how we can make New York City better and what is
really missing and how we can kind of, you know,

1
2 include these little recommendations and make sure
3 that immigrants are protected, the number one
4 requirement we need to have is we need to have a
5 pickup hotline for immigrants.

6 Now what that means is that most of the time when
7 people get picked up, they're sent into local jails
8 and when they're sent into local jails, at that
9 particular point of time, either the captain or the
10 police stations that the, the immigration, uh,
11 immigrant staff and police stations are not very well
12 trained.

13 They will need training because sometimes they
14 have a tendency of directly, you know, handing over
15 the immigrant or the person to ICE and we need to be
16 careful, and a lot of training is needed in that
17 regard. So a unit, a legal department, would be a
18 must in that.

19 Secondly, as far as landlords are concerned, If
20 we need to give them subsidies to install cameras, so
21 even if someone is scared in the building, he should
not be opening the door. That'll help a lot.

Thirdly, people need to be educated— immigrants—
about the difference between judicial warrants and
administrative warrants. Both of them are very

1
2 different. We need to educate them by means of
3 videos.

4 Next, very important, the prosecution, uh, in
5 criminal cases and the public defenders need to make
6 sure that we encourage a lot of plea deals. Court
7 systems need to be educated, especially the DA's
8 office. It's better for a person to go to jail 11
9 months rather than agreeing to basically-

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you, your time has
11 expired.

12 NARESH M. GEHI: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you. Our next-
14 Okay, we are going to take a pause just to make sure
15 that we can move forward effortlessly while we do
16 the, uh, virtual hearing. So just give us one brief
17 second.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Please stand by on Zoom while
19 we get reconnected. Thank you.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Can I get a Zoom check?

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Copy.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Copy on Zoom.

CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you and thank you
to all of the people behind the scenes that are
really helping us get this together. I'm gonna call

1
2 up the next, uh, virtual, um, panelist, Marilia
3 Richards.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

5 MARILIA RICHARDS: Good afternoon, Chair
6 Encarnación and Council Members. My name is Marilia
7 Richards and I serve as the managing director at Kids
8 in Need of Defense, or KIND, here in New York City.
9 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

10 KIND works daily with unaccompanied and immigrant
11 youth across all 5 boroughs, and we see firsthand the
12 fear of immigration enforcement prevents children and
13 families from safely accessing schools, courts,
14 hospitals, and other essential city services.

15 Too often, families simply do not know where the
16 federal immigration authorities may enter, what areas
17 of the building are public— sorry about that, um, or
18 non-public, or what rights they may invoke if
19 approached. This uncertainty alone keeps children
20 from attending hearings, school days, or vital
21 appointments.

For these reasons, KIND strongly supports Avilés
Amendment Introduction 55, which creates a uniform
citywide requirement for clear multilingual signage
in all city-owned buildings. Through our Know Your

1
2 Rights programs, we know that children and families
3 often struggle to recall complex legal information
4 under stress. Having signage posted in centralized
5 locations in schools, courts, shelters, and all city
6 properties provides critical reinforcement at the
7 exact moment a family may need reassurance or
8 clarity.

9 For many of our young clients who are required to
10 enter various courts for their immigration cases,
11 this can be the difference between safely
12 participating in their process or avoiding buildings
13 altogether out of fear.

14 We also strongly support the bill's community
15 education component requiring the Mayor's Office of
16 Immigrant Affairs to proactively share these
17 protections across IDNYC centers, emergency shelters,
18 humanitarian response sites, and LinkNYC kiosks.

19 This outreach is essential for reaching newly
20 arrived families and longstanding immigrant
21 communities alike. The Avilés Amendment is a
practical, compassionate, and an urgently needed
measure that strengthens safety, transparency, and
trust. We respectfully urge the Council to pass
Introduction 55 and ensure signage is accessible,

1
2 multilingual, age-appropriate, and widely implemented
3 across the city. Thank you Council Member Avilés and
4 the co-sponsors for your leadership and for your
5 continued commitment to immigrant children and
6 families.

7 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you. Our next
8 panelist is Nila Rai.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

10 NILA RAI: Um, I must say thank you to the
11 Committee on Immigration for holding this public
12 hearing to address the urgent need to protect our
13 immigrant communities in New York City. My name is
14 Nila Rai. I work at Adhikar, a Queens-based social
15 justice nonprofit, as an immigration organizer. I'm
16 also a proud TPS holder from Nepal.

17 As new immigrants, many of our members are TPS
18 householders of mixed family status, or undocumented
19 individuals who are forced to navigate our
20 terrorizing, opaque immigration system that puts them
21 at risk for deportation and detention.

The fear of ICE extends to everything we do. Our
members are having challenges renewing state IDs,
struggling to find jobs, or being let go with little
to no severance or unemployment. Many members, many

1
2 members risk losing their health insurance because
3 once they lose a valid immigration status, they risk
4 losing healthcare and access to life-saving
5 medication.

6 I stand before you as a representative of one of
7 the greatest cities in the world, where people from
8 everywhere have come, come to find work, pursue
9 dreams, and feed their families. We applaud Mayor
10 Mamdani's Executive Order to review our sanctuary
11 laws and policies.

12 New York City's sanctuary laws are essential to
13 maintaining trust among community members and
14 ensuring the safety of all New Yorkers. As our city
15 government enters a new chapter, it is imperative
16 that the City Council acts swiftly to ensure that our
17 city's commitment to welcoming and protecting
18 immigrants is ironclad. Our local laws must provide
19 clear, unambiguous provisions against colluding with
20 immigration authorities and must also include real
21 disincentives for violating those laws.

For those, for those reasons, I am testifying
today to urge this Council to act swiftly to pass the
NYC Trust Act, a bill currently before the Committee
which will create a private right of action to so

1
2 that people wronged by violations of these laws can
3 seek justice in court. Immigrant New Yorkers and
4 their communities suffer long-term harm when New York
5 City agencies ignore and misinterpret local and
6 federal laws.

7 This bill would make sure that city agencies can
8 be held accountable when this happens, helping ensure
9 compliance and preventing family separation. New
10 sanctuary laws can help keep immigrant workers,
11 workers like me, safe and protected at a time of
12 incredible fear.

13 Our work in advancing immigration justice
14 responds directly to these challenges, a central
15 facet of this work.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you, your time has
17 expired.

18 NILA RAI: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you very much.
20 Next we have up Daniel Klein.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin. You may begin.

DANIEL KLEIN: Thank you for the opportunity to
speak, uh, uh, Chair Encarnación, in favor of Intro
55, the Know Your Rights proposal. My name is Dan
Klein. I'm a coordinator for the Staten Island

1 chapter of Jews for racial and economic justice.
2 Immigrants make America great. This phrase rings
3 especially true for me and my experience of New York
4 City.

5 My great-grandparents immigrated here from
6 Eastern Europe over 100 years ago in search of a
7 safer and healthier home. To one degree or another,
8 that is most likely true for all of us. Since that
9 time period, many came with great dreams, others with
10 stories of pain, suffering, and hardship.

11 The population in New York City today consists of
12 mixed-status neighbors, friends, coworkers, and
13 caregivers, all playing an integral role in the daily
14 lives of our community. Living on the South Shore of
15 Staten Island, every pizza shop, deli, restaurant,
16 construction, and landscaping crew has migrant
17 employees.

18 We at Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, in
19 collaboration with many other faith and
20 immigrant-based groups, plan to continue sharing
21 information to our neighbors about their rights. And
I urge you as the City Council to support Intro 55,
the Know Your Rights proposal.

1
2 By sharing information regarding the rights that
3 this bill provides, immigrant residents, their
4 employers, and the community at large will better
5 understand how to protect our friends and neighbors
6 so they can continue living and working here safely
7 and peacefully. I believe as people of faith and good
8 morals that we have an obligation to do all that we
9 can to help New Yorkers who constitute an important
10 part of the fabric of our community. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you. Next up, we
12 have Yasmine Farhang.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

14 YASMINE FARHANG: Thank you, Council Member
15 Encarnación. My name is Yasmine Farhang. I'm the
16 executive director of the Immigrant Defense Project,
17 which fights for justice for all immigrants,
18 especially those targeted by the criminal and
19 immigration legal systems.

20 We're also a steering Committee organization of
21 ICE Out NYC, Thank you so much for holding this
hearing. You need to only listen to all of the prior
speakers to know the deep importance of sanctuary and
all of the harms of violations. So I'll keep what I
would like to share today short.

1
2 Like many other people who have joined today, I'm
3 deeply enthusiastic about this new chapter before our
4 city. The executive order exemplified what we wanna
5 see. I'm enthusiastic about a stronger MOIA and
6 welcome the critical interagency Committee.

7 We know at this moment at the local level that it
8 comes with unprecedented challenges from this federal
9 regime, as we've seen in so many other cities around
10 the country. And one thing we would really like to
11 urge today for our local leaders is to make a
12 commitment that when we say we're building true
13 safety and justice for all New Yorkers, we mean
14 holding a goal that every person who calls our city
15 home has due process and their human rights upheld.

16 So even those who have the best of intentions
17 often say about our sanctuary laws that they should
18 protect New Yorkers in most cases, exempting those
19 with criminal charges and convictions from
20 protection.

21 As you likely know, our laws have what is often
referred to as a carve-out, creating a second tier of
protection or a lack thereof for people with
criminal- certain criminal convictions. Yet in so
many cities around the country, there is simply a due

1
2 process-based system that is crystal clear that ICE
3 must simply produce a judicial warrant, right? So
4 we're actually behind in New York City.

5 What we believe is that punishing someone for
6 immigration purposes after they've served their time
7 or should otherwise be released is a cruel form of
8 double punishment that undermines due process and
9 undermines, um, what we want to see in our sanctuary
10 laws for New Yorkers.

11 Lastly, this is especially important in this
12 moment where ICE is carrying out illegal abductions,
13 holding people in abusive and life-threatening
14 conditions, and sending people to prisons abroad
15 where irrefutable, um, evidence of torture has
16 emerged.

17 So no New Yorker should be subject— no New
18 Yorker— to these illegal and unconstitutional
19 practices. And so when we affirm carve-outs in our
20 protections, we ask—

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you, your time has
expired.

YASMINE FARHANG: That some people can be abused,
and we want to make sure we're upholding due process
for all. Thanks so much.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you. Next we have
3 Husein Yatabarry.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

5 HUSEIN YATABARRY: Good afternoon, Chair
6 Encarnación and members of the Immigration Committee.
7 My name is Husein Yatabarry, and I'm the Executive
8 Director of Muslim Community Network. I am here today
9 in strong support of Intro number 55 and Intro number
10 261.

11 We are in a moment of deep fear and uncertainty
12 for immigrant communities across New York City.
13 Families are trying to understand what their rights
14 are, what city spaces remain safe, and what to do if
15 they encounter federal immigration authorities.

16 In this climate, the Council has a responsibility
17 not to only affirm protections on paper, but to make
18 those protections visible, understandable, and real
19 in the places where New Yorkers live, learn, and seek
20 help.

21 Um, at MCN, we do not speak about this issue from
a distance. We speak from direct experience working
with immigrant New Yorkers every day. Um, we've
served over 920 participants across immigration
rights collaboratives and immigration rights

1
2 workshops. Um, and in 10+ languages and ensuring
3 cultural linguistic accessibility, uh, for those New
4 Yorkers. That's why Intro number 55 matters. Clear,
5 plain language, multilingual signage about legal
6 protections on city property can make a difference
7 between confusion and confidence. Um, it is also a
8 daily reminder to every city employee walking into
9 work that they have a role in upholding the dignity
10 and rights of immigrant New Yorkers. And that is also
11 why Intro number 261 is so critical and important.

12 If the city is serious about being a place of
13 safety and trust, it cannot at the same time contract
14 with entities engaged in immigration enforcement.
15 Those two things cannot coexist. New Yorkers cannot
16 be told that the city spaces are safe while the city
17 maintains relationships that help legitimize or
18 support the very machinery creating fear within our
19 communities.

20 This is especially urgent at a time when DHS and
21 ICE have increasingly operated in ways that blur the
line between federal enforcement and trusted public
presence. When people see enforcement agents cloaked
in appearance of ordinary government authority, trust
erodes even further.

1
2 We cannot allow the kind of fear and confusion to
3 follow people onto city property.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you, your time has
5 expired.

6 HUSEIN YATABARRY: Thank you, Council.

7 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you. Um, I'd like
8 to call up Chris Johnson now.

9 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, hello, my name is
10 Christopher Leon Johnson. I support all the bills on
11 the ticker today, but I wanna make this clear that
12 you as an- Ms. Elise, I know you knew, uh, you need
13 to make a statement and calling on the Commissioner
14 and the Mayor to rescind the criminalization of the
15 libristas, the criminalization of cyclists, because
16 the- when you criminalize the libristas, um, that is
17 basically anti-immigrant, anti-migrant, um, sentiment
18 that is happening with the NYPD.

19 Um, and let's make that clear. But I'm the only
20 one that's going crazy and going hard to call this
21 stuff out to the point of saying this stuff publicly
that they need to stop the criminalization of the
deliveristas. Where is Transportation Alternatives?
Where is- where is Workers Justice Project, uh, when
it comes to- they won't do it because they scared of

1
2 Jessica Tisch. They scared of her, um, getting those
3 journalists to really start exposing who they really
4 are. Um, let's make that clear but I think this is-
5 the City Council need to step up and make a statement
6 and calling on Jessica Tisch to stop the
7 criminalization of deliveristas because, um, when you
8 stop- when you have this stopped, this- the city will
9 go forward and it will prove to the people that the
10 city really cares about the migrants.

11 It doesn't matter how much money you, you put,
12 million dollars you put into the Immigration
13 Committee or any of these nonprofits like La Comena,
14 Workers' Project, Mixteca, um, any of these- the
15 NYIC. But if you're not doing the basic thing for the
16 deliverista who is mostly migrants, East, West
17 African, and Hispanic, um, from Guatemala and Mexico,
18 and saying and doing what you got to do to tell the
19 Commissioner to stop the criminalization of the
20 deliveristas, including the street vendors- shout out
21 to the Street Vendor Project for passing in that
local law bill passed today under Shekar Krishnan,
um, you're not proving anything.

You're just- this is all talk and the City
Council has a lot of power to make the action, and I

1
2 think the action needs to start today, uh, before the
3 100 days are up. Because I'm gonna say this right
4 now, if the 100 days are not up— if the 100 days are
5 up and we still have criminalization of the
6 deliveristas, the City Council fails the people.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you, your time has
8 expired.

9 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you. We have now
11 heard from everyone who has signed up to testify. If
12 we inadvertently missed anyone who would like to
13 testify in person, please visit the Sergeant's table
14 and complete a witness slip now.

15 If we inadvertently missed anyone who would like
16 to testify virtually, please use the raise hand
17 function in Zoom and a member of our staff will call
18 on you in the order of the hands raised.

19 No, seeing no one else, I would like to— wait,
20 okay, hold on. Seeing no one else, I would like to
21 note again that written testimony, which will, will
be reviewed in full by Committee staff, may be
submitted to the record up to 72 hours after the
close of this hearing by emailing it to
testimony@council.nyc.gov.

1
2 Thank you everyone for, uh, well, the, the little
3 few folks that stuck around to the end with me, uh,
4 but everyone who participated in today's hearing,
5 thank you. This hearing is hereby adjourned. [GAVEL]
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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 April 26, 2026