CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY WITH
COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON
IMMIGRATION

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May 28, 2026
Start: 10:07 a.m.
Recess: 3:59 p.m.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Linda Lee, Chairperson of the Committee on Finance

Althea V. Stevens, Chairperson of the Committee on Children and Youth

Elsie Encarnación, Chairperson of the Committee on Immigration

COUNCIL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE:

Shaun Abreu
Alexa Avilés
Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
Virginia Maloney
Christopher Marte
Darlene Mealy
Frank Morano

COUNCIL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE:
(CONTINUED)

Lincoln Restler
Justin E. Sanchez
Nantasha M. Williams
Phil Wong

COUNCIL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH:

Simcha Felder
Rita C. Joseph
Chi A. Ossé
Nantasha M. Williams

COUNCIL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION:

Alexa Avilés
Gale A. Brewer
Rita C. Joseph

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Harvey D. Epstein
Chris Banks
Carl Wilson

A P P E A R A N C E S

Rebecca Jones Gaston, Commissioner for the New York City Administration of Children's Services

Margaret Pletnikoff, Deputy Commissioner for Financial Services for the New York City Administration for Children Services

Stephanie Glendell, Deputy Commissioner for External Affairs for the New York City Administration for Children Services

Nancy Ginsburg, Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Youth and Family Justice for the New York City Administration for Children Services

Luisa Linares, Deputy Commissioner for the Family Services Division for the New York City Administration for Children Services

Ina Mendez, Deputy Commissioner for Family Permanency Services for the New York City Administration for Children Services

Elizabeth Wolkomir, Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Child and Family Well-Being for the New York City Administration for Children Services

Sandra Escamilla-Davies, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development

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

Nevita Bailey, Chief Financial Officer of the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development

Dana Cantelini, Chief Accountability Officer of the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development

Susan Haskell, Deputy Commissioner of Youth Services of the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development

Daniel Guillen, Associate Commissioner of Youth Services of the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development

Valerie Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner of Workforce Connect of the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development

Denise Ramirez, Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer of the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development

Darryl Rattray, Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Partnerships of the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development

Mike Bobbitt, Deputy Commissioner of Community Development of the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development

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

Faiza Ali, Commissioner for the New York City Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

Lorena Lucero, Deputy Commissioner of Programs and Policy for the New York City Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

Jasniya Sanchez, Acting Chief-of-Staff and Deputy Commissioner of Administration and Strategic Initiatives for the New York City Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone check for the Committee on Finance joint with the Committee on Children and Youth joint with the Committee on Immigration, recorded on May 28th, 2026, located in Chambers by Nazly Paytuvi.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning, and welcome to today's New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing for the Committee on Finance joint with the Committee on Children and Youth and joint with the Committee on Immigration.

At this time, please silence all electronic devices, and no one may approach the dais at any time.

Chairs, we are ready to begin.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Great. Okay. Wait, oh. [GAVEL] Have to gavel. Always forget that part.

Good morning, and welcome to day three of the Fiscal FY27 Executive Budget Hearings. I'm Council Member Linda Lee, and today's hearings will begin with the Administration for Children's Services, followed by Department of Youth and Community Development, and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs.

I'm pleased to be joined by my Colleague and dear friend, Council Member Althea Stevens, Chair of the Committee on Children and Youth, and today we have been joined by Council Member Marte, Council Member Schulman, Council Member Epstein, Council Member Joseph, Council Member Wong, and Deputy Speaker Williams is on Zoom.

Welcome, Commissioner Rebecca Jones Gaston. Week two, or day seven, rather, day six, to you and your team, and of course, your amazing team. Thank you all for joining us today to answer our questions.

On May 12th, 2026, the Administration released the Executive Financial Plan for Fiscal 2026 to 2030, with a proposed FY27 budget of 124.7 billion dollars. The Administration for Children's Services proposed Fiscal FY27 budget of 3.51 billion dollars, represents 2.7 percent of the Administration's proposed FY27 budget in the Executive Plan, and this is an increase of 89.6 million dollars, or 2.6 percent, from the 3.42 billion originally budgeted in the FY27 preliminary plan. This increase results from several actions, including additional funding added for childcare vouchers, foster care, staffing across the agency, and a baselining of the Promise NYC program. As of April 2026, ACS's headcount was 562 less than their FY26 budgeted headcount. In the Council's preliminary budget response, we called on the Mayor to apply for the State waiver that would allow the City to apply for reimbursement of its expenditures across Fiscal 2019 to 2026, related to the implementation of the State's Raise the Age Act. Further, in our response, we called on the Administration to continue to invest in childcare vouchers by baselining the Promise NYC program. In our preliminary budget hearing, we encouraged the Administration to explore ways to end the waiting list practice for childcare vouchers, which now stands at approximately 25,000 children. While we were pleased to see the Promise New York City baselined and some additional funding added for childcare vouchers, I hope to see progress made in reducing the voucher wait list and ensuring these families are able to receive the vital childcare services that they need, whether through ACS or other agencies.

I look forward to hearing from our new Commissioner on how ACS plans to address the urgent challenge of providing childcare and continue to equitably serve families amid citywide savings requirements. My questions today will largely focus on areas in which ACS was able to realize savings, the agency's process and methodology in identifying these savings, and updates on the nearly 200 million in state funding designated for at-risk youth.

And I now want to turn it over to my Co-Chair for this hearing, Council Member Stevens, for her opening statement.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Good morning, and thank you, Chair Lee.

My name is Althea Stevens, and I serve as the Chair of Committee on Children and Youth. For this first part of our hearing this morning, I look forward to discussing changes to ACS budgets since the preliminary plan. The executive budget included investments in several areas, including childcare vouchers, detention facilities, and staffing across the agency. New needs of 55.7 million were added to the Fiscal 2026 in the executive plan, growing to

104.6 million in Fiscal 2027, and dropping to 80.7 million in Fiscal 2028, and in the outyears. Additionally, other adjustments in Fiscal 2026 totaled 547.6 million, dropping to 2 million in Fiscal 2027, and in the outyears.

While the City's budget now has been balanced without property taxes increase, all the agencies were required to meet savings and vacancy reduction benchmarks. As agencies providing front-line services to some of the city's most vulnerable residents, understanding the impact of these savings targeted ACS is critical.

My theme for today, and will always continue to be, the City will not be considered affordable if it's not affordable for young people, because if we don't invest in our young people on the front end, we then ultimately invest in them on the back end when they are living and doing things that are not things that we want to see. I look forward to discussing how ACS responds to the Mayor's savings requirements, their methodology, the rationale, and identifying areas where savings could be realized, and most critically, the effects on services or programming that these savings might have. I'm also interested in understanding how the agency is working with the State partners to maximize the funding and vital services such as childcare vouchers, preventative services, and programming. I'm also really curious to hear about the plan for the money that was allocated from the Governor, because in our preliminary hearing, that plan still had not been discussed with us, and want to make sure that the money that was allocated for youth services and the Raise the Age that we are thinking about, and also would like to hear if we're going to put in a hardship application.

It is the Council's responsibility to ensure that the City budget is fair, transparent, and accountable to New Yorkers, as the Chair of Children and Youth Committee, I will continue to push for accountability and transparency in the ACS budget. Amidst the needs to eliminate budget gaps and meet saving requirements, our responsibility is enacting a budget that reflects the needs and interests of our city's youth, taking on even higher importance. Like the Mayor has often repeated, this budget must not be balanced on the back of working people or young people. I'm adding the or, because nobody keeps talking about the young people. So, today and throughout the examination of ACS budget, we ensure that this is the case.

Before we get started, I would like to take a quick moment to thank both my Staff and the entire Council Fiscal Division for their efforts in preparing for this hearing, Margaret, Julia, Richard, Rie, Elizabeth, and my Deputy Chief-of-Staff Greer, and the entire A-team back in the suite 16.

At this time, I'll pass it back to Chair Lee.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Great. Thank you so much, Chair.

Before we get started, just wanted to take a moment to thank the entire Council Finance Team and Division for preparing today's hearing, especially Julia Haramis and Margaret Barnsley for today's hearing, and of course, Brian Sarfo, and all the Finance Analysts and Support Staff who make it all work.

And just as a reminder, for this year's Executive Budget hearings, because we're on a tighter timeline than we normally are, we're going to be doing all of the public testimony on Wednesday, June 10th, beginning at 9:30. And I see some of our partners here from our non-profits that are here with us, which I'm glad, actually, because I think it's always important to be in the room and listen to the feedback, and then also, hopefully, it'll help inform the questions you do have when we hopefully will see you back on June 10th, Wednesday, starting at 9:30 a.m.

So, I will turn it now over to our Committee Counsel to swear in the witnesses for their testimony.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning, everyone. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

Commissioner Jones Gaston.

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Commissioner Pletnikoff.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Commissioner Gendell.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Commissioner Mendez.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Commissioner Linares.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LINARES: Yes.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Deputy Commissioner Wolkomir.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And Deputy Commissioner Ginsburg.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GINSBURG: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin.

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: Good morning. My name is Rebecca Jones Gaston, and I am honored to serve as the Commissioner for the Administration of Children's Services. I'd like to thank Chair Stevens, Chair Lee, and the Members of the Children and Youth and Finance Committees for convening today's hearing on the Executive Budget for City Fiscal Year 2027. I am joined by my Colleagues, Deputy Commissioner for Financial Services, Margaret Pletnikoff; Deputy Commissioner for External Affairs, Stephanie Glendell; Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Youth and Family Justice, Nancy Ginsburg; Deputy Commissioner for the Family Services Division, Luisa Linares; Deputy Commissioner for Family Permanency Services, Ina Mendez; and Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Child and Family Well-Being, Elizabeth Wolkomir.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge Melissa Hester for her steady and COMPASSionate leadership as interim Commissioner. During a period of transition, Melissa guided this agency with care, integrity, and deep commitment to children and families, and I want to thank her and congratulate her on her new role as Executive Deputy Commissioner of People, Operations, and Technology.

I often say that I was born into the system. Child welfare is not simply the work I do, it is personal to me. It has shaped my life, my sense of purpose, and my understanding of what children, youth, and families need, not only to survive, but to heal, grow, and thrive. Because I know personally what systems can mean in the life of a child, I approach this role with both urgency and hope. My professional journey has taken me from the frontline practice in child protection and foster care to leadership roles at the state and federal levels, including serving as Commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families during the Biden-Harris Administration. Across every role, every system, and every community, one lesson has remained constant. Meaningful and lasting change only happens when we remain grounded in the voices, experiences, strengths, and hopes of the people most impacted by our decisions. That belief will guide my leadership at ACS.

I also recognize that this work does not happen in isolation. The well-being of children and families depends on strong partnership across systems and sectors, including providers, advocates, community leaders, and our partners in the judiciary.

Lasting progress requires all of us working together with shared accountability and shared commitment to safety, healing, fairness, and opportunity.

I believe deeply that safety and connection must coexist. Children should be safe, and families should have the support they need to remain together whenever possible. Communities should be seen not simply through the lens of need, but through the lens of strength, wisdom, and possibility. Children are not cases. Families are not problems to solve. Communities are not deficits to manage. They are people with stories, strengths, hopes, and potential, and our responsibility is to shape systems that recognize humanity and respond with accountability, COMPASSion, and intention.

As Commissioner, I'm committed to continuing the work of strengthening child welfare system that is more responsive, more equitable, more preventive, and more humane. That means ensuring child protective intention is focused on where children are truly unsafe, while continuing to invest in the community-based and family-centered supports that help families thrive before crisis occurs. It means listening closely to young people and families with lived experiences, and recognizing them as partners in shaping the solutions. And it means continuing to transform how we support young people involved in the juvenile justice system, seeing them not only for the worst moment in their lives, but for their potential, resilience, and future.

I also want to be clear about the tone and the spirit I hope to bring to this role. I believe in stewardship, I believe in partnership, I believe in accountability rooted in COMPASSion, and I believe in systems change happens when we are willing to listen, to learn, and to act with informed intentionality.

I also believe none of this work is possible without a skilled, supported, and well-resourced workforce. Every day, ACS staff, provider partners, attorneys, clinicians, case planners, direct care staff, and so many others carry enormous responsibility on behalf of children and families, often under incredibly complex circumstances. If we want stronger outcomes for children and for families, we must continue investing in the people who make these outcomes possible. I look forward to building an honest and constructive partnership with this Council as we work together on behalf of New York City's children and families.

Today, I'll provide an overview of the FY 2027 executive budget, which is projected to be 3.51 billion dollars, including 1.4 billion in City funds. As you know, the Mamdani Administration asked each agency to identify a Chief Savings Officer to carefully examine opportunities for savings and efficiencies. I want to thank ACS' Chief Savings Officer, Margaret Pletnikoff, for leading this work thoughtfully, with continued focus on minimizing impacts on children, families, and providers who depend on our services. Affordable childcare is essential for families, so I am extremely pleased that the Mamdani Administration has prioritized expanding across the quality childcare throughout the city. ACS's budget furthers the commitment in a number of ways. Due to the advocacy from the Mamdani Administration, the City Council, and many others, the State and City have come to a number of budgetary agreements that will enable New York City to expand

and maintain access to early childhood education. As it relates to ACS, the funding from the City and the State in ACS' budget will enable us to continue to recertify the vast majority of families receiving low-income childcare vouchers from ACS. The funding will also allow the City to support the growing need for childcare vouchers among families on cash assistance who are served by the Human Resources Administration. In addition, we are extremely pleased to share that the FY27 executive budget restores and baselines Promise NYC at 25 million dollars. This funding will enable ACS to maintain City-funded, community-based childcare. This funding supports approximately 1,000 slots. Historically, Promise NYC was funded for one year at a time. Baselining the funding for this crucial program creates certainty and stability.

I have dedicated my career to identifying ways to support and uplift families and communities so that they can be safe and thrive. As I take on this role, I remain committed to lifting up family-centered, prevention-driven solutions that improve outcomes and transform how systems support children, families, and communities. I am committed to keeping children safe by providing ACS child protective staff with the tools, supervision, and training they need to make sound decisions. And I am committed to ensuring ACS helps to provide families and communities with the support they need to succeed.

ACS will soon announce the providers recommended for the 11 community partnerships across the city. Community partnerships are neighborhood coalitions that enhance child and family well-being through strategies responsive to each community's specific wants and needs. By listening to the voices and ideas of community members, the community partnerships work to increase coordination among service providers, connect families to resources, and fill programming gaps. The new contracts will expand the role of community ambassadors, trusted community residents who build relationships with and connect families to information and resources. I'm looking forward to the implementation of these new contracts and the positive impact the partnerships will continue to have.

ACS currently contracts with 44 provider agencies operating 127 programs for family services, previously referred to as prevention services. Across the system, ACS contracts for 10,277 slots, meaning more than 10,000 families can receive services at any one point in time. In Calendar Year 2025, a little over 30,000 children in 14,000 families received child welfare, family support, and therapeutic treatment services. ACS and our providers have been intentional about supporting communities, engaging families, and connecting them to resources. Through this work, we've increased community referrals from 12 percent of all families served in January 2023 to 27 percent of them in March of 2026. These include referrals from schools, healthcare providers, and families themselves.

As part of our efforts to look closely at our budget and possible efficiencies, this budget includes closing four programs totaling 360 slots for savings of 2.7 million CTL and 7.1 million gross. We will be working closely with the four providers as well as the providers in the same catchment area to ensure that no family loses services. We will also continue to monitor community needs and make sure families continue to have access to services.

In New York City, the number of children in foster care is at a historic low with fewer than 6,300 children in care, down from 13,000 a decade ago and close to 42,000 when ACS was created 30 years ago. Our work at ACS centers on continuing to reduce the number of children in care, both by preventing children from entering in the first place and from intensifying efforts to reunify children more quickly. I am committed to working with the ACS team and our providers to continue this reduction.

For those children and youth in our care, it is essential that we provide them with the resources and skills that they need to become successful and thriving New Yorkers. This budget includes important actions that will enable us to do this. The executive budget includes a number of budgetary reductions in the foster care area that will have no impact on children, youth, families, or providers as the savings are from underspending or surpluses in specific budget codes, which I'll explain in more detail.

As you recall, last Fiscal Year, ACS's budget included the Youth Safety and Success Initiative, which was a 40-million-dollar investment in programs for youth in foster care and the justice system. Specifically, as it relates to foster care, the initiative funded an expansion of the number of youth who could be served by Fair Futures coaches and tutors, the number of youth participating in the College Choice program, and the creation of a new program, Career Choice. As a result of this investment, we see more youth getting connected to Fair Futures coaches, and there are over 470 youth enrolled in College Choice, up from 430 last year. In addition, we've created and launched Career Choice, a new program that builds off the success of College Choice by connecting young people in foster care to similar financial, social, and academic support when they elect to attend a vocational program or a job readiness program instead of college. The program was launched in October, and the first 10 youth are now enrolled in Career Choice programming.

In addition, we are on track for 136 youth to participate in the Department of Youth and

Community Development's Advance and Earn program this fiscal year, which is also a part of Career Choice. The executive budget better aligns anticipated spending levels of both Fair Futures and Career Choice with no impact on services to better match programmatic ramp-up and allocated funding.

Specifically for Fair Futures, we plan for the program to grow in budget and youth served in both FY27 and '28, while saving about 2 million CTL in FY26 and 27, and 1.1 million in FY28. We still anticipate full ramp-up to 42.7 million and 54 youth by FY29.

Similarly, there is a 405,000 CTL and 1.1 million gross reduction in Career Choice in the current Fiscal Year, 2026, due to the savings from the initial startup time needed for the program. All residential and specialized family foster care providers receive 3,500 dollars for each youth ages 14 to 21 in their care for independent living services, referred to as preparing youth for adulthood. These services help youth develop life skills through workshops and programs such as financial literacy, resume writing, college applications, grocery shopping, banking, and driver's education. The executive budget includes an annual reduction of 1.4 million CTL, 3.75 million gross, due to a surplus in the budget code. There will be no impact on providers or youth. Providers will continue to receive the 3,500 dollars for each youth age 14 to 21.

The executive budget also includes 233,000 CTL, 1.1 million gross reduction for adoption recruitment contracts, which ACS no longer maintains and has not since 2015. Adoption and foster parent recruitment is now managed by our foster care providers, and their current contracts include recruitment funding. Thus, there is no interruption in service and we do not anticipate any impact on providers or families.

The executive budget includes 97.5 million in CTL funding to address the Title IV-E budget gap that ACS has been carrying due to the way the federal government reimburses for foster care. Specifically, while federal Title IV-E funding for foster care is a federal entitlement, it is only an entitlement for those children and youth who are federally eligible. While there are a number of eligibility requirements, family income is the one that causes most children to be ineligible for federal reimbursement. To be eligible, current income of the child's family must be such that they would have been eligible for AFDC, which was the predecessor of TANF, in 1996. This has never been adjusted to inflation nor the current public assistance program. There was a period of time where the gap was being filled by federal government funds through the IV-E waiver, but that ended in 2018. This additional funding fills the gap ACS has been carrying.

The executive budget also includes 1.6 million for immigration legal services and fees for children and youth in foster care. Since at least 2006, ACS has been working with legal service providers to assist youth in care by obtaining special immigrant juvenile status. ACS is extremely grateful to these providers who have helped countless youth in care get green cards, all pro bono. Given the increasing demands for immigration legal assistance, ACS will now be able to provide attorneys handling these matters with 2,000 dollars per child. In addition, the Trump Administration recently created new fees and increased existing fees for various immigration relief applications, and this additional funding will provide reimbursement for those fees.

ACS continues to focus on meeting the needs of the increased number of youth across our juvenile justice continuum. As of May 13th, 2026, there were 362 youth in secure detention, 66 youth in non-secure detention, and 128 youth in Close to Home. The executive budget includes funding to support operations, maintenance, and capacity needs at our facilities.

The budget includes 6.3 million baselined for juvenile justice facility needs associated with the creation of the exercise pavilion at Horizon, including the additional funding needed for maintenance repairs and operations of the existing space. This funding will also be used for additional supplies needed for the population of youth in detention, such as uniforms, toiletries, bedding, and food services. Finally, a portion of this initiative is additional funding needed to support the conversion of a six-bed non-secure placement facility to a nine-bed non-secure placement facility to help with the increased Close to Home census. The executive budget also includes additional capital needs for our juvenile justice programs, including funding for the Horizon Annex, HVACs at Horizon and Crossroads, as well as our other repairs and IT equipment at Horizon and Crossroads.

So, in closing, I believe this executive budget reflects an important investment in children, youth, and families and communities across New York City, and it represents an opportunity to continue shaping systems that are not only effective, but also COMPASSionate, responsive, and grounded in partnership. As I begin in this role, I do so with humility, urgency, and hope. I know the responsibility that comes with leading this agency, and I know the profound impact our decisions have on the lives of children and families. I also know this work cannot be done by any one agency or system alone. It requires partnership across government with providers, advocates, communities, and with our partners in the judiciary, and most importantly, with young people and families whose lived experience must continue to inform and shape our work. At the same time, we are navigating a period of significant change and uncertainty nationally. Federal policy shifts and broader pressures on social service systems continue to impact child welfare and youth-serving systems across the country. But even as systems adapt, transform, and respond to those pressures, our responsibility must remain clear. Children, youth, and families must be at the center of every decision we make. This moment calls not only for responsiveness, but for intentional transformation rooted in equity, community partnership, accountability, and the belief that every child and family deserves dignity, support, stability, and possibility. I believe deeply in the power of connection and intentional action. I believe children, youth, and families deserve systems that see their humanity, honor their strengths, and create real pathways to healing, stability, opportunity, and belonging. And I believe our collective responsibility is not simply to respond to crisis, but to help create conditions where children and families and communities can truly thrive. That's the work ahead of us, and I look forward to doing it in partnership with all of you. Thank you, and I welcome your questions.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Thank you so much, Commissioner.

Before I go into my questions, just want to recognize we've been joined by Council Member Morano on Zoom, Council Member Ossé, Council Member Felder, Council Member J. Sanchez, and Council Member Mealy.

And thank you so much, Commissioner. We have two former non-profit leaders up here, which really greatly appreciate the work and the portfolio that ACS has, and so I know that you are in charge of a lot, and there's a lot on your plate. And so one of the things I hate are silos in government and so whatever we can do on the Council, we've always tried to champion ways to make sure that the agencies are also talking to each other in ways that we can play a helpful role in that as well so thank you.

And just wanted to, I have a few questions before I pass it on to the Chair. So, in terms of the savings exercises, I know that every agency had a target goal for the FY27 Executive Plan. How did ACS determine which savings to include in the Executive Plan, and what was the process in terms of what metrics were used to make the assessment?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: Sure. Good morning. So as part of the Executive Order 12, all agencies were required to identify recurring savings opportunities across their entire budget and review agency operations using a data-driven approach focused on operational efficiencies, program performance, and long-term sustainability. At ACS, we focused on aligning the budget to reflect our projected revenues, took savings from sunsetting programs and contracts, and we also looked across the entire agency budget and evaluated contracts based on performance and agency need. I want to stress that these decisions were difficult, and we approached them very thoughtfully. Our focus throughout the process was to find savings and efficiencies that would not eliminate services for children, youth, and families.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Because I know that when we talked about savings on the Council side, and I know the Speaker has said this as well, we really wanted to emphasize that we want to make sure that services are not cut, and so, you know, just wanting to make sure that that was actually the case, because you said sunsetting contracts and looking at other programs. And so which programs and services, if at all, were included in the savings measures, and will any direct services or programs see a decrease in funding from the savings exercise?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: Sure. So, the majority of our savings initiatives actually came out of maximizing revenue, so more than half came through realizing additional fringe that we were able to receive, as well as additional miscellaneous revenues out of audit. In terms of programs that were sunsetted, we sunsetted some administrative contracts. We made reductions for IT savings based on underspending in our Xerox contract. We had some programs that had already sunset, including

Esperanza. We also looked at looking at surpluses in our Committee on Special Education funding. We slowed down the ramp-up of some programs that we had received funding as of last exec for our Youth Safety and Success Initiative, and that includes identifying accrued savings in FY26 for the Career Choice Program, as well as slowing the ramp-up of our Fair Futures Program. And then we also had savings through prevention contracts. We are ending four contracts for prevention. We believe there's still program capacity, and so that all of the family and children will continue to be served.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. And a lot of the slowing of the ramp-up was because of capacity, hiring processes, that sort of thing, like to onboard. Okay. I know that my colleagues probably have more questions about some of those, so I'll save that for them.

And several savings measures included a reduction of state and/or federal funding, and what is the total loss in funding from each state and federal source from savings, and can any of this funding be shifted to different programs?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: Yeah. So, the revenue that was taken down is representative of the, as every CTL dollar we spend, we're able to draw down revenue, so the revenue can't really be transferred because we need the CTL dollar to draw it down. Give me one second, and I'll tell you what the total value of the revenue takedown is. Give me two seconds.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Oh, yeah, no worries.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: I can get it for you. I'm mostly focused on CTL, so I apologize.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. No worries.

I was going to try to ask a quick question, but I don't know if… I don't want to disturb you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: Please do. I'll come back to it.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Because I'm bad at multitasking, so I never assume.

So, were you able to hit the target of the savings rate this year for the targeted amount, 1.5 percent? It was more than that, right?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: The savings that we achieved was…

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: At the target?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: Not at the target, actually.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: And the total revenue takedown for FY27 is 29 million dollars.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: 29 million, okay.

And the second part of the question was just about whether any of the funding could be shifted to different programs? No? Okay.

I'll probably have follow-up later on that, but moving on to contracting and procurement, my favorite topic. Contracting is an issue across the board for a lot of City agencies, as we know, and what is the average timeline for reimbursements to providers at ACS?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: So, the average processing time for Health and Human Services invoices is 7.7 days, which is much lower than the average across the City for Health and Human Services agencies, which at the close of the year was 17.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: 7.7 days from the time they submit the invoice. But then if there's questions about the invoicing and there's back and forth, is that, how long does that? And this is assuming the contracts are registered.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: We also lead agencies in timely contract registration, so we're very good there. We don't actually… I don't have a way to measure if there's back and forth in terms of questions that might come up if something is submitted incorrectly and it has to be resubmitted or sent back to the provider. We don't have a way of measuring that.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. If there's some way to measure that, that'd be great, only because we've been hearing, and I say this also as someone that used to contract with DYCD, DFTA, DOHMH, and a lot of other City agencies, but I know that the timeline it takes usually for the reimbursement once you submit the voucher is usually a bit longer, so just wanted to know if you have any information on that, that would be great.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: Not to brag, but ACS is really good at this.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Oh, yeah. Okay. So, you guys are like A-plus.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: And so I think it really is 7.7 days in total.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. That's why I'm skeptical a little bit, because from our non-profit background, it takes a lot longer.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: They actually do well.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. That's good.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We want to know why other agencies aren't doing what they do.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Yeah, exactly.

And how has ACS dealt with and responded to challenges related to if there are any contracting issues or procurement issues on the process, and what are major concerns or areas of concerns for providers in terms of the contracting process? Have you heard of any and gotten feedback?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: My understanding is that we have close to 100 percent, if not 100 percent of all of our contracts registered on time on the human service side, so I don't think we've been hearing those types of things.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. So, then once it gets awarded, Schedule C comes out, and the contracts get procured, usually in a couple months, it's usually registered with ACS? Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: Yeah.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay.

Okay. Moving on to Raise the Age waiver. At the prelim budget hearing, we urged ACS to apply for the State for the hardship waiver, because this is money that has been owed to the City, I think, since going back to 2019. So, since the preliminary budget hearing, have you had any conversations with OMB regarding applying for the waiver or pursuing state reimbursement?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: Yes. We have had those conversations. We appreciate the Council's commitment and interest in New York City getting the funding from the State that it should get from Raise the Age. Back in the day, both Nancy and I advocated for Raise the Age and for the City to get reimbursement, and we've had those conversations with OMB. The decision about whether or not to seek a hardship waiver would not be up to ACS, it would be up to City Hall and OMB, and the funding for Raise the Age would be bigger than just ACS.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Right. So, okay, that's kind of leading to my next question, which is, are you able to share information regarding how the expenses, I know, like you just mentioned, it wouldn't be just with ACS, but would you be able to share any information regarding where the expenses would be directed?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: So, in theory, ACS, probation, MOCJ, are all agencies, and probably a couple others.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: NYPD and law.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Yeah, okay. Okay, and do you know if the Mayor's Office or if ACS would be able to share any of that information in terms of the funding?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: Sure. We shared a chart, which I can send to you as part of our response to the preliminary budget, and it's an in-depth chart, so I can send that to you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. And can you state for the record just how much you estimate the agency has spent on the implementation of Raise the Age from Fiscal 2019 to date, which I'm assuming is quite a bit?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: Yes. We estimate that we have spent, going back to FY19, 549 million dollars in expense and 133 million dollars in capital.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay, perfect. Thank you.

And for at-risk youth funding, we had asked at the preliminary budget if you had details regarding the 194.5 million in baselined State funding provided, which was part of the total of 300 million added across several agencies that the State had given. So, since the prelim budget hearing, have you received any further guidance or clarification from the State?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: We have not, although we're hoping it will be imminent because I believe the Governor's probably signing the budget while we're sitting here, but it did finally pass the legislature last night, so hopefully we'll be able to get more details soon.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Perfect. And if you could let us know which programs and services it'll fund, that would be great for follow-up.

And the 300 million is definitely a significant apportionment of funding for the new Fiscal Year, and have you developed any plans for how it will utilize the funding for FY27 and beyond? Have those conversations happened?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: Not to my awareness.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. So, for follow-up, if you could let us know which programs you're thinking of expanding, reworking, adjusting, that would be great.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: Right. My understanding about the 300 million is it's not meant for expansion, but meant as revenue.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Revenue, okay. If you could… yeah, either way, that'd be great if you could follow-up.

And I think that's it for now, but I'm going to pass it over to Chair Stevens.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Before I go, Council Member Ossé asked if he could ask a question, because he has to run, so if you could ask your question.

COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: Thank you so much, Chairs. Good morning, nice to see you.

There are members of my District who are concerned about the issue of non-mandated childcare vouchers for working parents. These are vouchers for low-income families who do not qualify for benefits, but do not earn enough to afford childcare. Because they were told the City has no more funding for these vouchers, parents and families in my District are concerned because these vouchers are crucial for them accessing childcare. I would like to know what are the Administration's plans for funding these vouchers, and if there is a funding gap, what would be the alternative for these families?

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: Well, first of all, I'll just acknowledge that childcare is absolutely a critical priority for the Mamdani Administration and for us.

COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: I would hope so. It'd be crazy if you said otherwise, right?

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: I would actually like to turn it over to Deputy Commissioner Wolkomir to be able to give some details about what the plans are.

COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: Thank you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: Yeah, absolutely. So, you're right, and as Stephanie said, we understand the budget is being finalized as we speak, so we're eager to see what is in the State budget, because it is State funding that supports those low-income vouchers. It's true that currently we are not able to issue new vouchers, though we continue to recertify families that have vouchers, so the vast majority of families using vouchers are able to hang on to them. As soon as the budget is finalized, we will analyze what that means for how we can move forward in terms of when we may be able to move the wait list that we are maintaining. Families, depending on age, have a few options. New York City public schools for children zero to five do have open seats, and of course, that depends on location and what families' preferences look like. And DYCD also has after-school programming, and we are regularly reaching out to families that are on our wait list to make sure that they are aware of those opportunities and can avail themselves of those.

COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you, Council Member.

Thank you for being here, and as I'm listening to your testimony and going through some of the things, one of the things that probably, to me, is very glaring, as of May 13, 2026, that we have 362 young people in secure detention. This is really alarming for me, and so I think, for me, my question is, and this is why I say it's so important for us to invest in our young people on the front end, because now we have 362 young people in secure detention, and that's a huge, alarming number for me. So, I want to ask, and specifically, is there some type of interagency task force or working group that's going on now to think about how do we reduce these numbers? Because at this point, I've been screaming at the top of my lungs for the last two years about this, and I know everyone is up in arms about childcare, but I want us to be just as up in arms about 362 young people being in secure detention. This is alarming and honestly unacceptable to me, so I would love to hear, is there a plan, and as we're going through this budget exercise and thinking about where savings are, are we thinking about how to get these young people from not ending up here, and what would that look like?

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: Thank you, Chair Stevens. Just to note that we absolutely share the value of and the importance of our young people in their development and their well-being, and absolutely crucial in focusing on what we're doing, both from a prevention of foster care involvement to also prevention of involvement in the juvenile system. I'll turn it over to Deputy Commissioner Ginsburg to give some more specific details.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GINSBURG: Good morning. Thank you for your question.

As you know, we share your concerns.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know. But it's just frustrating because you guys get them at the end, and so that's why I said, is there an interagency conversation on how we're going to reduce these numbers? Because you can't do this on your own, right? Like how are we working with DOE and DYCD and all these agencies that work with young people to get this number down? Because honestly, when we came in, we were at, I believe it was like 150, and no one is talking about these numbers constantly increasing, and it's really driving me crazy. And so, if we aren't doing that, I want to just say on record that that is something that I need and want to see really quick, soon.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GINSBURG: So, the good news is that since the change of Administration, we have been actively in conversation with MOCJ. We are speaking with DYCD. We have always been speaking with DYCD. As you are aware, DYCD funds many of our programs in the facilities and also funds programs in the community so when young people leave us, they can continue with some of that programming as supports in the communities in order to prevent them from coming back to us.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, I know. We're seeing them later at 1, so they'll be getting the same question. That's why I have you guys all here because I want us to make sure we're looking at this in a holistic perspective because this is a huge concern of mine. So, definitely want us to keep talking and thinking about how are we looking and being intentional about getting these numbers down because this to me is unacceptable.

Another thing in the testimony that was kind of glaring to me and was like something that I think is also connected to even the savings, I see now that some of this money is going to be around securing a nine-bed, non-secure placement facility for Close to Homes. This is also super glaring and frustrating to me because when we did the RFP, we were right-sizing this program and I remember providers screaming from the top of their lungs that we are not right-sizing and that these numbers are going up and we shouldn't be closing any of them and they also said that it was going to be really hard like once they close that they would now have to say to get a facility back up and running it takes a lot and we know that it's not something that can be done overnight. So, this is frustrating that now we're building another facility, and this is a case where we should be listening to providers and I get it. Yes, we have to have savings but it cannot be in areas that young people are impacted, and so I need to understand how do we get back to a place if we were right-sizing now having to build a new facility.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: I wanted to say first of all, you are correct. The history is that we reduced Close to Home capacity as part of the RFP. I do want to mention that it's not building a new facility, it's a current six-bed non-secure detention that we're going to turn into a nine-bed non-secure placement so it's already a site part of our juvenile justice continuum.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. I just wanted to say again that the…

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: I know it doesn't get to the heart of your matter.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. It doesn't but, you know, I just have to say the things and it needs to be said on record and it needs to be said because this was something in a place where providers said, hey, don't do this because we're going to need it and I feel like I'm going to go full circle to now where we're at with the savings in preventive care. And this is also frustrating because for the last two years because I've only had ACS for two years, the last two years it was said that the reason that these numbers are down in these facilities is because of the work of preventive care and that that was necessary.

GALLERY: (APPLAUSE)

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I don't want to get y'all in trouble because I'd be doing whatever and I don't know how Council Member Lee does her thing. Y'all know I'd be clapping, I'm sorry, my people don't know how to behave, sorry.

But it gets me very frustrated because preventative services has been toted as a reason for not having so many people in the facility. I think in your testimony you said that we're down like 13,000 from a decade ago and these numbers are consistently going down and it has been a continuous effort to get these numbers down and preventive services has been the thing that has been pointed to of saying we're going to get these things down and so how do we now sit here and say and justify that this is a place that services should have savings because I know we don't like to use cuts, I know that's not what we're saying, right, but how do we justify that now when that has been the thing that we've pointed to and so what is the plan to ensure that the continuity stays. Because one of the things that I think for me is frustrating is that I've heard things like, well, there's still slots and so if I'm a young person, well, if I'm a family and there's slots in the Bronx and I live in Queens and I already don't like the system because, let's be clear, and I already have issues, I'm not going. So, I'm trying to understand what the justification is, what's the plan, and how this is going to look in actual time for these families. So, I'll stop chatting.

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: So, I'll start out with and this might be my own artificial separation.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And welcome.

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: Hello. The Close to Home related to the work of trying to support young people that are involved with juvenile justice and those placements and then the prevention services connected to preventing foster care placement are aligned but different sort of.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, they're all different.

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: Right.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The point I was just trying to make was like, we need to listen to providers because they said this and now again, we need to listen.

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: Absolutely. And the partnership of providers is critical and you heard that in my testimony and prevention services are critical as well. The entire continuum, we also as an agency have responsibility for fiscal responsibility and aligning resources in ways so that we are investing and utilizing the resources we do have, and the decisions to eliminate slots is a really difficult decision. And I'm happy to turn it over to Deputy Commissioner Linares to talk a little bit more about the prevention programs that I think you're referring to.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LINARES: Good morning.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Good morning.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LINARES: Chair Stevens, so I share your sentiment. It was a very difficult decision for us, but we really had to maintain our fiscal responsibility and ensure that we are maintaining a strong prevention program as possible. We have looked at different indicators to make the recommendations. We wanted to make sure that one of the first thing that we consider when thinking about this, savings-wise, are families going to continue to have services. So, you're right, we don't want a family from Brooklyn to be thinking about a service in the Bronx.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. And a couple of the programs actually were in Brooklyn that's being cut, correct?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LINARES: Yes, so three other programs…

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Could you talk about the four programs? Can you tell what's the total number of contracts that are under this program that are being eliminated and where they're located?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LINARES: Yes. So, before I answer that, I wanted to mention that when we look at things like families in the Bronx versus Brooklyn, we were very intentional in thinking about where our capacity was. So, we try to have a bird's eye view of our entire system before we think about where to make a recommendation. Once we did that, then we landed in the catchments that we did, which are three programs in Brooklyn and one in Queens. Once we determined, we looked at things like, are there other providers?

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So it was one in… I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LINARES: Three in Brooklyn and one in Queens.

Once we looked at the catchment and determined that these were the areas where we have the more capacity, where we had less SCR costs compared to other areas, where we have other prevention providers available in those areas, once we did that, then we narrowed down to those areas, then we said, okay, so now let's look at the providers that are in the areas and let's think about their own performance against the key performance indicators that we have identified. And those are utilization, the number of families that they served. And we didn't look at a point in time, so we didn't look just at today how you were doing, but we were intentional in looking at Fiscal Year '24, Fiscal Year '25, and we also looked at what's passed in Fiscal Year '26. So, we wanted to have a very comprehensive understanding of how those programs were faring against those KPIs. The other thing that we had to consider was whether those programs were serving a special population. Once we did that, then we brought it down to those four providers that were put forward as recommendations.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many clients are served by those programs?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LINARES: How many? So, in family support programs, we serve citywide a total of 4,512. As of April, we had a total of 3,347 families that participated in services of family support. For these four programs, we have a total of 360 slots. Currently active, families that are actually receiving services is 199.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: In those programs?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LINARES: In those programs.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: 199. Has there been an analysis on where's the closest one? If those families are not being served there, where's the closest facility or place they would have to go?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LINARES: Yes. So, that was part of the metrics that we looked when making a decision or a recommendation because we wanted to make sure that families can have services.

Again, that was our first beginning point, will families continue to have services. Not only the family that are currently in the program…

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, I know they'll be able to still have services, but I'm trying to understand what is the distance? Especially, prime example, you said there's three in Brooklyn. Are those in the same area? And then were there other programs nearby? Because, again, like we know that these are vulnerable families. We know that these are a lot of Black and Brown families. I literally have a resolution about the harm that ACS has done to Black and Brown families because we know of the past harm. And so this, to me, is a disinvestment in those communities because we know we don't want to criminalize poverty, and a lot of these cases are often around poverty. And so, like, if I'm already struggling and now I have to travel and have a burden, like, I'm trying to get an assessment of, like, what's the closest facility that they are going to have to go to? Have you guys already thought about, like, what that transition plan is, like, a lot of these families are vulnerable? I barely wanted to talk to this social worker. Now you think I'm going to talk to a new social worker? I'm not doing it. So, I'm trying to get a better understanding of what that's going to look like and understanding, like, the bigger impact of, like, how… and again, I want to be clear. I know that no one wants to ever have programs cut. And I know that you guys don't want to have things cut, but I just need us to make sure, as a City, we're prioritizing different things. And for me, prioritization is young people. And this is a place and families of like, whether we like to say it or not, there's going to be harm. And for me, it's like, how are we mitigating this and how are we moving thoughtfully? And I'm not saying that you're not, but what I'm saying is this is my concern. This is why I'm focusing on this, because there is no way that families who are already vulnerable, families who already don't trust the system, are now going to say, all right, well, it's slots over here, so I'm going to go. So, I just am trying to have more of a concrete of like, what does this transition look like? What is the plan? And how are we going to ensure that we are mitigating the harm of all these families?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LINARES: I like to tell you that, unfortunately for me, I have lots of experience on ending contracts because of the end of contracts in 2020, when we transitioned the system to the new RFP. During that time, we had about 5,000 families or so that we were transitioning and that we did so successfully. I like to say that we have very carefully thought about what would it mean for each individual families. You should know that as part of the end of contract, immediately as the providers are notified, we have a team specifically dedicated to reviewing each and every case family that is involved actively in prevention. The decision about the next steps are made together with the provider, ACS, and the family. That is that if the family decides that this is a time when a case can close and we can determine that that's an appropriate decision, then we go ahead and make a case closure. So, it's a process that is very well thought out and one that I'm personally very proud of, despite the fact that it means that we are ending a contract.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What at were these contracts in?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LINARES: So, I'm going to ask Margaret to help me with that question and then, because I…

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: Savings are projected for FY27. We know that we need at least 90 days to continue the case management to transfer cases. And so…

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, we're saying 90 days.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: We know that we need 90 days from the beginning of the implementation in order to transfer all cases.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LINARES: I should say that we transferred 5,000 families in a six-month period during COVID, and we did so successfully. So, while 90 days seems like a very short time, I do believe that we have a dedicated team that will make sure that every family and providers get the support that they need to make this transition.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I mean, yes, the families is also a factor in this too, but 90 days for folks who are now out of a job is also a huge factor. So, we can't…

GALLERY: (APPLAUSE)

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Pretend like that's not part of the conversation. Like I don't… I agree. It kind of felt cold. I'm sorry guys. This ain't my hearing. Don't worry, when we go back (INAUDIBLE) act crazy, but sorry guys. But that's kind of… that's kind of upsetting. And, you know, this budget isn't complete. So, my hope is that we come up with a better solution than 90 days of thinking about the transition of families and figuring out a better way to have savings because again, everybody's talking about an affordable city on both sides, and that don't sound like we are thinking about workers, right? I feel like we've passed multiple bills around workers in this Council so my hope is that my Colleagues get along board for us to fight, to make sure that these workers are also protected because the human service sector keeps getting hit. So, you know, I hope other folks get on board with this because that is kind of heartbreaking to think that people will be losing their jobs in 90 days.

I'm going to transition to some other questions around Fair Futures. I'm going to do some questions, and I'll go to Colleagues and then we'll come back. The executive plan included baseline savings of 4.9 million from the City and State funding, stating that Fiscal 2026 related to Fair Futures programs after speaking with OMB, understood that the savings should only been reflected in Fiscal 2026 through 2028, that is expected to restore the funding in Fiscal 2029 and 2030 in the future fiscal plan. ACS has publicly stated that they desire to expand Fair Futures programs. Giving this, what is the rationale for the funding's reduction within Fair Futures? And I bring this up again, this is another program that ACS has been raising the flag about and saying how great it is and all the things. So, I get that we are in savings, but it is mind boggling that the programs that we've talked about for the last year, since I've been here and pointed to the success of getting these numbers down and foster care and transitioning that this is where we're finding savings. So, I just got to say it.

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: So, I'll just start and then turn over to Deputy Commissioner Mendez. I think these programs are exactly what you're referring to when we're talking about focusing on youth and well-being and our responsibility to helping them develop and become successful adults and understand how to navigate the world as best as possible and our commitment to that continues, and you'll hear from the Deputy Commissioner that it actually is not a loss in services and the investment is intended to be used in full.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: Good morning. Thank you for your question. So, regarding Fair Futures, you may recall in Fiscal Year, I believe it was '23, we baselined 30 million dollars, the City baselined 30 million dollars in the program. We were allowed to expand up to 26, serving children in care and out of care. And then with the Youth Safety and Success Initiative, we received additional funding because we wanted to make sure there were additional resources because as we support the kids in care, even though that number is going down, as children are leaving, we wanted to continue. So, there was a plan, a robust plan to take these additional dollars and have the agencies quickly ramp up to serve, I think the original plan was 5,300 children starting either in Fiscal Year '27 or Fiscal Year '28. So, what we're doing is we're still expanding and by Fiscal Year '29, '28, one of those Fiscal Years, '29, we'll get to 5,400, but we're doing this incrementally and we're allowing the providers to have a little bit more time to ramp up and that will help them build the infrastructure, do the onboarding and hire the additional staff. So, in fact, in Fiscal Year '27, they are receiving more money per slot for Fair Futures and we are looking for them to grow. So, the target, I don't have my glasses on, but there was a target for this year, you know how I am, and then there's going to be a target for Fiscal Year '27 so they are going to be growing, reaching more young people, the same thing for Fiscal Year '28. And then by Fiscal Year '29, they should have their infrastructure and all of their additional staff in place to reach that 5,400 number at a minimum. What I also will say is if providers come to us and say, look, I can do more than what you're asking us to do, for example, we have the capacity to look at resource and shift so that no one will… if there's additional children that need Fair Futures, we're committed to figuring out how they can get the supports because we are committed to the program. So, we are growing, we're just kind of creating a more of a runway to that growth.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And even to your point there around, like providers can come if they need additional growth, because I know this was a conversation we were having with the last Commissioner where providers weren't coming and saying that they needed additional funding or supports or whatever. How are we communicating that to providers? Because that is one of the things that providers are saying that they didn't know even was possible.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: So, within the Division of Family Permanency, we have a contract management unit and they work with the providers around their budgets. So, the providers are very vocal when they're having questions or they want to figure out the budget. So, that is that conversation, and we work on their budget, we look at their budget narrative. So, I will make sure the team communicates to each agency because we go over each of their budgets that if you feel you need more for Fair Futures or for anything, let's talk so that we can make sure that they can soundly do the work that they need to do.

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: Sorry, Chair. I just wanted to add, you know, in my role, I intend to have different mechanisms for being able to spend time and have conversations and hear from providers in a variety of ways in addition to each of the various programmatic areas and their relationship and contact on the nitty gritty of the contract. That is one of the commitments I've made.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's good to hear.

What are some of the targets around, because I know you spoke about the different target areas around the Fair Futures, what are those different target areas? And also thinking about, I know, as the Commissioners coming in and you're saying you're going to want to talk with them, do you guys have benchmarks of triggers? Like, okay, we see that you're increasing and so, like, how do we then, you know, have that turnaround and just go over the targets?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: Sure. So, for Fiscal Year '27, the target would be about 4,800. For Fiscal Year '28, we want to be at 5,000, a little over 5,000. And again, in Fiscal Year '29, at that 5,400. We're in regular conversation with the Center for Fair Futures because they do a lot of the training and help the agencies implement the model. They have a database. Our data team is able to look at data. And what we really do want to focus on now as we're moving into this second piece of the expansion is setting up some metrics and holding agencies accountable. We were able to pull some data and so we're able to say that right now, there's about 4,300 young people involved with Fair Futures this Fiscal Year so far. It looks like, I don't want to jinx anything, that we might be on track to surpass what we did last year, but 87 percent of those kids are in care, 13 percent are no longer in care and we're reaching them, and then we know about two-thirds of young people that are eligible are getting Fair Futures. So, how do we make that number? How do we get to 75 percent? How do we get to 80 percent? And I think that's working with the Center for Fair Futures and also the agencies and having specific metrics that we can touch base on. We have a team in the Office of Youth Safety and Success. So, we were going to have a conversation and kind of co-design that with the providers so that we can make sure everyone is reaching these targets that we've outlined.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. And I would love for us to continue to think about what that looks like even around, like, the targets because again, and thank you guys for coming to Shadow Day for our foster care youth here.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: Thank you for having us.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. They were really excited to have you guys and the information, but even some of that, and I'm not sure, they didn't ask you guys a lot of questions, but some of the conversations I had with them in passing, there's still a big inconsistency of what information is being shared according to agencies. And so definitely want to make sure that we're working on that, especially with a program like this and how do we reach those targets because if young people don't know, they don't know.

Is a lower number of young people than originally planned for being served by the… What specific steps is ACS taking to ensure providers are fully utilizing the funding in this program so that all eligible young people are receiving those vital supports?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: So, again, we have our contract management unit. And in addition to, they're not just…

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How often do they like meet with the providers at contract management units?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: I would need to get back to you with an exact often, but like invoices come in monthly or within a few times a quarter, and there's a lot of conversations with the finance teams at the agencies. Now agencies have their allocations, at least for enhanced family foster care and specialized family foster care. We're going to be looking for them to submit the budget, so there'll be a lot of conversations now. So, I'll get an exact number I can get back to you.

I think I forgot your question though. What did you ask me? Your original question was?

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We were just asking about like the utilization of the program.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: Oh, yes. So, they submit, and so we're able to look at the tracking and like basically on what they're submitting. So, let's say, you know, they're budgeted for X and then so far they've submitted a number much lower. We're going to have conversations about what's happening.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Is there like a trigger where if it's like, okay, you don't see a number and you guys can reach out and say like, what supports do you need?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: Exactly. So, that's the role of the contract management team is to look at like, hey, you haven't submitted invoices, are there vacancies, are there staff turnover, are there are difficulties. I think we want to refine and hone in more on the qualitative piece, not just look at like the monetary piece, but like the qualitative piece and how are you leveraging that information. And then I think our partnership with the Center for Fair Futures will help intensify because they're working with the coaches regularly so it's really just about expanding and making sure new staff come on and they say, oh, you're this age, you should go to Fair Futures, let me make a referral, that type of thing.

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: Chair Stevens, just to add, one of the things that I have throughout my career enjoyed is being able to spend time with young people and hear directly from them, and so as I'm learning all of the parts and pieces that we have available in ACS, certainly wanting to ensure that we've got pathways for young people to engage and give us feedback directly about what they need and how communication and information is best communicated to them from the various agencies that are serving them and so I'm looking forward to engaging with the young people around that issue as well.

And thank you for having a Shadow Day. I think it's critical.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, if you know me, and everybody knows this, I only like kids and so, and I get all the information from them, which is why when I come back, I'm so passionate because I am translating the, I do, I don't really like the adult, but the young people are what I'm really focused on, and so a lot of the things that I'm coming back with is like direct conversations that I have with them, because, you know, I think it's so important that they have access to government and have conversations with them. So, I look forward to going out and hanging out with kids and changing the system to actually work for them.

I still have a ton of questions, but I'm going to pass it to Chair Lee so that our Colleagues could ask some questions and come back to me on a second round.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Great.

I want to recognize we've been joined by Council Member Restler, Majority Leader Abreu, Council Member Gutiérrez.

And we are going to start off with Council Member Wong followed by Council Member Schulman.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you, Chair.

I would like to start about the relocation of your headquarters. When did the process begin and do you have an update on that?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: As the last sole employee at 150 William Street, I'll try to answer that question. We are, by the end of May, all staff, or by the end of the day today, all staff will have moved out of 150 William Street. I got special exemption to stay through the hearing. And by the end of June, we'll be fully out of 150 William Street. Our new headquarters is at 110 William Street. It's not fully complete.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Can you explain about the move, like is there something… is there issues with the current headquarters? Please talk about it.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: So, we had been in the current headquarters for about 30 years. The new headquarters is a much more family… it has been intentionally developed to be more family-friendly and to better meet the needs of the work we do. So, there are a lot of family meeting rooms. There are like a beautiful new playroom for kids. The new office of advocacy is much more family-friendly. It was just developed in a different time. And so I don't know all the details. I wasn't personally involved in the details to relocate, but have been part of some of the, like, it wasn't ULURP, but the City Planning process. So, I know a bit about sort of the idea was that this new location would better meet our needs for staff and for families.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. Thank you.

I would like to ask about the two detention centers. I've been reading the Mayor's executive budget and I've been hearing and reading the statement, and I just don't see any numbers regarding the number of kids in the two sites, at the Brownsville site, 17 Bristol Street, and the one in Mott Haven, 560 Brook Avenue. Can you talk about, like?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: Sure, Nancy can give you… we have numbers in the testimony, but Nancy can give you what we have today.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GINSBURG: As of this morning, we had 181 young men in Horizon. In Crossroads, we had 186 young people, 11 are young women in that facility.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. Last year, there's a report from State Comptroller DiNapoli regarding both sites, and I'm going to read that to you. The report was dated in April 2025 and it mentions (TIMER CHIME) that the absence rate, school absence, absenteeism rates for ranges anywhere from 13 to 73 percent days absent. Can you talk about what's being done to improve that?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GINSBURG: Yes. I can talk about that. That report covered the period of

COVID. It was a period of five years, mostly that predated the Adams Administration. That's what it was looking at. The current attendance rate, according to our DOE partners, in both sites, is about 72 to 74 percent, which is close to the attendance rate in the community.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Can you talk about the number of days the child spends in a detention center, on average, before they get to leave?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GINSBURG: Give me one minute. The average length of stay in secure detention for 2025 was about 97.4 days.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: What about the graduation rates on these schools?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GINSBURG: So, graduation rates are difficult. The school program is a program, it's not a school, because young people don't start on the first day of school. They come whenever the court mandates them into our facility. We have graduated about 150 young people over the last three and a half years. And two years ago, we signed an MOU with CUNY, and we have young people who have either graduated with a diploma or have achieved their GED engaged in college programming in both facilities through Hostos and BMCC.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Thank you.

Okay. I've been reminded we have to try to stick to time as best as possible, but we're going to do round two questions as well.

Council Member Schulman followed by Council Member Joseph.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you.

Good morning, Commissioner, and welcome to New York. I have to say, your background is quite impressive, and we're lucky to have you as the ACS Commissioner.

Since 1999, the number of children removed from families by ACS has dropped more than 80 percent, thanks to preventive services programs such as the one in my District at Forestdale, 135-year-old organization that is the largest and most effective social services agency in the borough of Queens. However, the families helped there are now at risk because of these proposed cuts. I want to ask you… well, first of all, I know that a lot of your background is in preventive services, and you've made some great achievements in many states and in the federal government. So, with that, I want to know, two things. One is the cuts that are being made to preventive services also have a match that you're losing, a State match that you're losing as part of that. That's number one. Number two is that it represents a very small piece of the ACS budget, so I'm wondering if there are other areas that can be cut instead. And the next question after that is, Forestdale's getting the biggest cut, or it looks like it is. They're going to have to lay off some work from some employees, and I have visited personally with the families there because I give them a lot of money from my budget, and they have thanked me for keeping, you know, it's important to keep the families together and keep the children safe, which is your mantra. So, is there a way that we can do these cuts differently?

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: Thank you for the question. Thank you for the welcome. It is a pleasure to be here and an honor to serve.

I'll just say, yes, prevention services are absolutely and continue and will be a priority, and you've heard in testimony today around some of the process and consideration that went into the decision making. I haven't had a chance to visit any of the providers yet on day six, but look forward to getting to get out and meet with the providers, their teams, the community members, and the families that are being served.

For the specific question around match, I'm going to turn to Deputy Commissioner Pletnikoff, and then if there's more questions about process for decision making, happy to pull in Deputy Commissioner Linares as well.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: Sure. Thank you, Council Member. So, the cuts are actually pretty even across all four contracts. It's 1.76, 1.75, 1.75, and 1.81, so it's approximately the same at all providers. The reimbursement is 62 percent that we received from the Child Welfare Services state funding.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Yeah. And I'm asking, because the total amount of the cut for the preventive services is a small piece of ACS's budget. So, were there any other areas that, especially since it is so important to have preventive services and we've seen the outcomes from preventive services, that's number one. And number two is that if you cut and then you have to do remediation (TIMER CHIME) on the other end, that's even more expensive. So, that's what I'm asking here, if there's a way to do it differently. I know the Admin has made a decision, I get that. The Mayor ran on working with vulnerable families and the family unit, and so I think it's just important to really push and ask that question.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: Yes, and I understand your concern. We did look across the entire agency, look to maximize revenues, look to find areas of underspending, and really kept our focus on the least impact to children, youth, and families. We want to note that there are over 1,000 vacant slots in this program.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: I understand. I understand there are reasons for vacant slots, depending on when the contract gets paid, depending on a whole bunch of stuff. Commissioner, you were a social worker, you know what's involved sometimes with families and everything else. So, I get that, but I'm imploring that this be looked at again. I don't want to take up too much more time because I know that my time is up. So, thank you.

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: Thank you for the question.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Thank you, and as a fellow social worker who ran a non-profit, I totally just want to reiterate what Chair Stevens was saying about how prevention is so key. It actually saves the City money in the long run, and so I think it's smart to actually invest in more preventative services, and then also just wanted to reiterate that it really does impact just the planning. And I say this with almost past trauma in my voice, but it affects the planning of organizations, staffing, budgets, all of that. So, we'll definitely be in continued conversation. I know there's going to be more questions about it, but just wanted to reiterate that point.

And we have Council Member Joseph followed by Council Member Epstein.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you, both Chairs, and I'd love to associate with your comments as well. Welcome, Commissioner. How are you?

The Every Child and Family is Known initiative, a collaborative between ACS and DOE which received additional funding in the same budget to expand its work with students living in shelters and other families facing crisis relies on the New Visions Portal to track and respond to families' needs. This school year, over 50,000 check-ins have been logged by caring adults in the portal. Please walk me through how does the City plan on expanding Every Child and Family is Known initiative while simultaneously cutting the platform it depends on to do the work. Can you share if these cuts are sustained? How will it impact your work at ACS to support our youth who need this initiative the most?

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: Thank you for the question, and thank you for the welcome. I'm going to turn it over to Deputy Commissioner Mendez to be able to answer some of the specifics that you asked. But just again, reiterating our role when we're working with children and families is to ensure that they have their needs met and that we're finding ways to resource their needs based on what they need and not just what we have and look forward to continuing to have conversations with them.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Absolutely. Our numbers are tremendous in New York City Public Schools, students in temporary housing. It's over 155,000 students. And you know I know that work.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: Good morning.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Good morning.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: Council Member Joseph.

So, I'm happy to report ACS is working very closely with New York City Public Schools, the foster care office, as you know, we have a close collaboration with them and New Visions to explore how to introduce the access to that portal to foster care agencies. So, as you can imagine, there's a lot of things we have to do on the back end. We have to formalize an MOU. Then we have to look at, I'm not the computer person, but I think it's called a cloud service agreement. So, we're going through some of those like bureaucratic things to put in place. But we're also starting to talk to the foster care providers. So, we're thinking about doing this as a pilot first, and we're talking to the foster care providers about like what should this look like, what makes sense, and all of those things while we're doing the MOU pieces. And so we're hoping that that will continue to move forward so that in the next school year, this can, you know, it will move forward.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: So, the timeline is for September this coming, so you'll spend the summer training and transitioning this platform? Is that what that's looking like?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: So that's the timeline. I think, you know, part of the, and I can get back to you with actual specific milestones. Like I mentioned, we have to create this MOU. So sometimes there's back and forth. I think Council Member Lee talked about back and forth so there'll be some back and forth.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Until you get it right.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: Right. Until we get it right. The cloud service agreement. I know New York City Public Schools is currently using New Vision so that should not be a problem for ACS. They should pass all those cybersecurity tests, but I don't want to speak, I don't want to get ahead of myself. I do know we're trying to launch in the next school year so continue to work on that.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: We get a round two, right, Chair Lee?

Okay. I have more questions.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: And I'll just commit that we can follow up as it's evolving with you directly.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Great.

Council Member Epstein followed by Council Member Restler. Is he here? He's somewhere, okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: We can go get him if you want.

But Commissioner, welcome. Thank you.

Just to disclose, I was a foster care worker back in the day so I appreciate your commitment to this issue.

I do want to focus on the prevention. As someone who worked in foster care, we're hearing a lot about the spaces, vacant slots in prevention, but I want to talk about maybe the need to do additional outreach to prevent that to happen. And maybe those slots that are vacant is maybe related to the agency not doing a good enough job doing the outreach in communities to get people into those services. I'm wondering, obviously you're new into this, kind of what commitment are you going to make to ensure that there's outreach into our community to make sure people know about those preventive services so they can get into those slots?

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: Great. Thank you for the question and the welcome.

Yeah. As I am getting my feet underneath me and learning all the acronyms, one of the things I'm committed to is looking at all of the programs and processes that we have and really find ways that we can continue to improve and outreach and how people know about what's available and our relationships with providers and community are really, really critical to that.

COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: Yeah. I would encourage you to do that and to work with us to ensure that happens because I do worry that when you reduce prevention slots, then we will, obviously we've heard a lot about this, the negative impact that it'll have on families and the cost of, obviously the human cost to the city and the human cost to those families who aren't getting the support that they need to prevent bad things to happen to their families.

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: Absolutely. And I look forward to working with sister agencies also as collectively thinking about how are we serving kids and families as a whole.

COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: Yeah. I want to flag the Children's Center for you because this has been something, before I came to this lovely Body, I was an Assembly Member for eight years and dealt with lots of issues there and insufficient programming and services available to the young people who are, some people are cycling in in a day, but some people are there for months on end, and I'm wondering what the plan is to ensure that the young people who are there are getting the support that they need while they're at the Children's Center.

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: I'm learning, and one of the things I know is, I agree with you, we absolutely, if children are in our care, we have a responsibility to make sure that we're meeting their needs and working with First Deputy Commissioner, get titles right, First Deputy Commissioner Saunders, who isn't here today, but with understanding kind of what's happening at the Children's Center, where our needs are and where there's opportunity for improvement. Ultimately, I would love that there's less and less need and utilization of the Children's Center and that we have the ability to both keep children at home with their (TIMER CHIME) families and meet their needs, utilize kinship placements, identify family home placements outside of having to use the Children's Center, but the quality of care is critical as well.

I'm going to turn it over to Deputy Commissioner Mendez, if she has anything else to add.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: So, just to piggyback on your question regarding services, I won't go into detail, we can definitely share, but there's a lot of robust service, mental health and well-being services. JCCA provides mental health support, Children's Village is working with us on our youth that may be trafficked. We have different organizations providing mentorship program. We have an eight-staff ACS staff mental health team that's based in the Children's Center. So, there's a lot of programming that Commissioner Jones Gaston mentioned that First Deputy Commissioner Winette Saunders introduced. I'm happy to report today, there are 39 young people at the Children's Center, and we have brought down considerably the length of time children stay there. There are some, yes, that stay older, our teens, but we're working with our foster care providers and also working with their families to see if they can safely be returned home so we've made a lot of strides. I could go on, but.

COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: Yeah. I'd be happy to talk offline about that more because it's something that we've seen as an ongoing concern and problem.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: Yes. And we work very closely with the 13 precinct and the community district in that area on a regular basis. So, I think those partnerships and the commitment, while we don't want children staying at the Children a long time, while they are there, we want them to be supported and have their needs met.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: I just wanted to add that First Deputy Commissioner Winette Saunders really wanted to be here today and unfortunately had a medical appointment she couldn't change, and so I just wanted to put that out for the record because I know she really would have wanted to share updated information about the Children's Center with you. As you know, we've both been longstanding members of the Children's Center and Community Advisory Board, and I'd be happy to set up a time for the three of us to meet so we can update you more fully. Four, four of us, sorry.

COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Great.

Thank you so much. We've been joined also by Council Member Brewer, and we'll go on to Council Member Restler followed by Gutiérrez.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Great. Thank you. Congratulations Commissioners. Good to see the ACS team this morning.

I will just note, building on Council Member Epstein for a second, the CAC in Brooklyn is moving. We've received no communication about that so would appreciate a briefing on what's planned and where that's going. It's in our District, it's an important location, and we really want to make sure that that is handled thoughtfully.

And with that, I'm going to switch the topic that your team knows I'm going to ask about, which is vouchers. Building on Council Member Ossé's questions, just to affirm, there are 25,000 children currently on the voucher waiting list?

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: So first of all, absolutely commitment to follow up related to the CAC question that you have and then I'll turn it over to Liz.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: Yes. Based on the report from last Friday, 25,600.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: 25,600 children desperately in need of childcare who do not have it today and with no plans right now to provide any funding to the families on the wait list.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: I want to be clear. I obviously share your concern and want to get care to as many families as possible. However, there are families on the wait list that are actively engaged in care, especially with New York City Public Schools. We keep those children on the wait list because if and when we are able to offer them a voucher, we want them to have the choice of type of care.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So, you mentioned earlier that your team and others across the Administration are doing outreach to folks on the wait list to connect them to 2K seats and after school programs. Have you quantified how many families have been successfully connected from the wait list to other childcare options?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: No. We don't have a way to quantify that, but I can say that there are about 6,000 children that are enrolled in CCBG-funded New York City Public Schools seats. There may be children in other New York City Public Schools seats, meaning funded by other funding streams and we don't have currently the ability to do a data match with DYCD.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So, without a data match, we know that there's tens of thousands of children who are in desperate need of support. And while we know this is a major commitment for Governor Hochul and Mayor Mamdani, these families are left in the lurch. So, just to understand, it certainly seems that there is, with the historic investment in the State budget, there are resources available for this Fiscal Year to pay for additional vouchers. Without concern about future years, can you confirm that's accurate?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: As you know, the budget is either being signed or signed potentially while we're sitting here.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But the childcare funding was determined five months ago. We all know what those numbers are and we've known them for five months. The Mayor and the Governor did an announcement on like the fifth day in January and the numbers have not moved. So just to affirm a simple question, for this Fiscal Year coming up, FY27, do we have funding for additional vouchers? Not for future years. I understand there's a major liability there.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: Well, I do want to say that I haven't seen… I haven't had a chance to look at the final bill so I'll take your word for it, but the language is complex and we do need to look at that, and we would be remiss if we didn't to ensure that it is exactly the same as the executive budget. However, we are always looking at where (TIMER CHIME) we are on spending and enrollments across the three agencies that use this funding, HRA, ACS, as you know, and New York City Public Schools. And so now that the State budget is final, we will need to look at and analyze how and when we will be able to move the wait list. I can't confirm today what that time window looks like.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So, where I'm going with this, and if Chairs, who I adore, who I didn't say anything nice about you at the beginning of my comments, I apologize. I do. Two quick ones, I'm sorry. I do adore them. That was very sincere. I say that to all the Chairs, but I really mean it today.

So, just to ask, I understand that we have an enormous responsibility. We significantly increased enrollment for these non-mandated low-income childcare vouchers during COVID with an expectation of federal funds lasting forever, and we're not there, and we've been successful for two years in a row with tremendous advocacy in Albany to maintain that every family who has a voucher is able to keep it. That's an enormous achievement. You guys deserve credit. Everybody involved deserves credit, God bless. But we do have a 25,000-person waiting list. The suggestion I want to make to you on the record here is that we do SCCF vouchers again. This was the model we crafted during the de Blasio Administration. It can be funded for a single year. We don't make a in perpetuity commitment that this child is going to have a voucher until they're 13 and age out, but that we add childcare capacity for this coming Fiscal Year with the resources we know we have today. And I think that is the approach we should take in this moment to help reduce the waiting list and help more families connect to care now. And if we can get more money from Albany in the future, then let's enroll people in vouchers in the future, but let's do more today.

Last question. If you want to respond to that, you're welcome. Anything you want to add?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: We note your recommendation.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you, I appreciate it. I'm not shy.

Last thing, I am deeply disturbed by one policy that didn't make it into the State budget, which has to do with OCFS's policy around hours that parents work and access to childcare vouchers. Basically, OCFS has regulations that require parents to… that only allow for a child to have a voucher during the precise hours that a parent is working. So, if a parent works nights, then they don't get a daytime childcare voucher. If a parent works Mondays and Tuesdays, then the kid can only go into the childcare center Mondays and Tuesdays. If this policy is going to be imposed on the City, it would be profoundly disruptive. It would lead to child center closures, because how can a childcare center that has 100 kids have a different policy of what hours every 100 kid is coming in? You can't hire teachers that way. We will see enormous, enormous disruptions for our childcare system. I am hopeful that the Governor is able to guide her agency to do the right thing and that OCFS no longer… and OCFS sees that this would be a disastrous policy for New York City childcare. Do you have any updates on your conversations on this? Is OCFS giving any indication to you that they're recognize how harmful and disruptive a policy this would be?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: I mean, first I'll say, you know, but for the good of all, you know that ACS has been advocating.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yes, no, no, no, I'm not criticizing you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: No. I just want people to…

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: You guys have been great. I'll say that on the record.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: Understand the position of the agency and the position of this Administration, which is that we agree that this would be bad for providers, bad for families, bad for child development.

We have been advocating at the OCFS level and having conversations there. The Administration has been speaking with Chamber about this. I don't have any updates, but we are holding onto the same hope that you are, that there is a pathway so that we can ensure that families who are juggling more than just their work schedule, as we know, have the opportunity to have the childcare they all seek.

There's I think four or five working days left in session. Whether we pass the Hevesi-Brisport bill again, which is one way to fix this, or OCFS changes its regulations, which is another way to fix this, we just need it fixed because the families in New York City…

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Thank you, Lincoln.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Sorry. I'm done. Thank you. Bye.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Council Member Gutiérrez followed by Majority Leader Abreu, I don't know if he's here, but we'll move on if not.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you, Chairs. Good to see everyone. Welcome, Commissioner.

I want to just uplift the remarks of my Colleague, Council Member Schulman, about the preventative service. I understand the role of the Chief Savings Officer. Obviously, I think we're all in agreement. We want to be able to fund programs that we have money for and fund effective programs. I do want to say that families in my District, I know the folks from Canva and Forestdale are here, they will be testifying, but I really think that putting something out or making a proposal that severely cuts this program without much of like a safety, without an explanation of what's going to happen to those jobs, without explaining what's going to happen to those families impacted is deeply, deeply concerning. And you heard from Chair Lee about just the very simple math of the eventual cost savings to the City when we do invest in preventative care. So, I just want to uplift Council Member Lee.

I, of course, am also asking some questions about the childcare vouchers. It's a hot topic and mainly because obviously, we care deeply about early childcare as I think this Administration does, but we have families that are saying, what about me. When the Mayor is talking about childcare, he's not talking about me. He's not talking about the voucher that I'm desperately waiting on. So, I just have some data if you have them specifically, and I'll sign up for round two if I need. But can you share what percentage, as I understand it, every family was able to recertify within this Fiscal Year?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: The vast majority of families have the opportunity to recertify provided they submit a recertification application. It's timely, it's complete. There is a small percentage. It's about, and not to minimize how important childcare is to this population, but there are about six to seven percent of families that we serve that are not able to continue with their voucher because when we have limited funding, we are required by federal rules to serve three populations first, families that are unhoused, families with a child with special needs, and families that are very low income, which is under 300 percent of the State income standard.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. And so that's about six percent of those folks unable to kind of maintain their voucher?

Okay. Do you have a sense of those that were able to recertify, how many of them potentially have siblings, younger siblings that were not able to qualify? Because I think that puts parents in, basically back to square one, where they have one child who is utilizing a voucher, but they technically can't go back to work because they have a younger child. Do you have a sense of that?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: I don't have a sense of magnitude. We know it's an issue. I mean, we do have families reaching out to us, telling us that they are trying to add a child to their case and that child might be on the wait list if the family is still eligible serving other children. We can look into whether or not those analytics are possible and get back to you.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Got it.

Just so you know, a few of my Colleagues and myself jointly sent a letter to some of our folks at the State, knowing full and well the budget would not have been passed by April 1st. Obviously, we don't have anything. I think what you've shared today is just nothing substantial.

My last question, and I'll sign up for round two, is are there any specific circumstances outside of seeing this miraculously in the State budget that would allow for ACS to begin offering vouchers to eligible families?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: Well, I want to be clear that we will be looking at what is in the State budget, which is a substantial increase in funding that is allowing us at baseline to continue the policy that we have in place.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: To allow people to re-certify, which is not nothing. I hear that.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLKOMIR: Which is not nothing, and we will be looking at where enrollment stands across all three agencies and spending to assess if there is a time in the next months that we may be able to begin moving the wait list. But we don't know that yet, because we need to assess what's in the budget, what attrition in our system looks like, what spending across ACS, HRA, and New York City Public Schools looks like.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Deputy Speaker Williams followed by Council Member Mealy.

DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Good morning. I'm just going to ask a few questions about the racial equity plans. I'm asking all the agencies these questions. We're super excited to have the prelim plans and want to make sure that as we talk about the budget, that we have a lens of racial equity. So, what has ACS determined are the short and midterm goals to achieve in relations to the equity plan?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: Good afternoon, I started to say good afternoon, good morning, Deputy Speaker, feels like afternoon already.

I know I said this for another question, but I just want to say for the record that first Deputy Commissioner Winette Saunders, who's leading this work for us, wanted to be here to be able to answer this question, but is not, so I'm here answering it for her, but she unfortunately couldn't make it today for a medical appointment.

DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: We love her. It's okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: Okay. So, on the short-term goals, we have launching school-based early support prevention, increasing community-based referrals to prevention, and those are the short term.

Do you want me to do the middle term?

DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Yeah. Let's do it.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: Middle term is continuing to invest in training ACS staff and providers to provide quality services and to foster a psychologically safe work environment that embraces equity and transparency, and another one is investing in the development of community spaces that contribute to healthy child development and family strength, such as the FECs. Another is to continue to decrease unnecessary child welfare reports by promoting a citywide culture shift among mandated reporters so that they're not calling the SCR when there's a child who doesn't have a safety reason. And another is to strengthen restorative approaches to addressing conflict in juvenile justice settings.

And then do you want me to do the long term?

DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: No. The short and midterm is fine.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: Okay.

DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: What if…

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: I'm happy to share the full plan with you. I think it's public.

DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Yeah. It's public.

What if any budgetary actions need to be taken to help achieve these goals?

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: Well, before Deputy Commissioner Gendell jumps in, I just want to also just kind of chime in here is first of all, I was super delighted to know that the agency had a racial equity plan, and I'm looking forward to kind of digging into it and adding some of my perspective and experience to be able to deepen the work that we're doing with identified goals and focus areas, but also look for other opportunities where we can really focus on decreasing the disproportionality and disparity that's experienced across our communities, particularly in the services that we employ.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: And I'll just, to answer your question, I believe that both the short-term and medium-term (TIMER CHIME) goals are all able to be accomplished within our current budget framework, but I will verify that with the First Deputy Commissioner.

DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Okay. In the City's Preliminary Racial Equity Plan, ACS states that it plans to support young people in preventing contact with the juvenile justice system by expanding community-based programs that serve youth before they come to the attention of family court. How does ACS plan to identify youth who may be at risk of system involvement? And what specific community-based programs or interventions does the agency plan to expand or invest in? And what resources are included, if any, in the exec plan to support this work?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: I'm going to turn it over to Deputy Commissioner Ginsburg to talk a bit about ACES and Just Us and maybe other items.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GINSBURG: Good morning. Nice to see you. Thank you for your question.

As you are aware, we engaged in a large expansion of both ACES through the Cases Program and Girls Just Us in the last year and the upcoming years. In FY26, that budget, there will be 24 additional young women who will be served via this expansion. It's a program that started in Brooklyn and is going to be expanded to Queens and the Bronx. FY27, there is also 0.8 million CTL being added into that budget. ACES, which is a program, it's the only ROCA program that exists in the city. It's an extremely important program for heavily street-involved young people. It's one of the only of its kind in the city. We have expanded that program so that 400 more young people will be able to take part. In that FY27, 7 million of CTL has been dedicated to that program, and in '28, 7 million also.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: Before we move on, Council Member Lee, could we correct something for the record from one of your earlier questions?

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Sure.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: Yeah. I apologize. When you'd asked me about the revenue impact, I rushed and I misstated. The actual revenue impact is 14.91 million. I had accidentally said 28.9 in my haste, so I apologize.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Great. Thank you so much.

Okay. Council Member Mealy followed by Council Member Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Congratulations. Thank you, Chairs, for this great hearing.

I want to concur with my Colleague Wong in regards to juvenile. You said most of this funding will support administrative and operation costs, including supplies, maintenance, and repairs that are not capitally eligible at the Crossroads Detention Center in Brooklyn. A portion of these funds, at least a half a million, which is baselined now, in Fiscal '27, will support three additional beds in non-secured detention facilities. I'm glad to hear that the half a million is going in, because I have to now, I put funding in with Ready, Willing, and Able to clean all around that detention center. I think y'all have to look into that to see when they're going to be moving the cars and make sure that area is neat. I'm making sure that area is. And I just was there last year in regards to the last Administration we put in. I was going to put in about five million this year, and last Administration had some from Albany to build a whole new bedding facility there. And now I'm hearing you're only doing three beds in a non-secure. We had the contractors there. We was taking one of the courts, because they have at least about three courts in it. And we said we could take one of the courts to make sure that our young men are not sleeping on the floor, in which I went myself walking through. Numerous of our young people are sleeping on the floor. And now to hear that y'all put money in, a million, to put it in for some of the classrooms, 20 to 40 classrooms, isn't this kind of a mix-up?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: Yeah. I think we can explain some of it, and then I'll turn it over to Deputy Commissioner Ginsburg. So, first of all, I want to state, first of all, no child, young person is sleeping on the floor.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: I was there myself.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: Some young people have temporary beds, but nobody is sleeping on the floor.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: They have chairs. They put the chairs together to sleep in.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: No, no, no. No, they are given a very…

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: We should do a walkthrough really soon.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: We'd be happy to do that, for sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Sometimes it's at major capacity, and that's why they don't have enough beds.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: So, that is correct. So, we are…

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: So, that's why we was putting more money in to make sure that no one is. And I have to say, Crossroads sometimes have more employees than our young people in there. So, it fluctuates, but recently it's been almost 90.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: So we are building a temporary structure at Crossroads.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Three beds.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: No, no, no. So, the three beds is different. So, last (TIMER CHIME) year's budget included funding, capital funding, either capital or expense, Margaret will correct me, to do expense funding to do a somewhat temporary facility at Crossroads to address capacity. This year's budget includes funding unrelated to Crossroads and unrelated to secure detention to take a non-secure detention facility and make it a slightly large, serve more children for Close to Home. So, completely separate…

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: How many beds?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: From Crossroads. From six to nine beds, but nothing to do with Crossroads.

Crossroads, do you want to talk more?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GINSBURG: So, at Crossroads, we are planning to build an additional 28 beds.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: There you go. Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GINSBURG: That will be two halls. Each hall will have education and programming space. We are also planning for additional classroom space to accommodate the increased population.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay. 28 beds sound more like it.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GINSBURG: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay. Thank you so much.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GINSBURG: We're with you and we appreciated your visit and you're welcome to come back anytime.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Please think about the maintenance around the facility. It's an eyesore on the community because they never move the cars. The 73rd precinct is right next, across the street. They don't move their cars, so I have to put funds just to make sure that the community look nice.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GINSBURG: We appreciate your partnership on that. We are struggling with the fact that we are a 24/7 operation and our staff need some place to park their cars.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Yeah. But sometime we got to take up one side of the month and just ask everyone to move it to the next side of the street.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Because I see the DYCD mob coming in, so we don't have to start wrapping it up.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Thank you so much.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Council Member Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

I have a question about Rikers. I go to Rikers a lot and I have been a foster parent and then now I have the migrant kids in my house, so I'm familiar with the crew. My question is, people coming out of Rikers or coming out from upstate, women in particular, are you in touch with the Department of Correction, because we all know that maybe the kids are in foster care, they really want to go back with their parents, they can't go back until they have a place to live, blah, blah, blah. I worry about that population. Because that population, I know well, you get mental health issues when your parents are incarcerated. So, do you have that kind of connection at all? Or is that something that you're focused on, either with Fortune Society, Correction, or anybody else?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: I just want to make sure we're clear. Are you asking about children in foster care whose parents are incarcerated?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Correct. And I'm also, it's not a big population, I don't know, 400 or

500 women at Rikers, but it is a population where young people can be damaged mentally if they don't get support.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: That's important to us, and I'll pass it.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: So, thank you for your question. ACS has a team, it's called CHIP, Children of Incarcerated Parents, and we work very closely with the foster care providers to ensure while children are in care and their parents are incarcerated throughout the state or even in the country, to facilitate visits, and that team also works closely with agencies because case planning should continue. And when parents are released and they're moving back into the area, if the goal remains reunification, there's an expectation that the agencies are supporting those families to assess and make a decision about safe and timely reunification.

To your question about a formal agreement or partnership, we don't have that at now, but we can definitely take that and look at that.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I would like to see… obviously, the new DOC Commissioner is phenomenal, known him for 40 years, and the fact of the matter is, I think he would be interested in it. We're trying to reduce the population. This would be one way to do it. You know the issues. I don't know if there's funding allocated to it. I don't know what the numbers are, but I'd love to see some data as to how many women could be reunited. You can know where this is going so that the families are in better shape, the women are in better shape and they get support. Is that something that you could get back to us on?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Number two would be…

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: I get in trouble when I say I'll take a look into that. So yes, I think so.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It's a really important population, and they're going to end up in recidivism if that issue is not addressed, in my opinion.

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: Well, and I'll remove her getting in trouble and say, yes, we'll absolutely follow up. And I look forward to meeting the Commissioner.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

Second issue quickly is between Fair Futures, a wonderful program, and the fact that True Colors and others are trying to deal with young people coming out of foster care, becoming adults, etc. So, what are the numbers on that? In other words, because we don't want people to end up in shelters. We (TIMER CHIME) want people to have a life after foster care. True Colors helps, others help. I just want to know what the numbers are. It says here in this question that there's money allocated toward coming out of foster care, etc. So, what are the numbers and how are we doing on that topic? Because there are people unfortunately in shelters who I don't think should be there.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: Agreed, absolutely. So, for Calendar Year 2024, we had 420 young people, non-permanency discharges. That number is down in Calendar Year 2025 to 383. We work very closely with the foster care providers who do a wonderful job engaging young people in preparing them for transition. So, there are independent living skills that are provided prior. We have our Fair Futures. We work very closely to understand and assess the child's needs post foster care. Will they need supportive housing? We work, you know, with HRA and HPD to make sure that we, if they need supportive housing, they can go there. We work closely with Anthos and we have CityFHEPS vouchers so young people get CityFHEPS vouchers.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Laura Lazarus, yes, keep going.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: And Anthos does aftercare. So, they help with the stabilization after because we know that once you just get your keys, there's more to maintaining an apartment.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm aware, I'm very aware.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: Fair Futures, I think you know, is up to 26. For those that decide to leave care prior to turning 21, we have a team called Supervision to 21 that does their best to track these young people, providing them supports, connecting them to services, and then if need be, we'll hold a conference to see if they need to come back. So, I say all that to say, we do try as much as possible to have a net around these individuals to support them so the organization that you mentioned, we'll make sure that our providers are aware to connect the young people to that organization and also the Center for Fair Futures as they're working with the coaches.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I guess my question would be not right now, but is there extra funding or are there extra resources despite all the amazing work that you, Fair Futures, Laura, and everybody else is doing? That would be my question. You always need more money, but in this case, this is a really, again, a really important move.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: I can take that back and look into that.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I would appreciate it. This population is recidivism if you don't address it now.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: Right. And that's why the partnership with Anthos is so critical because they provide that year of stabilization, and so we're hoping that that will continue.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know Laura very well.

So, 383 is what? What is that number? I'm sorry.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: So, that is the number of youth non-permanency discharges.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Not in…

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: Correct. Those are young people that left care, not to adoption, reunification, or kick out.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Ones who need help. Okay. Thank you very much.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you, Council Member Brewer.

I'm going to do a lightning round just because I know that there's a couple of folks who still want to ask a few questions.

I guess my first question is just around the preventative services contract. Have we notified that are being cut? Have we notified those providers in writing yet, and have they received the date of when those contracts will be ending? And if not, when will that be going out?

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: So, and I can be corrected. We have not notified in writing yet. I did have an opportunity to touch base with each of the organization's leadership yesterday, and we are waiting for kind of final approval on the budget, and then we'll move forward with written communication and then the timeline of the 90 days as stated earlier.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. Thank you.

The executive plan includes a budget headcount of 385 for protective services areas. How many vacancies are there currently in this program? I'm going to do a couple of questions. Were any vacancies in this program area limited as part of the Mayor's savings? If so, how many and why?

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: I'm going to turn that over to Deputy Commissioner Linares.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LINARES: Hi, again. So, we have the contract capacity for family support model, again, is 4,512. Know that that's about 44 percent of our total capacity, which is 10,637. In April, again, we had a total of 3,347 families that were participating in the services. So, we have over 1,000 contractors slot capacity to serve families in the family support programs. That doesn't account for the other programs that we have available in the boroughs. We do not anticipate that any of the families will be wait-listed.

And there's different reasons why there are some vacancies. So, we've taken steps to increase utilization. We have worked closely with DHS and NYCHA to make sure that we are in the community. We do things like Family Day and invite prevention providers to the table so that they can connect with families in an effort to make sure that their utilization is increased. Hence, I think we have, you can see an increase in our community referrals where we've gone up to about, from last year, the same time, about 20 percent.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: Were you also asking, sorry. Were you also asking about Child Protective?

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LINARES: Sorry. I misunderstood.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: It's okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: So, the plan doesn't have any new savings there. We currently have 191 vacancies in the Division of Child Protection. Our CPS, the actual Child Protective Specialist, budget position is 1,855, and there are 108 that are vacant.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: 108 that are vacant.

What is the typical timeline for frontline staff such as Child Protective Specialists? Does ACS perform its own background checks on candidates? If so, how long does it take? And if not, how does those background checks take place?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: There is a background check policy. It varies by position, what's required, and so it would vary how long it takes.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Do you have like an average?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: It's about six weeks.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Six weeks.

How does the onboarding typically take place and train a Child Protective Specialist? And what is the percentage of CPS candidates provided job offers actually complete the hiring process and onboarding? What difficulties has ACS faced in hiring those workers and what is ACS doing to address those issues?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LINARES: So, we have a very extensive training program for new CPS. They spend several months at the Satterwhite Academy, and that also includes, we have a simulation site where part of the job is practicing what it's like to go to court, what it's like to go to home, and then they go into a training unit in their offices where they have a small caseload and less complicated cases, and then they go back to training in the academy because they'll have had a better sense of what the job's like when they've done a few cases and they go back to the academy. So, it takes several months, and I think about 75, like about three-quarters complete, is that right? Sorry, closer to 70 percent, sorry.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Those are all the questions I have now. I still have a number of questions. We'll send them to you in writing because I know we are kind of pressed for time.

And so just want to just remind our Colleagues and you guys to try to be as succinct as possible because DYCD's in the other room waiting, please. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Thank you. Okay, round two.

We got Council Member Joseph followed by Council Member Schulman.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you, Chairs.

Just wanted to ask a quick question. How many young people we have at Crossroads and how many at Horizon? Real quick.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GINSBURG: 181 at Horizon, 186 at Crossroads.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: What is the capacity the facilities were built for?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GINSBURG: 245.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: 245. All right, so.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GINSBURG: Bedrooms.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Okay. We're going to hold that right there.

The City has a unique obligation for students in foster care who are under the City's care and custody and must do more to support their education including ensuring that they get to school in the first place. These are feasible options. Has ACS worked with New York City Public Schools to identify and implement a solution that allows students to get to school as soon as they are placed in foster care or change foster care homes as utilizing ACS vehicles?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: So, yes. So, in 2022, in October, November, we worked with New York City Public Schools, the foster care office and the transportation office and we released a reimbursement plan and guidelines around transportation. It outlined that as soon as children come into care, the school should be notified and then providers will be reimbursed. At the time, it was up to 200 dollars a day if they had to cover the transportation because the providers are the foster parent. And we've had that plan in place. We made some revisions, I believe, last school year and then New York City Public Schools, after some additional conversations and hearing from the community, increased the 200 dollars a day so that is a new facet so we're in the process of revising the transition plan and also have kind of extended who could apply. So, it's children that are going to school in the city or out of the city, and then I believe those that live out of the city that need to come into the city. And then also they will reimburse providers if they use other entities that have, there's other types of car service, which wasn't part of the original plan. So, we're in the process of revising the current policy, and so hopefully we'll have that online for the start of the next school year.

For children at the Children's Center, when you think about it, they are in ACS's custody. So, we are now responsible for getting them to, and all of the children are in our custody, but like they're in our house, if you will.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Right.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: So, we are responsible. We have an added interest to make sure they go to school. So, we use our ACS transportation and our Deputy Commissioner of Administration coordinates with the Children's Center team to make sure those cars are available and they have a plan and they get the children to school.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And the ones that are in agency service this fall, you will have a plan to make sure they get to and from school because they have the highest absenteeism rate entering into care.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: So, we're hoping that, and we'll reiterate with the foster care providers, we're hoping that with this revised policy, they're going to get reimbursed for more money per day. They'll be able to use other services like Kids Car that should (TIMER CHIME) increase the attendance and reduce the challenges that they've experienced.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Okay. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Council Member Schulman followed by Council Member Gutiérrez.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you. I have two questions.

One, are there currently any tools and data sharing agreements in place that make it easier for public school staff to understand student needs and support matching with prevention services?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LINARES: Hi. Thank you for that question. So, as you may know, because of social service laws, for prevention services, we need consent forms to get information about the education of the children so we don't have a data agreement where we can exchange data aggregately. However, if a provider is in need of specific information about a specific child, as long as they have a consent form, we are able to work with them and get them the information that they need. But unfortunately, because of service laws, we need a consent. So, there's been some conversations in terms of trying to figure out how to do that, but we will continue this conversation and try to figure out how to do it in a way that obviously keep the confidentiality of the family safe.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Great. No, keep us informed.

And the other is that should these cuts go through for the preventive services, I would like a briefing on how that's going to affect particularly the agency in my District.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LINARES: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: That's a yes? Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LINARES: Yeah, of course.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you very much.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Deputy Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Yes, I'm back.

So, back to the racial equity plans. So, AC has pledged to expand Fair Futures to provide justice-involved youth with coaches, housing specialists, and educational services. Given the reduction in funding in Fiscal 2026 through 2028 for Fair Futures that was included as a savings in the exec plan, does ACS still intend to achieve this expansion? Will any slots that were earmarked for the pledges in the racial equity plan be eliminated due to this reduction in funding? And how many additional youth does ACS hope to serve if it does expand the program? When can we expect to see this expansion and how will it be funded?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENDELL: We are continuing to expand Fair Futures, and it is in both on the juvenile justice side and on child welfare. The budget action slows the growth, but the growth by Fiscal 2029, we achieve the same end number of 5,400, which was the goal. When we get to Fiscal 2029, if we feel that's not sufficient, obviously we can have conversations about where to go from there.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Great.

And back to Council Member Joseph.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you.

Real quick. Two more questions. Over the past five years, how many youth have aged out of foster care annually and what percentage of those youth are enrolled in college?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: So, I don't have the past five year. I can give you, we had in Calendar Year 2024, 420 non-permanency discharges. So, those are youth leaving foster care. And in Calendar 2025, we had 383. So, I'll have to get the other information and then also crosswalk that with our College Choice data. We do know that when College Choice launched in 2022, we had 200 young people. And I believe the spring semester of 2026, we had 471 youth in college. But I will have to crosswalk the exits with who was in college at the time.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: No problem.

For students with foster care experience who did not complete college, what academic career re-engagement supports are available for them for re-enrollment or transition into employment pathways?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENDEZ: So, for young people that are in college specifically, we work very closely with New York Foundling. They do our college support services program and they provide, in addition to supporting around the financial issues, the wraparound academic advisement. So, for those that are going to be struggling, let's say they're on probation, they're providing additional support. If they do have to leave school, they still, if they're in care, still have their case planning team, they'll have their Fair Futures coach, and then we have a team at ACS. So, we do work to re-engage. There have been young people that have been in the College Choice Program, discontinued, and now are looking at our Career Choice Program, which launched this Fiscal Year. So maybe they're going to take a different path.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank you, Chairs.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Great.

Chair, do you have any more?

Okay. I think we are good.

So, thank you so much for joining us. We're just going to take a quick break.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Wait. How was it?

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Oh.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Were we nice? Are you okay? Did you survive?

COMMISSIONER JONES GASTON: It was great. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Just a reminder, everyone, please do not approach the dais, please do not approach the dais at any point.

No food or beverages are allowed in this room.

Please, quiet down. Please, find your seats. We are getting ready to begin. Please, find your seats.

Just a reminder, no one may approach the dais at any time, and no food or beverages are allowed in this room.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. I think we can go ahead and get started.

Okay. So, good afternoon, and welcome to today's second hearing about the FY27 Executive Budget, and I'm Council Member Linda Lee, and today we will hear from Department of Youth and Community Development, and I'm pleased to be joined again by my Colleague, Council Member and Chair Althea Stevens, and we have been joined by the Deputy Speaker, Council Member Maloney, Council Member Epstein, Council Member Wong, and Council Member Felder.

And welcome, Commissioner and your team, and thank you so much for joining us today to answer our questions. And I just want to note, it's really cool that the three of us have all this former non-profit experience, and I think there need to be more of us in government spaces, so I'll just say that. I will just say that.

So, on May 12th, 2026, the Administration released the Executive Financial Plan for FY26 through 2030 with a proposed Fiscal '27 budget of 124.7 billion. The Department of Youth and Community Development's proposed FY27 budget of 1.62 billion represents 1.3 percent of the Administration's proposed Fiscal '27 budget in the Executive Plan. This is a decrease of 14.2 million, or less than 1 percent from the 1.63 billion originally budgeted in the FY27 Preliminary Plan. This decrease results from several actions, including savings the agency found through elimination of certain consulting contracts, vacancy reduction, COLA adjustments, and underspending in community resources for employment and development, and the ONS programs. This was slightly offset by addition of funding to expand services for the Crisis Management System program and the supporting wraparound services.

As of April 26, DYCD's actual headcount of 626 is 71 less than their Fiscal '26 budgeted headcount of 697. In the Council's preliminary budget response, we called on the Mayor to add 14.2 million to DYCD's budget to invest in expense funding for programs related to runaway and homeless youth, peer navigators, and runaway homeless youth housing navigators. Although these requests were not included in the plan, we remain hopeful that today's hearing will give us the opportunity to discuss a path forward to secure funding for these programs.

And now I want to turn it over to my Co-Chair for the hearing, Chair Stevens.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Good afternoon, and welcome to our second half of the Fiscal 2027 executive budget hearing for the Department of Youth and Community Development. I am Council Member Althea Stevens, Chair of the Committee on Children and Youth.

Today, we will be hearing from DYCD, our new Commissioner, Sandra Escamilla-Davies, along with our First Deputy and our Financial Officers. Thank you for joining us today.

We're here to discuss the agency's recent release of executive plan, which includes a budget of 1.6 billion for Fiscal 2027. This funding includes 66.2 million in personnel services and support and a budget headcount of 704 positions and a total of 1.55 billion other than personnel. The current Fiscal 2027 budget is 105.3 million or 7 percent more than the Fiscal '26 adopted budget. However, DYCD's Fiscal 2027 budget decreased by 14.2 million from the 1.63 billion budgeted in the Fiscal 2027 preliminary financial plan. To note a few changes in the executive plan, there's an additional 14.8 million to expand services for the Crisis Management, CMS programs, and supporting wraparound services in Fiscal 2027. In Fiscal 2028, in the outer years, the plan includes a baseline funding of 19.6 million in the Office of Community Safety to further support the programs in the new office. A plan also added 8.8 million for the Office of Economic Opportunity Adjustments for the Advance and Earn program that helps train and employ young people ages 16 through

24. The plan also includes the savings agencies found to meet the targets set by the Office of Management and Budget. That included 6.3 million for over-budgeting in the Community Resources for Employment and Development, CRED, and ONS programs. A surplus cost of living adjustment resulting in 31 million after assessing that providers' distribution funding needed to provide the 3 percent increase for human service contract. I want to ensure that the COLA adjustment does not impact programming and provides adequate funding to the providers. I'm concerned that the executive plan includes baselined City fund savings of 3 million from the elimination of 27 vacant positions beginning in Fiscal 2026. Again, I want to ensure that actions don't impact programming for use.

The executive budget did not include Fiscal 2026 one-shot funding for RHY funding and peer navigators, which is something that I've been fighting consistently with to make sure that we're funding because we do not want to forget about our young people. I do hope the Administration will provide baselined funding in the adopted budget for the navigators because that was a program that we lost and then the Council brought back, and so we want to make sure that this is something that's critical because the young people and providers have said it's a critical service need. Our youth better relate to their peers. This gives them a sense of belonging and a sense of understanding. The housing navigators assess in navigating the young people through transition and a safe, dependable housing. The services for RHY youth does not stop at the door, but it begins at the door. I'm pleased that after 10 years, it was a long time, a new COMPASS RFP for elementary and middle school students was released, and I do appreciate the dedication and hard work by DYCD. I really want to give it up to you guys because everyone knows that I was so critical that they put this on you guys in the turnaround. So, it was done. I knew it was going to get done. I mean, Dan, you are a little grayer, I'm not going to lie, but you still look good. They aged you, I see it. But you guys worked really hard to get it done and work it through, and I'm really happy. However, you know, with new RFPs, there are always these mitigating factors that come in and including myself and everyone here and Council Member Williams just came to me and said she's also being spammed about the COMPASS RFP. We are getting so many calls about a lot of worried providers who have to fold as a result of the outcome of the deficit of services that they will be able to provide to the communities and I'm concerned. And I know as our new Commissioner comes in, she is being so thoughtful and having a perspective of a former provider of trying to figure out the best way forward and make sure that everyone is whole, including the providers. I think sometimes we talk about it as if the providers are not a workforce as well. And, you know, this Council has spent a lot of time and energy talking about the workforce, but for some reason we forget to keep fighting for human service workers, and I think that is just as important. And so, when we do these contracts, we have to, and I know you guys have been thoughtful, I think as a Council, we have to think about like, how do we protect them as well, and that's something that I'm dedicated and have been dedicated in doing.

There are other DYCD programs that are overdue for the RFP, like my new fight, the Beacons and Cornerstones. I want the agency to take this opportunity to further evaluate the COMPASS RFP, examine every process, every methodology, and matrix used to identify changes that can be made for the next RFP so that it has a fair and equitable process. And honestly, I think that if any, we probably need to get all the RFPs done while Sandra's here. I'm going to just say it because I just have a feeling that with that provider background, it'll look a lot different than this one did. So, I'm going to be pushing for a lot more RFPs just so we're clear, so we can have a nice, stable program so that when I'm gone, we'll be in good hands. And so, I'm excited about that, and so I'll be pushing for that.

Everyone here today in Fiscal 2027 executive budget hearing has a responsibility with the objective of providing the best services to the youth of the city. It is my expectation from DYCD you guys will be responsive to questions and concerns of the Council Members. It is my hope that Fiscal 2027 adopted budget meets the goals set forth by Council.

We want to ensure that every youth and adult program provides the essentials, necessities, including adequate funding to meet the everyday needs.

I would like to recognize… I've recognized most of my Staff already, but I want to recognize the Fiscal Staff, Sandra Gray, our Senior Fiscal Analyst, Aliya Ali, Assistant Director, and I don't see Aisha on here, but also Aisha, shout out to her because I've been driving her crazy as well.

So, with that, I will turn it over to Chair Lee.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Thank you.

And just as a reminder, really quickly, we're having all of our public testimony for all the agencies on Wednesday, June 10th, beginning at 9:30 a.m. So, Wednesday, June 10th, beginning at 9:30 a.m. is when we're having a long all day… we're going to have so much fun all day of public testimony hearings so please make sure to sign up for those.

We've also been joined by Council Member J. Sanchez. Everyone's going to start thinking your first name, his first name is Jay, Justin Sanchez, sorry, Council Member Restler, Council Member Wilson, welcome, our newest Council Member, and Council Member Joseph.

And with that, I'll turn it over to Committee Counsel to swear in the witnesses for their testimony.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good afternoon. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

Commissioner Escamilla Davies.

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Commissioner Haskell.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Commissioner Mulligan.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chief Financial Officer Bailey.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BAILEY: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chief Accountability Officer Cantelini.

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And Associate Commissioner Guillen.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin.

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens and Lee and Members of the Finance and Children and Youth Committee. I am Commissioner Sandra Escamilla-Davies, and I am joined by Chief Financial Officer Nevita Bailey and other DYC staff who are here and available to answer your questions today. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss DYCD's Fiscal Year 2027 executive budget.

Since becoming Commissioner, I have spent the past few, three months, listening and learning from staff, providers, and partners across the city. What has become clear is that DYCD is powered by extraordinary dedicated workforce and a provider network that continues to deliver critical services for children, youth, and families every day. As the agency has grown significantly over the years, both in scale and complexity, my team and I are taking a thoughtful look at how our internal infrastructures, staffing, operational systems, support that work. This includes examining areas such as procurement, contracting, payments, program operations, and performance management, so that DYCD can continue to operate in a way that is responsive, effective, and aligned with the evolving needs of New Yorkers. At the same time, we are engaging providers and community partners to better understand both operational challenges and opportunities for innovation across our programs and services. These conversations are helpful to inform how we strengthen and broaden the ecosystem that supports young people and families across this great city.

The executive budget presented today reflects Mayor Mamdani's vision for a more affordable, equitable, and safer New York City, and demonstrates a continued commitment to the children, youth, families, and communities that DYCD serves every day. Despite broader fiscal pressures facing the City, the budget protects DYCD's core programming and continues to invest in services and opportunities that support young people and strengthen communities across all five boroughs. DYCD proposed a series of savings totaling 10.9 million in the current Fiscal Year, 34.8 million next year, and 32.7 million in the outer years. This includes savings from conducting audit functions in-house, along with savings from readjustments to cost estimates. The budget stands at 1.619 billion compared to 1.633 billion in Fiscal 2027 preliminary budget, and the breakdown is as follows. 1.5 billion in tax levy funds, 105.4 million in federal funds, 18.4 million, or about 1.13 percent in state funding, and 5.2 million in intra-city funds.

These resources support a wide range of investments across the agency's portfolio. While not an exhaustive list, I want to highlight several key initiatives that reflect how these funds strengthen services for young people, families, and communities across the city.

First, I'll start with the COMPASS request for proposals. COMPASS is the nation's largest afterschool system serving elementary and middle school students across New York City through COMPASS Elementary and schools out New York City. The release of the COMPASS center-based and school-based awards marks the very first major re-procurement and modernization of afterschool contracts in more than a decade, and that is just so exciting. This investment reflects what families, schools, and providers have consistently called for, expanded access, stronger program, quality, workforce stability, and greater equity across the afterschool system.

For Fiscal Year 2027, the City committed to 727 million in COMPASS funding. This investment supports the additional 20,000 new elementary school seats over three school years and increased the price per participant rate to better support provider stability, staffing, and high-quality program for children and families. DYCD announced, and I want to highlight some of the things from this RFP, 121 center-based awards representing 7,840 seats, 806 school-based awards representing 95,841 seats, expansions into 71 new elementary schools across 32 high-need community districts, 8,621 additional citywide seats, and 52 new community-based organizations joining the COMPASS portfolio, including at least one in every borough. This RFP also introduced an updated program model designed to better reflect the evolving needs of young people and families, including strong expectations around social-emotional learning, career exploration and future readiness, expanded inclusion supports, enhanced program quality standards, and greater alignment between the after-school programming and broader youth development goals. The increased investment in COMPASS represents an investment in stability for the sector by supporting stronger staffing structures, better wages, more sustainable programs, models, and expanding access for children and families across New York City. We are proud of this expanded access, strengthening program models, and new investments reflected in these awards. It really is noteworthy. Yet at the same time, I want to recognize that there were providers who were not awarded contracts through this process. For some organizations, this transition may have significant financial and operational impacts, particularly for providers that have served children, families, and school communities for many years. We do not take that lightly. I do not take that lightly. Those contributions, relationships, and years of service are meaningful and worthy of recognition and respect. And yet it is also true that this was a competitive procurement process guided by clearly defined evaluation criteria, including program quality, organizational capacity, and operational readiness. In partnership with New York City Public Schools, the process also incorporated principal input for school-based programs. As implementation moves forward, we are committed to focus on supporting thoughtful transitions, maintaining continuity for young people and families, and working closely with schools, outgoing providers, incoming providers, and communities to help open strong in the fall.

The second program that I want to highlight is Summer Rising. The Summer Rising 2026 application portal opened on March 3rd and closed on March 27, during which time more than 150,000 applications were submitted by families across New York City. Using a data-driven understanding of enrollment, patterns, and demand, the City extended approximately 127,000 offers to families, and this is an increase of 3,500 offers compared to last summer.

Available seats will continue to be offered to families throughout the summer. To support expanded access, New York City Public Schools opened 19 additional buildings, bringing the total of Summer Rising sites citywide to 379. DYCD and New York City Public Schools continue to work closely together to strengthen and expand high-quality summer enrichment opportunities for young people. This includes deeper collaboration between principals and community-based organization, strengthening supports for students with disability, and enhancing program opportunities, such as field trips, enhanced activities, and career exploration.

The next program I'd like to highlight is Runaway Homeless Youth. We are so thankful for the early Mayoral commitment to continue the critical role of housing navigation, peer navigators, and financial coaches as part of the services offered youth in our RHY drop-in center in FY27. The budget process is ongoing, but we are pleased that the City recognizes the importance of these supports for Runaway Homeless Youth, and providers have the opportunity now to better plan the delivery of service for the upcoming Fiscal Year.

We're in the thick of summer youth employment. Mayor Mamdani officially launched the 2026 Summer Youth Employment on January 20th, marking the earliest application opening in program's history. This program received a record 230,000 applications from young people across New York City. Funded at 246 million, SYP will once again serve more than 100,000 youth this summer through paid work experiences, career exploration, skill building, and supportive opportunities. As one of the nation's largest youth employment programs, SYP continues to be a critical pathway to economic opportunity and future readiness for young New Yorkers. And this year, DYCD is expanding career ready programs to 260 schools, up from 230 in 2025, while continuing high school credit and Career Ready CUNY Reach, so that more students can earn high school or college credit through participation. The program also continues to prioritize young people facing barriers to employment, including NYCHA residents and youth living in priority precinct communities. In addition, DYCD is continuing initiatives launched in previous years, including SYP Pride, in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice and the New York City Commission on Human Rights, which offers providers and employers training, supportive work experience, and professional development opportunities for participants.

And finally, the Fatherhood Program. To date, DYCD Fatherhood Program has engaged more than 500 fathers, supporting them as they navigate co-parenting, custody, and other complex family challenges, while strengthening parent skills, family stability, and long-term father engagement. Through workshops, trainings, and supportive resources, these programs help fathers build connections with their children, families, and communities. Last month, DYCD hosted its second annual Fatherhood Policy Symposium, convening more than 100 leaders from government, academia, and community organizations to highlight the critical role fathers play in well-being of children and families, and to advance father-friendly policies and practices across the city. On June 25th, DYCD will host its fifth annual Affirming Father

Convening at John Jay College of Criminal Justice to further elevate the importance of father engagement, leadership, and community connection, while continuing conversations about how systems and institutions can better support fathers and family across New York City.

And if I had more time, I would tout all of the other wonderful programs that this investment will yield for us, as well as this extraordinary staff that I have behind me and working on the field right now that are doing everything they can to provide quality support to the network of providers that serve young people every day.

Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss the Fiscal 2027 executive budget, and we're looking forward to answering any questions you may have.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Great. Thank you.

We've also been joined by Council Member Brooks-Powers, and I'm just going to dive right… Council Member Wong. Oh, wait, I think I said it the first time, sorry. Here we go.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: You can say my name again.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Sure. Council Member Felder. Such a riot.

Okay. So, I'm going to just dive right in so I can pass it off to my Colleagues. For DYCD's FY27 budget in the executive plan, when comparing FY27 budget in the executive plan to FY26 adopted budget, we see that there's a reduction of 107.6 million in community development programs, of which 103.9 million is contractual services. So, why is there a reduction in contractual services for community development programs and also what is the reason for the reduction of 1.6 million in full-time salary positions?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BAILEY: Good morning, Chair Lee. Nice to see you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Nice to see you.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BAILEY: So, the original reduction that you're referencing regarding is within the City portfolio and that's adult literacy and that may be attributed to the one-time funding that we get annually for that portfolio, the restoration.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. And then was the funding moved to other programs?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BAILEY: No. Because it's a one-time restoration that we typically get from the Council for the adult literacy portfolio.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Oh, it's one-shot. Yeah. Okay. Got it.

And then in terms of the vacancy reduction, a reduction of three million in FY26 to FY30 for a headcount of 27 in each Fiscal Year. Which programs will see a headcount reduction and what is the amount for each?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BAILEY: At this time, we have not identified the locations where we'll have the reductions. We were just notified of it and as you know, the agency has all their hands full with the implementation of these new initiatives and so we intend to, in short order, start to look at where we will apply these reductions.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. If you could keep us updated on that, that'd be awesome.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BAILEY: Sure.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: And is this just a reduced vacancy for each of the programs? If so, what is the remaining vacancy for each of the programs and the overall percentage? I know you're still working this out but just some of the questions in terms of the alignment of where we're going. And then also will this headcount reduction impact services provided by the agency? Hopefully the answer is no.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BAILEY: The answer is no. Ultimately, as the Commissioner has indicated in our first hearing, she's doing an assessment of the organization and so at this time, we have not necessarily identified the total impact of it, but the ultimate goal is to ensure that there's no disruption to services and so we are confident that with the remaining vacancies that we have and our existing staff, that we'll do our best to make sure that you do appropriate oversight in the program areas and ensure contracts are registered and paid.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Perfect.

And what other savings, if any, were identified in the executive budget due to the Mayor's Executive 12 Order?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BAILEY: Sure. And so as part of the Executive 12 Order, we looked at new organization to see where we can find efficiencies and how funding is utilized, and we identified surplus as well as unobligated funding in a number of program areas and with that, we submitted that and that was accepted and as a result, we did not do any service cuts for any of our programs and so we were just prioritizing that.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. And then just really quickly moving over to COMPASS because I know you all have been putting a lot of effort into the new RFPs and I have to say, I did my first year of social work degree at a Beacon program so I just want to plus one to what you're saying. But I know you said there was 727 million total for the RFPs and so what's the breakdown with the school-based versus the center-based budgets?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BAILEY: I don't have that offhand. I can get back to you on that. I don't want to give you wrong information but I can get that to you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Perfect.

And now that you have provided the list of new providers who will be entering the COMPASS system, does the agency feel there's enough time to process the contracts by the beginning of the FY27 school year? I know that's a challenge that you guys are trying to push through so just wondering if you could speak to that.

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: Thank you for the question. We are committed to ensuring that the contracts are registered on time. We have a team that's dedicated to moving with the providers. We've had sessions with the providers to ensure that they are clear on the documents that are needed. We're working very closely with MOCS as well as the Comptroller's Office to expedite registration. We also know that the timeline is very, very tight, and we're planning to, you know, the biggest thing for providers is cash flow so we are making sure that we have a plan in place for those that may not be registered on time. So, we are definitely committed to getting them registered as quickly as possible.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. You have to include OMB in that conversation too and the Comptroller's Office because we have to get those contracts registered quickly.

And what is the target date for completing the new contracts and does the agency foresee any obstacles in meeting the target date? I know you just mentioned some of those things, but what's like the final sort of deadline that you guys are hoping to complete?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BAILEY: So, currently for our timely registration, we have about at least 50 percent of our contracts already in our PACE department for registration. For COMPASS, for center-based, about 30 percent are already getting processed. So, we're confident that we're moving forward. And in the next week or so, our school-based awardees will start getting their contracts in the next couple of weeks. So, we're doing what we can, and we're hopeful that by a month or so all the providers will have their contracts and we'll be moving forward.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Great.

And what was the final number of applications received for both the center-based and the school-based providers?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BAILEY: I'm going to defer to our youth service team to provide that information.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: And then sort of the second part to that question which I'll just ask is what percentage of the center-based providers who submitted an application received an award? So, the first part is just total number of applications received for both.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Thank you, Chair. I think it was roughly 209 center-based proposals. Forgive me if I'm a little off. And we had proposals from roughly 3,500 if you consider each of the individual schools. Because we had a community district competition, it was many fewer than that, and we can get back to you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. So, 209. And then how many of those that submitted were awarded for the center-based?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: 121.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Right, 121, okay, out of the 209. Okay.

And what percentage of school-based providers received an award? So, 3,500 applicants, and then it was, sorry, what was the number?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We made 806 awards in the school-based competition.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Yes. And then there were, as you said, 3,500 that applied, right?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: 3,500 individual school proposals, but many fewer if we count them by the community district proposals.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay.

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: Just to add, sorry, for school-based it was 228 unique providers that applied. 147 were awarded.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: For school-based?

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: For school-based.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Thank you.

And then what was the criteria used to score the COMPASS RFP applicants and what was deemed as an unviable score?

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: So, the criteria was organizational experience, service requirement, staffing, community partnership, approach, and budget. Those were the criteria that we looked at, and the minimum score was a 70.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Minimum was 70, okay. Okay. I know there's going to be a lot more questions on that, so I will leave it to my Colleagues.

Chair Stevens.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I will jump right into it, and I know we are kind of pressed for time, so I just ask that the answers be succinct because we want to make sure we get to as many people.

So, I'll stay with the COMPASS theme and just kind of just thinking about just the impact of like organizations and, as we know, these decisions aren't being made easily for you guys, but just thinking about because of this RFP, we know that some of these organizations that didn't get contracts, this is actually going to be a huge impact on their agencies and so I wanted to know how is the agency responding? How are you guys responding to the providers? What supports have you been giving them? What has this transition been looking like, especially for those we know that it's going to have big impacts where they didn't get any awards?

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: So, we're in the protest phase for the school base, but so I'm going to speak more generally. First, I want to say that the non-awardees, I want to acknowledge that they have financial and operational impacts that are going to force them to make really difficult decisions and we don't take that lightly and, as I mentioned before, this was a procurement process that followed all of the guidelines of procurement law and yet we are going to try to stand in the gap for these providers. We're conducting briefings for them. We've extended based on their feedback, the protest period so that everybody can get a briefing before the date, before they send a protest letter, but also we are trying to figure out about having conversations about what this is going to look like and if there are other things that we could do to support them and then really leaning into the transition periods and figuring out what does transition look like from summer to September? How do we help transition providers in ways that hold their dignity intact while entering new providers and making the way for good providers to also stand in that gap and support children, youth, and families?

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

And just even thinking about the summer because I know you brought up summer. So, as we're thinking about Summer Rising, just going to record again, everybody knows I don't like that program. Anyway, I just always have to say it. But anyway, wanting to think about the providers who would be running and operating Summer Rising and then not having a host site going back and moving forward. What's the plan around that? Does DYCD plan to support those providers who programs are closing out like right after that and also just kind of considering what the morale for some of these programs is going to be for this summer and closing out?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Thank you, Chair. It's a good question because there's two parts to this, right? There is the contracting closeout process, but we want to make this process as humane as possible. So, our teams will be coordinating with those CBOs to have conversations on the process itself from the contracting side, from the financial side, and also that transition between CBO to CBO, coordinating transition convenings between CBOs, connecting with school leaders and community to, again, really emphasize, this is not just about the contractors, it's about the people on the site as well.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Could you talk to me a little bit about what the transition processes look like? I know, that's one of my biggest things, like how are we working with organizations on this transition process and what is that going to look like, you know, especially where, you know, there's cases where they might not have gotten that site, but they have another site. And so, yes, we would love for those folks who work in the program to stay, but some people are going to go to the new sites. And I just think this reshuffling is going to cause a little bit of a chaos. And so, just trying to understand how are we preparing not only the providers, but schools and families around this transition and what it's going to look like. Do we have like documents? Are we like working on like toolkits? And then also, how will we be involving the Council Members? So, I know a lot of them are already getting a lot of calls and pushback and want to make sure that the local Council Members are a part of those conversations with these transition processes.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: So, that's a great segue because part of this process is a real coordinated effort between all those stakeholders for, again, the best transition as possible because the timeline is difficult and there's a lot of concerns about incoming change, right? So, the first part is there's core components of the plan that focus on transition meetings between all the different stakeholders, knowledge transfer.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Have the transition meetings already start to take place?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Yeah, starting to take place, right? You know, also keeping in mind that we are in the protest and appeal period, right, so trying to make sure that we're coordinating all those engagements as well as being thoughtful about them in that process and in a respectful way, thinking about what staff retention may look like, connecting with the school leaders, family and school communication and coordinating with New York City Public Schools centrally and doing district level engagement and principal level engagement because some instances, it's a good change that they're really anticipating for and have been working for a long time towards and then what our role is really kind of that central point to lift and escalate if there are some challenging conversations along the way and what we'll be tracking along that path. So, one thing that we already started is engaging with those new CBOs and welcoming them in and really thinking about readiness check. Where are they as an organization? Where are they in terms of the staffing supports, coordination, what types of activities they're looking towards doing, connecting them with the school leaders so every single principal as part of the announcement was provided who the CBO was and the contact information and coordinating with public schools where there are some instances where there's some disconnect. So, that's what we want to ensure throughout the…

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And I know it is a fast turnaround time but again, I just want to make sure that we are tapping in the local Council Members to be a part of those conversations so we could all be on the same page because it starts to get disconjointed when you have parents reaching out and the schools and all these things so I want to make sure that local Council Members are part of the conversations and being brought in to be as supportive as possible with these transitions because I think, you know, a lot of folks are not happy and, you know, we are in a place where some of these decisions are final and so thinking about how do we work together to get not only the communities acclimated but also the Council Member with some of these new organizations that will be coming into their communities.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: This is a community effort so all stakeholders involved. You know, we'll definitely be connecting with you guys and if there's any questions or flags.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, absolutely.

So, according to the After-School Expansion Plan, 5,000 additional conference slots will be added in fall 2027 or Fiscal 2028 in addition to the slots added in this RFP. How will you determine where those slots will be located? What is the timeline to determining providers and beginning those slots?

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: We're in the process of making strategic decisions about how to leverage that those slots, specifically to continue to stabilize the ecosystem and strengthening it as well.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Will there be an impact on providers who are currently providing after school program services? So, thinking about… as you're thinking about those expansions and even thinking about some of the mitigating factors now, how are we looking to leverage some of the losses that we have now like moving forward? Is there going to be another RFP? Like what does that look like?

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: I would say we are going to move in ways that honor the current procurement process but also that we are going to be opportunistic about ways to leverage the current slots or the future slots in ways that help to mitigate some of the impact.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Post-award announcement, there is a 10-day appeal process with a submission date of April 24th for the center-based providers that may not have been viable to receive awards. Has there been any changes in this appeal process?

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: We extended the appeal process I believe by two weeks in order to have providers be able to receive a briefing before they made their appeal.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And I know with like the community-based, it's a little different than it is for the school-based. And one of my biggest issues with the community-based was that we were going to be closing programs. And in a time where we are seeing young people having lack of programs, I'm like, well, why would we be closing any programs? So, can we talk about what that process was? And I know you guys have been really thoughtful like thinking about creative ways of like trying to work with different providers, but especially with community-based, I think in a moment of trying to close any center in this moment sounds crazy to me, especially going into the summer. So, I'm just trying to get a better understanding of where we are with that and how do we move forward.

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: We're in the process of looking at the impact and making strategic decisions about how we move forward. Because we're in the process of investigating that right now and looking into it deeply, I don't have a formal strategy to share right now.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. Has there been any additional funding for OMB to fill the gaps for these community centers?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BAILEY: I think there we're in ongoing conversations that the Commissioner just mentioned, recognizing the impact of the most recent awards, and we are looking into how we can appropriately respond to the concerns of all stakeholders. And so we're in ongoing conversations with OMB.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. I'll join those ongoing conversations because again, I just want to just say like, you know, community-based, everybody knows community-based programs has a special place in my heart and that's because they do a different type of work. And the same students that show up at a school-based program typically does not show up at a community center, and those are a lot of times are the kids we need to be reaching, right, and the community center staff are the ones that are typically from the community, out on the ground and in there. And so for me in this moment, these community-based programs has to be a priority. And that has been one of the biggest things that I've been pushing for. And I think like, as we're thinking about where we need to save and I understand that savings, we cannot do it on the back of young people, and that is one thing that I'm just not okay with. And I've been saying this, my theme today is like, if we're going to have an affordable city, it needs to be affordable for young people. And these are the things that we need, especially when we had ACS before you guys and we have 362 young people in secure detention currently, and that is abysmal because when I got into office, we were at 150, and so those numbers have tripled at this point. And closing community centers just does not sound like that is something we should be doing in this moment. So, I'm going to continue to advocate and push because community-based programs need to be open and we should be expanding that work and not closing any programs.

So, I have a couple of questions about the appeal process for the school-based providers. Is the appeal process the same for the school-based providers, if they were not deemed viable, is it still 10 days as well for them as well?

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: Yes. So, anyone that was not selected for an award, whether center-based or school-based has the right to appeal.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And it's the same process as well? And was there an extension for them as well?

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: For center-based, there wasn't an extension. For the school-based, we gave the extension due to volume.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And a question even around the contracts, has every contract been awarded already?

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: So, for school-based, the majority of the contracts were awarded. There were 12 schools right now that currently were not awarded that we're working on getting.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And what does that process look like and why weren't they awarded?

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: So, within that competition, there was either no viable proposal or no one was submitted a proposal for that particular school so we're right now in conversations to finalize the plan for the 12.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And so what does that plan look like and how is that going to work? Is it going to go back out to procurement? Are we looking at some of the providers that are already in the pool? I'm just trying to get an understanding of how do we then, like what does the mitigation for that look like?

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: It's still under review for consideration because our ultimate priority is to ensure that services are happening for the fall and we want to make sure that there's no lapse so we are looking to see what's the best interest of the city to get services started in the fall.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. I just want to go on record for saying there was a lot of providers who got multiple contracts. And so if they are the people getting additional contracts, I'm going to be upset because I think capacity is one of the things that, you know, we know that a lot of these folks will say they have the capacity and then when it's time to produce, it starts to get watered down so I want us to really look at some of these groups who might not have been able to get awarded because there was a lot of competition in certain areas and things like that to kind of mitigate that. But thinking about capacity and being able to, trying to keep some of these providers whole should, and I would like to see that be a priority.

How's the agency assessing providers who do not have school-age childcare licenses? Because that's another question, especially for the new providers that's coming in, that's going to be in these places. One of the things I was showing y'all about when the RFP came out was just like, are we giving additional supports to DOHMH? Because they are a huge part in this process that we kind of forget about. And so, I'm trying to understand, especially with these new programs coming in, how do we expect to get all these people cleared? Because even if you were cleared at another site, you have to do the process over. And with the SAC requirements, I'm really concerned about folks being able to start and being able to get up and going by, what is it, August? What is it?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: September.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: September.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Yeah. Thank you, Chair. That's a great question.

At the start of the RFP planning process, we've been in full engagement with DOHMH and New York City Public Schools because there's a whole coordinated process that happens behind the scenes outside of the application process, which includes inspections, the facilities itself. So, we wanted to really focus on the more trouble spots areas and then on the application side, work with those new and existing CBOs to ensure that they are fully understanding the process itself, that we have support and technical assistance that we can provide on our end as well. What's been great is that there's only a small subset of these programs starting in the fall that actually require a new license itself. So we're…

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Right now, we're looking at just over 200. So, that's a share… Again, it's also…

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You said 200 like it was like 10.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: But let's be clear, 200 out of the total 900-plus programs we have, we've done this in the past when we did the Sonic expansion.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And I was there and it was not smooth.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: It was…

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: It was not smooth.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Smoother.CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I was there. It was not smooth and it was a mess.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: And you're 100 percent correct on that. And what's been great since then is that there actually is an online portal, right? We had to go from paper-based to online since then so there's been a lot of progress since then.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And there's a lot of hiccups in there too. You know I know the process.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: And that is the process of what we do here at DYCD to make sure that we can make those troublesome spots as comfortable as possible, right? I think this is an opportunity for us to really think about these processes across multiple agencies and how we're tracking them and ensuring that we are escalating. As we speak right now, we have these teams coordinating and meeting to discuss where additional supports are going to be needed, really coordinating with public schools and identifying the classrooms so DOH can go out and do the inspections in a quick manner and engaging with CBOs that still need support in that process.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Is there a contingency plan if they are not able to get their SAC license and up and running?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Yes. There will be plans in place to ensure…

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, you have that plan already? Okay. So, you'll share that with me?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Yes.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: All right. Great.

Can the agency provide the City Council with a list of current school-based providers who did not get an award, a new RFP, a list of school-based programs who did not get awarded the new RFP with the old funded amount lines, a list of non-viable center-based providers, and a list of DYCD funding groups for both center-based and school-based awards and their amounts? You don't have to go through it. If you guys can just get that to us.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Yes. We can provide that.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. I have a lot of questions, but I'm going to pass it off. I do. I didn't even get to any of the other sections, so I'll be back. So, thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: She will be back for round two.

Okay. So, we're going to move to Council Member questions. Council Member Maloney followed by Deputy Speaker.

COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: Thank you.

On behalf of countless parents and principals across my District, and you're going to be hearing from other Districts in Manhattan, I have concerns about the new COMPASS RFP, and in particular Manhattan Youth, which was discontinued at some schools, but not all schools, with limited transparency about why, and limited engagement with the parents and the principals on the ground, to Council Member Stevens' point earlier. This is a program that had a 94 percent attendance rate, positive audits, and was recommended first by many principals. So, the question is, why were they deemed insufficient? And if their program truly was insufficient, then why were they awarded for some contracts and not others, including a case where there's a co-located school, where Manhattan Youth was awarded for one school and not the other?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BAILEY: I want to say that… you know, I want to speak more broadly about the selection process, and I'm going to hand it over to Dana. But I do want to talk about this in terms of transparency and the narratives that are out there. This was a procurement process that was highly transparent. The concept paper was co-developed by the field, and in any procurement, there are winners and non-winners, and my heart goes out to all of the agencies that were not awarded. But I am really proud of the rigorous process that we engaged in, and the level of care that DYCD took in making these awards. I want to speak about that, but I also want to give you the technical answer, which I'm going to hand over to Dana. And I also want to say that every single competition in every single region was competing with other providers, and so they were ranked in that geographical area accordingly. So, there were some providers that, in some areas, they were awarded their specific… they were re-awarded, and in other areas, they were not. And I can tell you, on the provider side, as someone who's been a provider, that is devastating, and yet it is part of the procurement process. I think the thing I want to highlight, because this has not been procured for over 10 years, there is a sense of ownership that I think is really felt in terms of relationships, in terms of continuity, and yet what we know to be true is that procurement is necessary because it allows for innovation, for equity, and for accountability. So, I think more than one thing could be true about this process, but again, I share the deep empathy and regard for the staff, for the families, and the children, youth, that are going to have a new provider. But I'm also really excited about the providers that were selected that are high quality, high caliber, and that offer really great services.

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: Thank you, Commissioner.

To add, I definitely want to push back a little on the fact that the procurement wasn't transparent. It was extremely transparent. We had made selections based on a basis for award where there was criteria outlined on how we were making the awards. In the case of Manhattan Youth, they did apply to multiple competitions, and each competition is handled on its own merit. So, you could have one school, which was considered a competition, be more competitive than others, and we made selections based on where scores, ranking, provider diversity. There were many areas that we looked at when making those selections, but it stood behind the basis for award that was released in the RFP, and that was a procurement document that was made public. (TIMER CHIME)

COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: Can I ask one more question?

You shared what the technical factors are that you were looking at. One of them was around budget. Can you share more details on how Manhattan Youth scored against those criteria?

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: At this time, we can't give specifics because we are in the protest period.

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: And also, they will be awarded a briefing, so they will get not only their scores and how they fared in relationship to other people, but they will get also specific feedback on their RFP of areas that were highlighted by the evaluator.

COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: And are there instances where a school and a principal did rank Manhattan Youth as excellent, and it was still not awarded again? And if that's the case, there's a process where the principals on the ground are being overruled in a closed-door process, if you could speak to that.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BAILEY: It wasn't a closed-door process. It was actually a transparent process that was guided by a contribution that was made by the principal. So, principals' selections was weighed, but the primary selections, as Dana mentioned, were the RFP, and so I'm proud to say that over 80 percent of principals got their first or second award. And with principals that did not get their first ranking, we're going to be working to help that transition on the ground to really think about ways to be a bridge and to make sure that they are centering this choice around children, youth, and families.

COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: And my last question, I know I'm out of time here, is if there's a chance to re-evaluate these decisions, and we're signing up for a six-year RFP, so if these programs are not meeting the needs of the community, for example, in this case, there are scopes of services like sports, arts, or academic enrichment that the prior provider did offer that the new provider does not, which can be very disruptive for the youth and the families, and that's who I'm representing today, what's the recourse on the line?

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: I want to say two things. The first is that I know how resilient young people are and how adaptable they are to change. And I also know how responsive providers are to children, youth, and families and how they will tailor their services to meet the needs of young people. Yes, it is a new process. Yes, there will be an on-ramp. But I believe that at the end of this, that there will be responsive services that center young people. And yet, if they do not, like any other process at DYCD, we will take the necessary course of action.

COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: Thank you very much.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Just really quickly, I know you guys said that you're going to be doing a briefing with the providers and a debrief around the folks who are unviable. Can you please make sure you share the information with us and also let us know when that is happening so we can possibly participate and support? Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Great. Okay. Deputy Speaker followed by Council Member Epstein.

COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: Thank you, Chair.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Oh, wait. Oh, Deputy Speaker first followed by, sorry.

DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Thank you. Thanks. Hi.

I'm going to ask some questions about the racial equity plans. Recently, the Administration released the preliminary report on the plan. The plan included input from many City agencies, including your own. Could you just share with us if any of the goals that you have identified have any budgetary actions?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth before this Committee and respond honestly to Council Member questions?

CHIEF EQUITY AND INCLUSION OFFICER RAMIREZ: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin.

CHIEF EQUITY AND INCLUSION OFFICER RAMIREZ: Good afternoon. I'm Denise Ramirez, and I serve as the Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer here at DYCD.

Yes. There are budget implications for our goals and our strategies, but the way we've approached this is to incorporate it into our operations. We have a goal on capacity building that's part of the budget for this year. We have the equity methodology, which will be integrated into the RFPs as we move forward. So, it is integrated into how we approach the work.

DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Thank you. I'm happy you mentioned the methodology.

So, in 2021, you begin developing an equitable investment methodology that prioritizes communities with the highest concentrations of poverty. However, the City's Racial Equity Plan states that this methodology will not be fully applied to all City tax levy funded programs until 2034. Why will it take more than a decade to fully implement this approach and what barriers are preventing faster implementation?

CHIEF EQUITY AND INCLUSION OFFICER RAMIREZ: The timeline of 2034 is to align with what we expect to be the cycle of RFPs coming online. I will say, I think the hurdles are what we've been talking about is anytime that we are implementing change, it will take time to iterate, adapt, and integrate the methodology. So, it's part of the process.

DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: I just think that's very long to do, especially considering you guys started this in 2021.

So, one of your long-term goals is to apply this investment methodology to 100 percent of the funded programs. What percentage of the City tax levy funded programs currently use this methodology?

CHIEF EQUITY AND INCLUSION OFFICER RAMIREZ: It was applied to the Literacy RFP in 2024, and an equity approach was applied to the COMPASS RFP so those are the two so far.

DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Can you explain how this methodology weighs poverty data, demographic data, community violence indicators, and (TIMER CHIME) existing service gaps when allocating program slots?

CHIEF EQUITY AND INCLUSION OFFICER RAMIREZ: The primary driver for the methodology is poverty, looking at poverty data.

DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: So, you don't use any other metrics of data, only poverty?

CHIEF EQUITY AND INCLUSION OFFICER RAMIREZ: It's the driver. So, poverty makes up at least 70 percent. In some cases, like the literacy RFP, we took into account the program-specific needs. So, looking at data on limited English proficiency or looking at data on adults without a high school diploma. So, we will look at other factors, but poverty is the primary driver.

DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: But when do you look at other factors?

CHIEF EQUITY AND INCLUSION OFFICER RAMIREZ: Yes, yes.

DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: No, but I'm saying when. When do you say, let's look at other factors?

CHIEF EQUITY AND INCLUSION OFFICER RAMIREZ: As part of the process. So, in the COMPASS RFP, we looked at students with disabilities, students in temporary housing. We looked at English language learners. So, as part of that process, we also looked at the priority precincts with the highest levels of gun violence. So, as part of that process, we will look at that.

DEPUTY SPEAKER WILLIAMS: Okay. So, you do look at other data metrics, but primarily poverty.

Okay. And just the last question, will DYCD publicly release the methodology and underlying data used to determine which neighborhoods receive priority investments?

CHIEF EQUITY AND INCLUSION OFFICER RAMIREZ: So, one of the strategies that we included in this long-term goal is to conduct outreach and engagement to get input on the methodology. So, as part of that process, we will be sharing as we do that outreach, sharing what's been done and soliciting feedback.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Yes. Okay. Thank you.

Council Member Epstein followed by Council Member Joseph.

COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: Hi. Good afternoon, Commissioner.

So, I just want to first focus on center-based providers that lost their funding. I know we've talked a lot about this, especially Henry

Street in my District. It's got 150-year history providing services as a Boys and Girls Republic Center that now, how are we going to make them whole to ensure families who have been relying on that place for decades are going to be able to have services for their children there?

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: We're in the process of evaluating a strategy to really think about strengthening stability and continuity, and so we're in the thick of that.

COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: So, what's our timeline to get for them to hear back from you?

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: I believe that the protesting period ends June 4th. Yeah, June 4th, and everybody gets a briefing, so thereafter, we hope to be able to identify kind of some next steps.

COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: Yeah. Because they have staff, and so they have staffing needs, and they're making some decisions. We need to be able to do that. And then families also have to make decisions based on that as well.

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: Yeah. Absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: So, you think soon after June 5th, you'll be able to get back to them?

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: Absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: Yeah. And just on the other providers, the school-based providers, I want to follow up with Council Member Maloney. In some of these determinations, how much did family input play into this factor? How much did principal input play in? How much did services, like someone has a sports program, someone doesn't have a sports program, like all those factors cost, how are these all factored in? Because from the families that we're hearing, and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of families, they were very happy with the provider. And I understand that you went through a process, and I respect that, but it feels like they're not feeling like their input has been heard.

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: Yeah. Dana, would you like to?

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: So, as part of the procurement process, the principals did have an opportunity to weigh in through their ranking. And when we made those selections, we did take other factors into consideration. The parents at the time of the RFP, that was not taken into consideration. However, that will be done as part of the school partnership agreement process when we're bringing the new providers in. That's when the opportunity for the parents to speak about what programming they want to ensure that the new provider is providing.

COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: I appreciate that, but I'm not sure why after the fact you would take parents' consideration in, like why not have that involved in the application process, and parent engagement, and are they happy? I appreciate the principals and the three schools that lost Manhattan youth in my District all rated, ranked them as number one. So, they've already said they want them to continue. The parents said they want them to continue, but not really listening to the parents.

And the second question I'll ask, because I know I'm almost out of time is, are you committed to coming out to the school to talk to parents, or your team will be? We'd like to be able to get that set up before the end of the school year. I want to make a commitment now to make sure that happens in the next couple weeks.

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: I'm committed to speak to whoever wants to speak to me about this process.

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: Yeah. I also just want to add, in terms of parent engagement, also, prior to the RFP being released as part of our stakeholder engagement, we did engage families to build that new COMPASS model that made it into the RFP. So, parents were engaged before, but during the actual RFP process, it was really between the school principals and DYCD.

COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: And I'll just say, I think that's a mistake, honestly. I think parents are the recipients of these services, and they're the ones best to judge beyond the paper what happens day-to-day in those schools, and I think taking their consideration out of the mix as an instrumental part of what we're doing, I think, unfortunately, was a mistake. And I think it'll have some consequences in our District, and we're hearing directly from it so I would love to figure that out, and I appreciate your willingness to come talk to parents and to hear directly from them, but also hearing directly from the community about the jobs and the staffing and making sure people who are working for Manhattan Youth, maybe they can either stay on with a new provider or whatever we can do to fix this problem. We really do need to fix it.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I just wanted to add something to that, to the principal engagement and to how extensively through this process the superintendents were involved and the principals were involved. But where we are right now, having just announced these awards and finalizing the protest period is precisely the time when families and young people and principals and superintendents can express what it is that they love about their current provider and how those programs and services could be implemented in the fall, what they haven't had that they'd like to see. We love at DYCD, you won't get any arguments, when a school community loves their afterschool provider, that is like the best thing for us, and we really appreciate the advocacy. If that energy could be brought to help plan and coordinate with the new provider, this is what our kids want. We have a whole group who wants theater. We can't live without soccer here. Can you hire with that in mind? Like this is the time for the school-specific, student-specific activities to be negotiated. And that's what Daniel and the team are going to be engaging with providers and now. So, I hope that the adults working with young people around this will take that opportunity to engage with the new providers to get things off to a good start in the fall.

COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: I know my time is up, Chair, so I'll come back for a second round. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Perfect. I will add you to the list.

Council Member Joseph followed by Council Member Restler.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you, Chairs.

And I hope young people are also at the table when you're making these decisions and their voices are centered. Thank you so much.

You know what my favorite topic is? What is the total budget for Summer Rising program? And can you provide the status update on number of providers for the Summer Rising program remaining outstanding or not receiving payments for FY25 service? You know, the City love to owe people. How are we doing on that?

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: Well, hello.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Hello.

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: Hi.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Hi.

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: So, Summer Rising, our budget for FY27 is 151 million. We're grateful that the most recent Administration did it based on restoration in the Jan plan, and so we know for this upcoming summer, the funding is restored and they'll have continuity of services.

What was your other question?

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: We're hearing from providers that haven't been paid from FY25.

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: All of our FY26 amendments inclusive of Summer Rising are pretty much registered. I'll just give you exact number. But for the most part, for FY27, 98 percent of our amendments associated with all types of increases to funding have been moved.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And this is FY25. They wanted to know why is there delays and providers have been informed of why there's a delay. Do you inform the providers when there's a delay in payments? What do you say to them?

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: For payments, usually we inform them that there's a delay, but currently there has not been any substantial delay in payments. I think what they're referencing is someone may be saying they have not received their funding, additional funding. If that's the case, I ask that they reach out to our help desk and we can look into it. But to my knowledge, all implementations for prior summers for Summer Rising were included in a release to providers.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: We can always talk offline and let you know who the provider is.

What strategies are being implemented to pay providers faster in the FY26? What is the timeline to get funding out the door right away for providers?

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: Well, currently most of our providers, when we get contracts registered, we do a 50 percent advance to help with cash flow. After that, we essentially do reimbursements based on provider invoice submission. Now in full transparency, we have not had as much invoice submissions, and so that may be impacting the provider's ability to maintain cash flow. But currently we have less than 1 percent of invoices over 30 days so, we know that there's a pretty much fast turnaround for invoice submissions. But again, if someone is having specific issues, I encourage you, please reach out and we'll look into it. But right now, about 1 percent of our invoices are over 30 days. And I think when I came in and looked, it was about three, and they're at 40, and I said work on them. So, I know that they're already working on them right now and so we're prioritizing.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Wonderful to hear.

And if a provider's having trouble accessing the system, do you provide technical support for that provider?

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: Yes. We have a help desk, and a lot of our staff are doing phone calls all the time, and we work closely with MOCs. Our payment team and budget team have weekly calls with MOCs to troubleshoot any issues they're having technically. And if providers are having issues, we always raise those concerns to them during those meetings. And, again, we have a help desk to respond to any inquiries.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: How many students applied for Summer Rising today? And what provision are you putting in place for students with special needs, students with IEPs?

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: I'm going to defer to the youth services team to respond to that.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: So, this past year, we received over 150,000 applications so we're really excited about that. Regarding providing supports for youth and disabilities, we've been working with the DAL team in New York City Public Schools to ensure that we have accommodation plans for every single child that is required to receive those services, and coordinating with school leadership and the CBOs as well to ensure that all those supports are in place for all those services throughout the program period.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And a student who needs a one-to-one para in Summer Rising, one will be provided, and you will accommodate what's on the IEP.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Correct?

ASSOCIATE COMMIsSIONER GUILLEN: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you so much.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so much to the esteemed and impressive Co-Chairs of this hearing. Really appreciate your great leadership. And congratulations again, Commissioner. I really enjoyed sitting down with you some weeks ago and checking in on some of the COMPASS concerns that we've been hearing from our communities, and, you know, I just think it's a great thing to have somebody with such deep expertise in youth development leading the agency, and we know there's a really strong bench supporting you at DYCD, and look forward to working with you and your team.

I continue to be concerned about kind of the COMPASS process. I fully appreciate that whenever we put out a new RFP, I mean, part of the reason we haven't put out this RFP for 10 years is because they're winners and losers, and it's an incredibly bumpy process to go through, and so the last Administration handed you this, you know, hot potato, I guess I'll call it, for the purposes of being diplomatic. But as I've shared with you, we have, just to give one example, a provider that serves the Hasidic community in Williamsburg that's been an excellent provider for many, many years. They had hundreds of seats, they now have dozens, and they were the one provider that served that community. And they scored really well. I know you're not going to speak to an individual provider, but I'm going to just give you the specific context for my District to make this real. And so it would help me to understand, like, how could one provider score excellently at one location and above the threshold, but not at a different location when it's the same team providing the same excellent services across the board?

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: So, within each competition, there's evaluators that are reading, and the evaluating team could be different across the board, right? So, it's all objective, based on how the provider has demonstrated that they can provide these services. And the other part, too, is that depending on how you…

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: You're saying objective, but isn't that inherently subjective, right? Like, that is the precise definition of a subjective process, is that it's different readers, and some readers are determining that this organization is excellent, and two blocks away, where they have a different site, they're determining they're not. That is… I mean, sorry to interrupt you, but…

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: No, no, no, it's fine.

But I would also just add that it really depends on what other providers competed in that competition, right? If the competition was extremely competitive…

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Totally.

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: That's where you're going to see the disparity in scores.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I can appreciate that you could have different… at a given location, some other organization applied, and is even more excellent than the group that's been there for 30 years, and they get selected because they did even better. What I struggle to understand is how one organization can be reviewed as excellent at this location, but at these other locations in the neighborhood where they've been doing an excellent job for 30 years, and always scored well on all of their DYCD contracts, and all of their performance reviews, how they could be found to have such a different score based on who's reading it. It just, that is what really pains me, and is paining my community.

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: I appreciate what you're saying, and I do think this is very nuanced, and what I would say is, I think there's assumption in some of the questions, right? The assumption is that they did poorly in one section, and good in another section. And the truth is that they could have done really well, but there was greater competition in one, and there were more providers that were invited, or that came to that proposal. So, if you have 10 in one section, and you have five in another, and you rank number seven, and there's six slots, so I want to just offer that nuance, but I don't want to take away from what you spoke about earlier. So, it's not like that they did poorly, right, if we give that example, and then better in another one, it's really that they might have done really well in both, but there was greater competition.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I appreciate it. You know, from our conversation, previous conversation, Commissioner, you had explained that there was a threshold level, that if organizations did above, then you could try to figure out a path to work with them, because they scored well enough on the thing. And if they scored below that threshold level, then your hands are kind of tied, because they didn't, you know, when you have an objective, subjective, whatever word we want to use, you have a process, it was determined. And that's what I'm speaking to, and my question is that on some locations, they didn't score above that. I'm just using this as an example, but there are other providers, and I was on a tour this morning of one site with a City agency Assistant Commissioner who wanted me to ask questions about their school. So, everyone… Manhattan Youth, if Virginia's still here, but everybody's concerned about, I think, a similar thing. I just am using this as an example, that this organization scores above the threshold, you know, here, does in across the street, it's confusing.

And so, can I ask one more question, or are you going to kill me? I can't do round two, but it's okay. I will text you the question. It's about charter schools getting selected for the COMPASS RFP, and that is what I'm concerned about. But I will save that for… Chair Stephens will ask it in a much more effective way.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Council Member Selvena Brooks-Powers followed by Council Member Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you, Chairs, and hello, Commissioner, and to the DYCD team.

The increase of 14.8 million dollars of City funding in Fiscal '27 to expand services for the crisis management system program is welcome news. My community has seen a surge in gun violence in the last few months, including a neighboring District where the Deputy Speaker represents, with the tragic shooting of 15-year-old Jaden Pierre in Southeast Queens. How will this new funding allocation help reduce gun violence, particularly among our youth? What CMS groups will see additional funding thanks to this increase, and how will the transition of CMS from DYCD to the Office of Community Safety Impact Programming and the City's administration of these programs, because we know when it shifted from MOCJ to DYCD, it was a whole dynamic there, and then also for my CMS providers, they're often going above and beyond, going beyond the small territory they're responsible for, and the funding that they have right now is absolutely not sufficient. And the last question, I'll leave you with, and I can repeat whatever you need me to, SYEP meets a critical gap for youth to seek gainful employment and stay busy during the summer months, but we have heard that youth need similar employment opportunities throughout the academic school year. What is DYCD doing to meet this need?

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: Yeah. I'm going to start. Thank you for that question, Council Member. I'm going to start with the transition of ONS from DYCD to the Office of Community Safety, and then I'll pass it over to my colleague, Darryl. The first thing I want to say is that I am really excited about the Deputy Mayor Renita Francois and her commitment to really seeing this program through and to making it a priority for the whole city, and so the transition is going to take place in two phases. The first is the programmatic and strategic transition has already occurred, so it is already reporting to the new Commissioner and to the Deputy Mayor, and that has been seamless, and it has been happening in tandem with the support of my team. The operational aspects of it, the contracts and some of the operations are going to be transitioned over the next year. What I can say is that because we had the experience of transitioning from MOCJ to DYCD, we have experience in what this could look like in ways that really keep programming intact and then do not disrupt services, and so we're all committed to doing that and to continue to partner with the Deputy Mayor as well as the new Commissioner. And then Darryl, you can speak specifically to the other question.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Hi, Darryl.

CHIEF MIANO: Yes, and I would need to be sworn in.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

CHIEF MIANO: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin.

CHIEF MIANO: Thank you, Council Member, and it's great to see you.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: You too, Darryl.

CHIEF MIANO: So, we are working closely with the Office of Community Safety on the additional investment of 14.8 million for the Office of Neighborhood Safety. We're working out details now on both how that's going to be either amended or procured and which groups that it's going to, but it will support the place-based work, the precision work that that team is doing on the ground. So, supporting the crisis management system, supporting the wraparound services, supporting the HVIP Hospital Program as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: And I just want to put a plug in for Hammels and expansion to Hammels, because right now I'm using discretionary funding, which is fine, but they have not been designated an official site, and so we have King of Kings that is stretching pretty much most of the peninsula. And then the supplemental funding I give to Queens Royal Priesthood is like a stopgap so we need to expand those as, especially as the summertime comes.

CHIEF MIANO: Got it.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: And then the question on SYEP.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Thank you for that question. I'm really excited about it because we agree. We have our Work, Learn and Grow program, which was created due to advocacy from the Council many years ago. That program serves 7,000 young people who were in SYEP and are able to extend their experiences through the school year. And we've found that like the impact of that program really like is exponential on top of what they get through SYEP because we're able to engage them throughout the school year. We're able to offer college credits. A lot of the young people who go through Work, Learn and Grow have received a college credit, over 20,000 of them in the past five years. And we have another 1,000 people with our Learn and Earn program, which is also a full year program. And so, I would say we definitely appreciate your advocacy. There's tremendous, tremendous interest from young people for

Work, Learn and Grow slots, and so it's definitely a place that as an agency we're looking to continue investing in and looking at how we can do more.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that, and I hope it is expanded. My very first on the books job was Summer Youth Employment Program, and then I also worked through the school year. It wasn't back then called what it's called now, but it definitely was helpful to get money in my own pocket so I advocate for that. And I know our amazing Chair Stevens does as well, but thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Thank you.

Council Member Brewer followed by Wong.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. I appreciate the call yesterday that we discussed the afterschool programs. I sent you a letter. I assume you got it, and we hope that that can be changed. Is it true that we could do subcontracting if nothing else works?

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: The contract does allow for 30 percent subcontracting.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: 30 percent.

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. That's not everything then, okay.

Also, just so you know, the people, principals do not have a contact for the other provider. They don't know how to reach them. I obviously know, so I made the contact, but they did not have a contact, just so you know. They contacted you to get a contact. I hope that can be changed. It's really causing a lot of challenges. Also, PS 145 is not happy. They want LEAP. I assume you know that. They also contacted me. Everybody contacts me. And so they too are upset. So, you've got a lot of upset people, just FYI.

In terms of contracting, we work… we have wonderful staff. We work constantly, really almost with a lot of agencies in Manhattan, not just in my District, and the issue is constantly, I wonder what are the benchmarks or what metrics do you use to evaluate whether the contracting process has improved and what do those metrics show compared to previous years? And also, how many do you keep track of how many get escalated to the Mayor's Office of Non-Profit Services, which is what we do. We call them and then work with them to try to get contracting addressed. Is that something, do you keep track of that?

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: So, we do work very closely with the Mayor's Office of Contract Services. We meet with them weekly. We have our own tracking monitoring system where we are able to track where the contract is within the life cycle that's outside of PASSPort. So, we are able to pull data from our own internal systems as well as from PASSPort on where things fare in the contracting process.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So how do you measure that it's working better?

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: So, we have also weekly meetings. We have contracting weeklies. We have a program operations team that meets with us to ensure that we're meeting our regular goals and targets. This is all implemented as part of the backlog initiative that was put in place two years ago, I think, no, three years. So, we are actively monitoring and also working on improving our lifetime cycle for registration.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. And then I guess as a three-year, I remember when the three-year contract process went into effect, we are hearing that people don't find that it's more… I thought it would really be much better, but they don't feel that it is as productive, even more so than it was in the past. Do you know how many providers chose not to apply or express confusion about the new model?

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: I don't have those numbers.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Can you get them to us?

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: Yeah. We'll have to also work with the Mayor's Office of Contract Services because although there are three-year contract term, it still has to go through the cleared list process as well as the annual application that providers have to file with Council.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Because they feel like there's not enough communication so that they understand the process, just so you know. I'm getting these because we get everything, people contacting us. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Thank you.

Council Member Wong followed by Council Member Wilson.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. Thank you, Chair.

My first question is regards to the attendance for the Summer Rising. Okay. So, we have over 150,000 applicants were submitted from March 3rd to March 27th, but my experience with Summer Rising is that quite often some kids don't show up and then meanwhile, there are other kids in the waiting list, they're expecting a phone call, and they never get the call. So, my question is who does the outreach? DYCD or it's the school's job? Because when I call the school, I get the runaround.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: So, thank you for that question. You know, I think it's important to note that this is a collaborative program model between New York City Public Schools and DYCD and ensuring that there are supports and services for all young people. And also summer is a very different model in itself, right? It is not a requirement to show up every single day. We have families that utilize space and weeks and days differently than you would say after school, which is a year-round component. Another thing is that the wait list is also factored in with other components such as ensuring that we are prioritizing youth that are special needs, students in temporary housing, you know, families that will be able to have opportunity to have those seats that they probably wouldn't have never used before. And it is an extremely popular model so we are going to see robust wait lists in certain areas, you know, from one year to the next. So, every year we do focus on looking at specific locations and sites where we can open up more programs. And actually this year, we actually opened up more programs to kind of lighten the load on wait lists for specific schools. This past year, we opened up 40 new elementary programs where we know the demand has increased.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: But our families in the waiting list, are they being contacted and say, okay, we have an opening, please come. Because my impression is that they don't get these phone calls.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I'm glad you asked that question. And as my colleague was mentioning, like every year we listen to feedback and we make improvements. We had roughly the same amount of applications this year as last year, but we made significantly more offers, thousands more offers. At this time, in comparison to the same time last year, we also have thousands more of those offers accepted. So, we're above by the thousands, the numbers that we had last year, and the wait list has actually gotten smaller because of those efforts. So, as Commissioner said in her testimony, looking at the attendance patterns, as you mentioned, enrollment patterns, we've been able to get more young people pushed into the program than we ever have before, being able to anticipate some of those trends, and I think we'll see changes to the experience you had last summer.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Back to my question. If kids don't show up, say after the first week, should the next person move up? Is that happening?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: It's happening automatically.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: And does DYCD reaches out or the school reaches out?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: So, both the school and CBO have access to the same wait list. So, either school or CBO will be doing some engagement as the list moves. So, if they're not receiving a call, unfortunately that may mean that the list hasn't moved up to the next person.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. There's also that.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you.

Okay. Quick question, quick. City or State, right? The 246 million for SYEP, is that primarily City funds or State?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: It's primarily City funding with a small allocation of TANF funding from the State.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: As I recall, SYEP historically gets State funding or am I wrong here?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: The scale of the State funding is very small in comparison to the amount of City tax levy that we have funding the program.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: I see. Okay. I see it's so successful. I think it should, the size of SYEP should increase and I don't see that happening. So, please look into that.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Thank you.

Okay. Council Member Wilson followed by Banks.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILSON: Thank you, Chairs.

I would also like to add my voice with that of my Colleagues Maloney and Epstein regarding Manhattan Youth. I've received an overwhelming correspondence to my office, over 400 parents and students and teachers concerned about the change. They received positive audits and built decades-long relationships with the school communities and parent communities. They've been told that the new programs are going to look to incorporate the same staff for programs that existed. So, my question is, if we're looking to keep what was built by Manhattan Youth, why switch providers?

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: Yeah. Because procurement processes allow for competition which is necessary for the ecosystem of New York City. And so while again, I wanted to say that I appreciate the advocacy, and my heart goes out to the children, youth and families of those communities, I also want to say that I have confidence that the new provider will be able to meet the needs of the communities as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILSON: CEC2 in my District also put out a resolution asking for them to be reinstated. And given that response from the parents and the school board, would there be any consideration to reinstating Manhattan Youth?

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: So, what I would say is that the school procurement process was different than the center-based process because the school procurement process allowed for continuity of the slots, the number of seats in a building. And so what is being asked of us is essentially, would we give the contract to another provider that won it through the competition? Unless we found something egregious in the RFP process, and believe me, I am reading a lot of these close calls to make sure, but it's really the continuity of the slots and not the provider.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILSON: I also want to ask about the CBO selection. So, I want to acknowledge that Hudson Guild is here with us today, which is a crucial provider in Council District 3, centered in Chelsea, right next to two very important NYCHA developments and families that they serve. So, you know, they were a recipient of one of the cuts, and this leaves a huge gap in the District for after-school programming with the provider on the northern edge. That's not really going to work for parents and for the families, especially those in NYCHA that really rely on this. So, how are we going to deal with that gap? And how is Hudson Guild going to make sure that they have the continued resources they need to serve Manhattan and my Council District?

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: Yeah. I would say that we're in the process of thinking about continuity of services and stability of the ecosystem for center-based awards. And we are hopeful, as I mentioned earlier, to share where we land after June 6th.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILSON: Can I ask one more question?

Okay. DYCD funds programs explicitly designed to improve educational outcomes for high-need students. What are the challenges DYCD faces in understanding whether those programs are reaching the students who need them the most and whether they're working? And how can the new visions portal potentially help address those changes?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I want to understand more which programs you're talking about at DYCD. Are you talking about, I mean, on the one hand, all of our programs are designed to help young people to reach their goals and to thrive. I'm not sure which particular program you're talking about.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILSON: So let me, I have to…

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: But I can answer a portion of that. And I think Valerie, if you can chime in as well.

I think one of the things that New Visions offers, the portal, is access to data that community-based organizations would ordinarily not have to assess impact. Right now, currently, all of our contracts are designed to check enrollment and participation. But with the support of New Visions for public schools portals, we're able to look at how that correlates to academic gains.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Yeah. So, I oversee our workforce program so primarily young people between the ages of 14 and 24, and we have been in really amazing conversations with the New Visions team about where we can leverage their tool because we are always looking at ways to demonstrate the specific impacts, especially of the Summer Youth Employment Program and Work, Learn, Grow, which I talked about a little earlier. And so we've been looking at things, we already do this, but we've been looking at expanding, like for a school, can they see a young person's participation in Summer Youth Employment Program so that they can take that into consideration as they're developing what a high school experience is going to look like for that young person. And then in return, can we look at how that young person did throughout the program now that we have that data in that portal and can see comprehensively how their experience was in a public school. And so, I'm really proud over the last many years, we've been building that partnership with public schools, and we're now in conversation with New Visions about how we can leverage their tool.

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: And I just want to add that that's super critical in terms of allowing providers to use data to inform their practice. And so, we are hopeful to continue to be working with them and expand our work with New Visions in the coming years.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILSON: Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Great.

Council Member Banks.

COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Thank you, Chair. Good to see you again, Commissioner, and to your team.

One of the obviously topics of discussion and contention has been the COMPASS Program RFP. One of the major concerns raised following the most recent COMPASS RFP process involves the concentration of contracts amongst a smaller number of large providers. In some instances, a single organization reportedly oversees north of 80 schools or sites under the DYCD-funded COMPASS Program. What is the agency's rationale for allowing one provider to manage such a large portfolio of school-based contracts?

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: So, at time of award selection, we really did take that into consideration. The provider that you're referencing, they did submit a lot of proposals across the entire procurement and weren't selected for everything that they proposed for, and they do make up only 10 percent of all the awards that were made. We did not award them in multiple competitions just to ensure that we were reaching other providers.

COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: But that's a large concentration of contracts to one organization.

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: They are an existing provider, and when we were making awards, we wanted to ensure that we were making them thoughtful and not overgrowing the system, and we really did make an effort to ensure that we were reaching other providers within the different competitions.

COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Well, that particular provider's actually, they received contracts in, I mean, areas that they have no track record in, as far as community relations. And so how do you rationalize that?

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: Yeah. Within their response for the RFP, they demonstrated to be the highest proposer within those competitions.

COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Okay.

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: I think your point is well taken, and I want to also just say there's 52 new providers as a result of that. So, in prior iterations, we had higher concentrations of what you're speaking of, and this has really opened up the aperture and created ecosystems that's more balanced, that takes into account small, medium, and large organizations.

COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Okay. Many of the smaller community-based organizations feel that they are being shut out of the opportunities within the COMPASS ecosystem despite years of service and strong relationships within their communities. What opportunities currently exist for the smaller non-profits to grow within the COMPASS and the broader DYCD ecosystem and compete for additional sites or contracts over time, including programs such as Saturday Night Lights and other DYCD-funded active initiatives. What are being done to support those groups or give them opportunities?

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: As the Commissioner mentioned, we have 52 new providers as a result of this COMPASS RFP.

COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Right.

CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER CANTELINI: And in terms of small CBOs, 17 which are considered those that have less than 100,000 dollars in revenue, we do have a whole host of capacity-building services to help those providers along the way as they enter into the COMPASS portfolio. In terms of new procurements at this time, we don't have anything for them to apply to, but they do have the opportunities also to serve as subcontractors that help them get into these COMPASS programs and start building their ability to.

COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: I have one, there's one organization that's been in the school for close to 10 years or so. Has a long, long track record in that community, and they've been surviving off of CASA monies that we've given them, and then whatever other monies that they've raised. They competed for a COMPASS, you know, they submitted for the RFP. And they got approved, the principal supported them, the consideration was given, but they didn't get the contract. And that to me means something, because having a relationship with the community, having a relationship with the students means a lot. And I know the Commissioner had mentioned earlier, I think it was the Commissioner, the need to support those new organizations that are coming in and figure out ways that, you know, they can, the community can now instruct them or give them ideas of things that they want to see, but a relationship is important. And when that chemistry is broken up, it can do damage to the community. And I know you're looking at, you know, numbers, you have your scorecards, but those relationships mean a lot, and I don't want our community to be negatively impacted because of, you know, a score chart that really doesn't take into the human side of the impact of those relationships. So, I know this is ongoing. I know a lot of these organizations have put in appeals, and we're hoping that strong consideration is taken, given to those organizations.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Thank you, Council Member.

COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Can I just ask one more question, Madam Chair?

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Very quickly.

COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: If you could indulge me. And then I'll pass on those other questions. Thank you for your indulgence.

When it comes to contract processing and staff reimbursement, this has been a major issue with a lot of the discretionary allocations to a lot of the small organizations. What is being done? You know, my office, I think every Council Office acts as a medium between the DYCD and those organizations, but there are many a times when DYCD should just directly call those organizations if there are issues that occur or documents are missing. Sometimes, there's like a major lapse between communications between DYCD and those organizations. What we want to do is see how we can strengthen that with DYCD directly. It's being more proactive in reaching out to those organizations. Trust me, my office, we can be dealing with a whole host of other issues instead of having to be this medium or this go-between between NYCHA and the non-profit. So, if we can improve that, that will go a long way. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. And I'm sure the Commissioner will take that into consideration and add that to the million list of things to do.

I'm just going to do a quick lightning round around some things because I know we do have to wrap very quickly.

My first question is just around SYP. Hey Val, there you go. Just thinking about as we prepare into the summer and going to the summer and thinking about the issue we had last summer with the debit cards and things like that, I just want to get a clear understanding of how are we moving forward this summer to ensure that that doesn't take place again and ensuring that young people are getting paid in a timely manner and that other things are happening. Succinctly.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: I can assure you that the team at DYCD is doing everything within our control to prevent it from happening again. I can talk about this for a very long time because it's been our focus since the day it happened last year. But high level, we're doing everything from engaging young people in more and more financial literacy training. Our providers have been convened at DYCD to make sure they're focused on educating their young people on the risks of participating in fraud. And we're working with the banks, the Law Department, DOI, the payroll processor, and all of those folks to understand what they're doing to prevent it from happening too.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you so much. I know we have been COMPASS crazy, but I will call you so we can have a deeper briefing to go over how do we prevent and what does that look like moving forward.

Really quickly, this might be Bobbitt over here, so get ready. This is adult literacy. Just have some questions around there. I know who works for what.

The New York City Coalition of Adult Literacy has responded to the threats with a 20 million proposal for the Mayoral Administration to create a new fund stream for immigrant adult literacy students called Education for Integration Equality. Are those conversations with OMB to add this new funding stream into the adopted budget? Have you guys started having those conversations?

Oh, we didn't swear him in. Thank you, Bob, for being honest.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth before this Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: I'm sorry. Could you restate the last part of the question?

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I was asking, you know, the Adult Coalition has been asking about this 20 million dollars proposed for additional funding for immigrant adult literacy students. Have you guys started to have those conversations with OMB already around this funding?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: There hasn't been a pointed conversation with OMB at this time. As you're aware, the Administration had to deal with a significant budget crisis, but we are having internal conversations and talking with LAC about the nature of the proposal.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The Adult Literacy Forward Initiative is currently funded by Council, which was created in partnership with the expertise of providers. It focuses on meeting the community needs with an innovation and holistic approach to adult literacy. Is DYCD open to adopting aspects of this program for DYCD's RFP adult literacy program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: We're happy to continue to support the Council's pilot. As you will recall, there was a prior iteration for Adult Literacy Forward, and for our part, we believe that we learned from that model as well as a pilot that we did. That's why we increased to a significant extent the price per participant under the current literacy model. So, we currently like and abide by the model that we have, and we'd be happy to continue to receive support from the Council as we have in prior years to expand the number of slots made available under the model.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The next question I have is just around the Father's Initiative. What is the current budget for the Father Initiative?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: I'll defer to Nevita to answer that question.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And who are the providers that receive the awards? And what boroughs and districts?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BAILEY: Chair Stevens, I don't have all that detail for you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, okay, sorry.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BAILEY: But for the budget, I can tell you that the budget for Fatherhood at FY27, sorry, is 8.2 million.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: In terms of the providers, there are 14 providers operating 17 contracts, six are in the Bronx, four in Brooklyn, three in Manhattan, two in Queens, and two in Staten Island. And we can follow up later with you after the hearing.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, don't you worry. You guys are going to be following up a whole lot because I still have a bunch of questions I didn't get through and I'm trying to be really quick. They told me I got into 2:15. So, I have one more question. Oh, here it is, sorry.

Okay. So, my next question is just around what is the actual spending for the OMNY Cards budgeted at 11 million for the OMNY Cards and how many providers and you've received the cards?

Oh, I'm sorry. I should have had you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: We were really trying not to do the shuffling. It didn't work out the way we hoped. Can you repeat that? You're asking about the OMNY Cards.

CO-CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What was the actual spending for FY26 budgeted for 11 million for the OMNY Cards? How many providers and you've received those cards and does the agency receive any reports from providers on a distribution of those cards?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BAILEY: So, I will let Valerie speak more to the distribution and providers who receive, but I can tell you that in last year we spent approximately 4 million dollars towards the OMNY Cards.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Yeah. And that funding went to about 80,000 cards. Participants need multiple cards to get through the summer so it was for about 40,000 participants that we purchased cards for, and they were distributed to 90 providers. And we have very tight policies around the provider's responsibility of tracking which participants get the cards, how many cards they've distributed, where they store them, and they report all of that back to us on a regular basis and then we use that information to take into account the need for each following program cycle.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Advocates have been, and this is, wait. Oh, it's 2:16, I'll stop.

Okay. So, we are short for time and I don't want to go over it anymore, but I still have a ton of questions. We'll be sending them over to you guys. We want to make sure that we know that we're going into negotiations, but please do not let that hold up getting these questions because we really want to get through it, and so we'll be sending them over as soon as possible and I know there was even Colleagues who have questions so we'll be sending those over and please make sure that we're working in tandem to get this done and not let negotiations get in the way of that. So, thank you guys for being here today and I'll pass it back over to Chair Lee.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. I mean you basically said it all. Very efficient time.

So, thank you so much. I just want to thank you all again for being such great partners.

COMMISSIONER ESCAMILLA-DAVIES: Thank you so much.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Quiet down, please. We are getting ready to begin with our next panel.

Quiet down please. Quiet in the Chambers.

Please take your seats. We are getting ready to begin.

Just a reminder, no one may approach the dais at any time during this hearing.

There are no food or beverages allowed in this room as well.

Please find your seats.

Okay. Everyone please find your seat. We are getting ready to begin. Please find your seat and quiet down, please.

Quiet in the Chambers.

Just a reminder, no one may approach the dais.

No food or beverages are allowed in this room.

Chairs.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Great. Thank you.

All right. It's good to see familiar faces. Okay. So, good afternoon and welcome to today's third hearing about the FY27 Executive

Budget. I'm Council Member Linda Lee, and I'm glad to be joined today… oh, I'm sorry… glad to be joined today by my Colleague, Chair Elsie Encarnación, Chair of the Committee on Immigration, and we have been joined by our Deputy Speaker Williams, Council Member Brewer, Council Member Joseph, Council Member Wong, and Council Member Avilés.

So welcome to a familiar face, Commissioner Faiza Ali and your team. Thank you all for joining us today to answer our questions.

On May 12th, 2026, the Administration released the Executive Financial Plan for FY26 to '30 with a proposed FY27 budget of 124.7 billion. The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs proposed Fiscal 27 budget of 781,962 dollars represents .00063, and I feel like that's important to note with such a sizable immigrant population in our city, of the Administration's proposed FY27 budget in the Executive Plan, and this remains unchanged from the originally budgeted amount in the Fiscal '27 preliminary plan.

As of April 26, MOIA's headcount was 3 less than their Fiscal '26 budgeted headcount. In the

Council's preliminary budget response, we called on the Mayor to ensure the critical and essential services we provide to our immigrant population be upheld, and that we safeguard programs that may be at risk with any possible federal funding cuts.

And my questions are largely going to focus on a bunch of the services around the AAPI community, funding, the consolidation of all immigrant services into a single agency, of course, contracts, payment delays, which is one of our favorite topics, prioritizing access to mental health and health services, the legal support hotline, City preparing for the 2030 census, and also MOIA's role in preparing for the '26 FIFA World Cup.

And I now want to turn it over to my co-chair for this hearing, Chair Encarnación, for her opening statement.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon to Commissioner Ali and her team. Thank you all for joining us.

Before we get started, I want to take a quick moment to thank the entire Council Finance Division and Committee Staff for their efforts in preparing for today's hearings and all of the hearings alongside the Finance Chair. I'm sending her all of my reserved energy to continue on through this budget process.

I also want to start off by condemning the horrific shooting that occurred at the Islamic Center of San Diego on May 18th and stand in solidarity with our Muslim brothers and sisters to say hate and violence against our vibrant immigrant communities will never be tolerated. We offer our condolences to the families of the victims whose lives were taken.

Our immigrant communities continue to be under attack. Last fall, we saw an uptick in street arrests by ICE and recently the news publication, The City, reported that 800 New Yorkers were arrested by ICE between October 2025 and March 2026, and they were not even the intended targets of immigration officers. The federal administration has threatened to increase the so-called collateral arrest in sanctuary cities like New York. Last year, the Council fought long and hard to secure a historic level of over 50 million for immigration legal services, doubling the City's investment to safeguard immigrant communities. The Council values the partnership through task force meetings it has formed since last year with MOIA, the Office of Civil Justice and DOE Project Open Arms in prioritizing funding and resources for our immigrant neighbors. For Fiscal 2027, the Council is urging the restoration of last year's budget amount and an additional 30 million to further protect and enhance our City's immigration legal services in this time of great need. I'll be repeating that number over and over again so you don't have to write it down, no worries. Commissioner Ali, you played a critical role in securing that funding last year, and we're asking you to continue your advocacy within the Administration.

We look forward to an open and honest conversation today's hearing, and I will now turn it back over to Chair Lee.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Great.

So, just before we start, just a couple of housekeeping rules. So as a reminder for this year's executive budget, because we have a shorter timeline, we're doing all of the public testimony on one day, on Wednesday, June 10th, beginning at 9:30 a.m. so please make sure to sign up for June 10th, Wednesday, 9:30 a.m. We'll try to make it as fun and exciting all day as possible so please come join us that day.

And also, because we're pressed for time, because we have to be out of the space and we only have the translators for a certain number of hours, if Members could keep their questions brief and if you guys could keep the responses as brief as possible so we can get through everything, that'd be great, and if we can keep the openings to 10 minutes, if it goes over, it's okay. But yes, okay, awesome. Thank you so much.

And I'll turn it over to Counsel for swearing in.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good afternoon. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this Committee and to respond honestly to Council Members?

Commissioner Ali.

COMMISSIONER ALI: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Commissioner Sanchez.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And Deputy Commissioner Lucero?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin.

COMMISSIONER ALI: Great. Thank you so much. Good afternoon, and thank you to Chair Encarnación and Members of the Committee on Immigration as well as Chair Lee, Deputy Speaker Dr. Natasha Williams, and Members of the Committee on Finance for this opportunity to testify today.

My name is Faiza Ali, and I'm the Commissioner for the New York City Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, or MOIA, and I'm joined today by my colleagues, Lorena Lucero, Deputy Commissioner of Programs and Policy as well as Jasniya Sanchez, Acting Chief-of-Staff and Deputy Commissioner of Administration and Strategic Initiatives.

As the daughter of immigrants from Azad Kashmir, Pakistan, I understand deeply the role that local government must play in ensuring communities are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect. Across the country, aggressive ICE enforcement operations have sown fear and uncertainty in immigrant communities and, in this moment, New York City must be clear. We remain committed to protecting all New Yorkers, regardless of their immigration status. At a time when immigrant families are increasingly being met with disdain or contempt and hostility, local government must be a source of stability, clarity, and protection. That requires investment, operational capacity, and sustained support to meet our responsibility to immigrant New Yorkers.

Today, I will provide a brief update on MOIA and highlight six key areas of our work, Immigration Legal Services, the Immigration Legal Support Hotline, the Haitian Response Initiative, Rapid Response Collaborative, Language Justice and English Language Learning, and the Community Engagement Programs.

During a recent visit to 26 Federal Plaza, I watched immigrant New Yorkers arrive for a routine immigration proceeding only to encounter an atmosphere of intimidation. Hallways were filled with families lawfully seeking status while enforcement agents moved through the building in masks. It was deeply unsettling and a stark reminder of what is at stake for the communities that we all serve. At MOIA's preliminary budget hearing, I outlined the challenges immigrant communities are facing under the Federal Administration's aggressive detention and deportation campaigns. ICE's recent presence at Wyckoff Medical Center in Brooklyn drew community protests and a highly visible NYPD response. Consistent with Executive Order 13's directive to continuously review agency policies and protocols, NYPD in partnership with the Interagency Response Committee will assess whether there are any updates to the policy and procedure to be made in light of that incident. Pursuant to EO 13, the agencies have completed their initial audit of policies and protocols with support from the Interagency Response Committee on interactions with local immigration enforcement and is updating its training guidelines and materials accordingly. MOIA remains an active participant in the ongoing work of the IRC and is firmly committed to upholding and complying with local laws. This is a moment when immigrant New Yorkers need reassurance that their local government will stand with them and protect them. Mayor Mamdani was elected in part because New Yorkers recognize the growing instability and anxiety many immigrant families face about their place in our society. It is MOIA's responsibility to help restore trust, reinforce that commitment, and ensure that there is continued access to schools, healthcare, housing, and City services for all New Yorkers.

In the interest of time, I'm going to skip around in testimony, but you do have my full statement as well. With a Fiscal Year '27 budget of approximately 34.2 million dollars, MOIA maintains more than 70 contracts with non-profit organizations serving immigrant communities across the five boroughs. We are already communicating funding levels to all contracted providers so that they can plan accordingly for the next Fiscal Year. Over the past few weeks, it feels like it's been several months already at MOIA, but over the past few weeks, I have met directly with our providers to better understand how the City can be a stronger partner. They are meeting this moment with urgency, compassion, and a deep community trust, doing critical work on the front lines. Now more than ever, the City must provide stability in both funding and vision so providers can continue delivering urgently needed services to immigrant New Yorkers.

At the same time, MOIA is continuing to build a team capable of advancing Mayor Mamdani's bold agenda. Ten new positions at MOIA are currently open, and we expect to move forward with hiring in the coming weeks. I appreciate the Council's continued attention to MOIA's staffing levels and look forward to sharing additional updates soon.

Over the past year, MOIA has strengthened its legal service infrastructure during a period of dramatically increased need. MOIA's immigration legal programs include Legal Support Centers, the Immigration Legal Support Hotline, the Legal Technical Mentorship Program, and the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative. Together, these initiatives expand access to trusted immigration legal support at a time when the demand continues to grow. Our immigration legal service network includes 29 providers serving communities across the five boroughs. Last summer, MOIA launched the Immigration Legal Support Centers, supported by more than 18 million dollars in investments over three years to strengthen community-based organizations providing culturally and linguistically responsive immigration legal assistance. Since the program's launch in July 2025, the LSCs have conducted more than 12,000 comprehensive legal screenings, helping immigrants address a wide range of legal needs. These investments are critical not only to expand services, but to strengthen the long-term capacity of the organizations immigrant New Yorkers rely on the most.

Another critical resource for immigrant New Yorkers is MOIA's Immigration Legal Support Hotline that's operated by Catholic Charities, which helps New Yorkers connect to comprehensive immigration legal screenings and support. So far this year, the hotline has received more than 19,800 calls. In FY26, MOIA increased funding to expand the hotline's accessibility and responsiveness as callers face increasingly urgent and complex immigration challenges. This April, we partnered with Catholic Charities to host a family preparedness phone bank responding to concerns from parents and caregivers about family separation. In collaboration with the New York State Office of New Americans, the Mexican Consulate, and the New York Legal Assistance Group, 56 volunteers fielded 225 calls. As part of this expansion, the hotline increased staffing capacity, including hiring additional counselors and a staff member specifically designated to respond to time-sensitive rapid response needs. The hours of operation were also extended beyond the previously Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. schedule so that callers have more opportunities to reach the support outside of a standard work hour day. The hotline also launched WhatsApp communications, expanded multilingual reporting from four to 10 languages, and added three new interactive voice response language prompts.

Moving on to the Haitian Response Initiative. MOIA coordinates HRI, an innovative program designed to support both newly arrived and longstanding Haitian residents. The initiative funds seven Haitian-led community-based organizations to provide case management and social services, while Catholic Charities delivers immigration legal services and capacity-building trainings. Established in FY22, HRI was baselined last year at nearly 1.7 million dollars. HRI partners have also organized legal clinics across the city, helping hundreds of Haitian New Yorkers access legal assistance related to deportation protections, legal remedies, and work authorization. Catholic Charities regularly conducts train-the-trainer workshops to equip community organizations with real-time information needed to support residents navigating immigration-related issues independently. This work remains especially urgent, as we know, amid growing instability in Haiti and a pending Supreme Court decision that will determine the future of TPS. In FY26 alone, HRI has completed six legal clinics with an additional asylum application review clinic scheduled today, May 28, 2026, at Brooklyn Borough Hall.

I will skip now to and talk a little bit about the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative. MOIA has significantly expanded our Rapid Response Legal

Collaborative, which provides legal assistance to immigrant New Yorkers who are detained or at imminent risk of detention or deportation. To meet the growing demand, MOIA increased our investment in Rapid Response legal efforts by 3 million dollars this Fiscal Year. MOIA also coordinates rapid response efforts in schools to ensure that immigrant families receive timely information and support when immigration enforcement activity occurs in or near their communities. It includes connecting schools, families, and community partners to legal resources, Know Your Rights information, and direct services. Referrals are centralized through Project Open Arms, a dedicated team within New York City Public Schools that coordinates across public schools, including charter schools, District 75, and District 79 schools as well, to support immigrant families and help ensure access to a full range of services.

I also wanted to provide an update on MOIA's language access work, an area that impacts nearly every aspect of City government. MOIA oversees and monitors and provides technical assistance to more than 46 City agencies in implementing language access services. Language justice is not simply a compliance obligation. It is a core equity and public trust issue. New Yorkers cannot fully access critical services or exercise their rights or meaningfully engage with City government if language remains a barrier to information, to care, or participation. This work impacts approximately 1.8 million New Yorkers with limited English proficiency and is essential to ensuring equitable access to City services. On April 17th, MOIA convened all of the City's language access coordinators for a historic citywide meeting and launched working groups focused on strengthening relationships with language service providers, multilingual strategic communication and engagement, bilingual talent and language access training, as well as language access in data and evaluation. In addition, MOIA has built an in-house language services team that provides translation and interpretation support to Mayoral Offices and City Hall. Thus far in FY26, the team has delivered translation and interpretation services to 37 Mayoral Offices and agencies. The LS team has also provided on-site language support at migrant centers and played a critical role in rapidly translating updated shelter protocol for recent arrivals.

On community engagement, finally, I wanted to share that MOIA's community engagement work helps immigrant New Yorkers access services, understand their rights, and stay connected to trusted information during a time of heightened fear and uncertainty. Through our immigrant rights workshops, MOIA staff deliver presentations that connect community organizations and their members to free high-quality immigration legal services and Know Your Rights resources. In FY26, the program delivered over 300 presentations, reaching over 7,000 people citywide, continuing our critical work reaching diverse communities where they are. MOIA also continues to strengthen relationships with trusted ethnic and community media outlets that serve immigrant New Yorkers in multiple languages. In the past year, MOIA has led 10 community and ethnic media roundtables to share critical information through hyper-local newspapers and television stations that immigrant communities rely on for timely and accurate information. So far during my tenure, we have convened three such roundtables with additional sessions scheduled for this summer.

In conclusion, MOIA was created to ensure that immigrant New Yorkers can fully participate in the civic, economic, and cultural life of the city, and that mission is especially important and critical during periods of rapid policy change and growing uncertainty for immigrant communities. Meeting this moment requires strong coordination across agencies, deep partnership with community-based organizations, and continued investment in the systems that help immigrant New Yorkers access services, understand their rights, and remain connected to their neighborhoods and opportunities. As the needs facing immigrant communities continue to evolve, MOIA will remain focused on building trust, on strengthening that coordination, and ensuring New York City remains a place where immigrant families can live with dignity, safety, and opportunity.

Finally, I want to thank the City's dedicated public servants, many who are in this room and make these hearings run, and our community partners for their continued support and responding every day to the needs of both recently arrived and longstanding immigrant New Yorkers. Immigrant New Yorkers are not separate from the story of this city. They are central to it. They are workers, parents, students, business owners, neighbors, and caregivers who sustain this city every day. I look forward to working with the Council to ensure that our policies and investments and our institutions reflect that reality while continuing to strengthen the communities that are, in fact, the backbone of our city. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Thank you, Commissioner. And I just want to say thank you to you also, because even when you were back in the day in the Council, when I was at KCSU, you were so instrumental in helping a lot of our immigrant communities and non-profit organizations be that bridge to us accessing folks in government so I think it's very crucial. It's a very crucial role that you played and still play even more so now in this role. So, thank you.

Okay. So, I'll go through my questions quickly because I know we have others that need to ask questions. So, since MOIA is a mayoral office technically and not a full-fledged City agency, what specific challenges and limitations does this structure present in terms of funding, operational capacity, and policy implementation because I know you have to go across a lot of different City agencies.

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. This is a great question. I think it's actually a really important conversation that should be had. And I think that it deserves more nuance than sort of a binary answer of like, should MOIA be an agency or not? Right now, MOIA's structure as an office, it does create certain limitations because we are, like you said, fundamentally a coordinating office rather than a standalone operational agency, and much of our work does require sustained partnership across City government. But at the same time, I think that there are some real strengths to the current structure that we should take into consideration. Being housed within City Hall, for example, gives MOIA the direct proximity to executive decision-making on issues related to immigrants and immigrant inclusion. It really allows us to also elevate our concerns as a citywide priority rather than being siloed into a standalone agency. But I say all this to say that I think it's really important for me, and I'm glad you raised the issue of input and engagement with advocates. I think this is a conversation that needs to be had more broadly with other stakeholders to fully understand what will the impact be, in fact, if we were to transition into an agency or not.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: And there regular meetings or task force groups or conversations? I'm assuming the answer is yes, but if you could speak to that a little bit because between MOIA, HRA, DYCD, SBS, DOHMH, there's a lot of agencies I feel like that you touch, right, and so how has that been in terms of, I mean, in the last few weeks?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. Well, I mean, there is a longstanding intra-agency task force that MOIA is responsible for. It brings to the table all 46 City agencies for the very purpose of making sure that we're sharing updates and information that can potentially impact immigrant New Yorkers. So those meetings happen quarterly, but I'll go a step further, you know, and just tap into my organizing background. It's really important for me as the leader of this office to also engage Commissioners at some of the leading agencies where immigrant New Yorkers seek services and make sure that we're building across as Commissioners as well. And so I've been, you know, focused on having those meetings, having those conversations, and making sure that we're elevating those issues even outside of the intra-agency task force meetings.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. And then moving now to the AAPI community support. I know that there was an analysis done by Stop AAPI Hate, and it found that a lot of the ICE arrests actually have gone up seven times in the Asian community, and then there have been over 1,400 arrests of individuals with Asian citizenship in New York compared to 205 arrests of Asian immigrants during a similar period. And in April, the AALDEF, Asian American Legal Defense Fund, released a report highlighting systemic gaps in language access, outreach, funding structure, and institutional partnerships, and so how has your office, or will your office increase access to legal services specifically for the AAPI community? And what are some challenges you've had connecting to the population to legal services, which I'm sure a lot of is language and other things, but.

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. I think first it's really important to sort of highlight that MOIA meets the needs of AAPI immigrant communities through sustained engagement with stakeholders and advocates, different organizations, and that includes ongoing meeting with advocates and community organizations. We have close partnership with AAPI-serving organizations, and many of them receive funding and run our legal support centers or immigrant rights workshops. I think that one of the biggest challenges to answer your question more directly is language access. You know, earlier this year, MOIA met with AALDEF after they released that report, and I think one of the findings that really stood out and reflects what we see in our own work is that nearly six in 10 New Yorkers who speak an Asian language have limited English proficiency. And while many of the legal services hotlines right now primarily operate in English and Spanish, and so for many AAPI immigrants, the legal system can seem inaccessible, but language is only part of the challenge. I think that AAPI communities is incredibly diverse as well with different immigration histories and cultural contexts and levels of familiarity, frankly, with the system. So, I think like, you know, typically we tend to lean on a one-size-fits-all approach to outreach, but in this instance, it just is not something that would work. There are real gaps when it comes to culturally and linguistically competent legal services, particularly for some of the lesser common languages that are spoken. You know, I think that's primarily a reason why MOIA has focused heavily on our partnerships, especially when we're doing our multilingual Know Your Rights outreach. We've relied heavily on our ethnic media engagement. You know, the community media is where many of the Asian communities seek, you know, trusted information from, and so that has been really important for us to forge those relationships with ethnic media and to get the information out.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: And I think this is across all communities in general and something we've heard in our round table conversations where there really is such a shortage of culturally competent attorneys that are available. And so, what are some ways that, and you sort of alluded to this with the partnership aspect, but what are some ways our local AAPI-serving community-based organizations can partner with you to bridge this gap?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. You know, we know there are areas where I think additional culturally and linguistically responsive legal capacity would make a real meaningful difference, especially for our AAPI communities. You know, I think meeting those requirements requires sustained investment in community-led legal infrastructures. You know, one specific way that MOIA is already working on this is really through capacity building initiatives. You know, I mentioned in my testimony the legal technical mentorship program that's administered by IARC, making sure that our AAPIs-led and serving organizations have access to that capacity building tool is really, is critical.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Yeah. Okay. And then moving to the Legal Support Hotline. Because I know that you were saying that you received 14,700 calls in FY26, and I know the Council also supported this with an additional 500,000 in FY26 to further expand the hotline and outreach to the Asian and African communities. And so, just wanted to get a sense of how you sort of, and you sort of mentioned this already, but how you were able to partner with ethnic media or local community-based groups to do the outreach for the hotline specifically.

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. I'll share a little bit about the Council's support. Also, you know, we appreciate the additional investment in FY26 to help just bring more awareness to the hotline and specifically do outreach to these particular communities. Right now, MOIA is currently finalizing a targeted multilingual Know your Rights Media campaign that's supported through this additional funding. We anticipate to launch that in mid-June. The campaign is being designed specifically to reach New Yorkers, some of the more hard-to-reach New York communities, specifically in our Asian and African communities through our ethnic media platforms, and our outreach will be expanded to include radio and TV and print and digital media and also other platforms, frankly, that more of these communities utilize, like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. The campaign, and we can share additional breakdown, but there are a number of languages that will be included in this as part of the outreach campaign in Wolof, in Tibetan, in Korean, in Bengali, and we can provide the council with a full list.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Great.

And then how many of the total 14,700 callers were effectively connected to legal services providers, and how many of them actually received legal support, if you have that?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Yeah. So just to clarify on the numbers, from July 1st, 2025 to May 15, 2026, the hotline received 19,000 calls.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: So, it's 19,830. When a caller calls the hotline, we do not collect PII information, so personal identifying information. We do direct them to our legal support centers. Overall, the legal support centers have served over 12,000 people.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. So, but that doesn't just include the legal services, but maybe referring them to different community organizations for other types of support, or is this specifically just for the legal?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: The hotline itself provides referrals to primarily our legal support centers for legal services. That's sort of the why it was created, but it also provides connections to other agencies and things to that extent.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Great. And then let me just get back, because I know we're, for contract and payment delays, moving on a little bit. We know that there's, you guys are, you know, the legal services groups are dealing with an unprecedented attack on immigrants' rights, and one of the biggest issues that providers expressed during our roundtable that we had was the extreme delays in getting paid by the City. One provider explained that the City owes them 15 million, and they have now spent thousands of dollars on interest payments from private loans just to make payroll, and this is a common sort of theme that we hear amongst our non-profit providers. And so, just wondering how MOIA, if you can, advocate for this Administration to dedicate more funding to processing the contracts and talking to MOCS, ensuring that providers have timely access to invoicing and reimbursements, if you can speak to that.

COMMISSIONER ALI: I can start, and then I'll turn it over to my colleague if she has anything more to add.

I mean, this is an area that you all know I care very deeply about. I did, during my time at the Council. MOIA strongly supports continued investment in contract processing capacity and reforms to improve payment timelines for our providers. We recognize that a lot of our immigrant-serving organizations are operating under significant financial pressure. I think it's important for me to just kind of elevate that last session, the Council did enact major procurement reforms, including laws establishing advanced payments and quarterly invoicing and stronger accountability. Those reforms were really an important step forward, but implementation across the agencies is something that's critical. We're continuing to partner with our agencies and talking to MOCS and providers to identify any operational bottlenecks and figure out ways together on how do we improve that consistency and transparency.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: And I will just add that, at least on the MOIA end, we have a close partnership with both MOCS and the Mayor's Office of Non-profit Services, who are a great resource for all non-profits, especially folks that are new to the invoicing or contracting process over here in the city, right, so we definitely, at least when things get elevated to us, we definitely work closely with providers to point them in the right direction.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Great.

And I think you answered my question, Commissioner, already about, I think HRA and DSS are probably some of the ones that we hear most about from the agencies, and so whatever you guys can do to help push those contracts through would be, I think, immensely helpful.

Okay. And moving on to health and mental health. So, I know that, aside from the traditional mental health and health services, I know that, more specifically, there's been a lot of trauma around the federal immigration detention that's been happening across the city, and so do you support immigrants post-detention with their mental health needs or other services, and what does that look like?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. MOIA's been working really closely with agency partners, including DOHMH, to really understand better the kinds of support and mental health support that we can provide to immigrants following detention. This includes coordination with organizations, such as the Envision Freedom Fund, which is a bail and bond support non-profit organization to strengthen connections between community-based organizations and the relevant agencies. MOIA also, I'm proud to say, is in the preliminary stages of research to assess the mental health impacts that immigration post-detention, and to identify where are the gaps in services and support that is needed, and we'll continue to engage our partners on this process and share those additional findings once we have them.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Perfect.

And will there be, I mean, given that we're looking at federal cuts that are obviously going to hurt the refugee asylum seeker services, have you been having conversations with the Administration, OMB, do you know if there's any additional funding for immigration services in the executive plan that go towards specifically funding wraparound services for this population?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. The Administration continues to evaluate community needs across legal services and case management and other stabilization support, and, you know, at MOIA, we strongly recognize the importance of holistic and trauma-informed approaches, particularly for vulnerable populations, and so while there may not be additional funding in the executive plan for wraparound immigration services, we do want to take a moment to highlight again the work of the Haitian Response Initiative, because they have done incredible work in this area. I think we have specific data that HRI has completed about 610 intakes so far this Fiscal Year, and has, you know, completed a certain number of trainings as well, so there is an example of folks within MOIA's network where they have offered and do offer this trauma-informed care.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Great. And two things really quickly I just want to uplift is that during our roundtable discussions with a lot of the providers, definitely ways to retain immigration attorneys, and if there's anything you all can do on your side to really emphasize to Admin, OMB, that we need extra funds to make sure that we're able to retain the attorneys with higher salaries and pay, that would be great. And then of course, purpose of funds, making sure that the funding can be flexible, because there's a lot of different types of services that they need to provide, and so those are two things I just wanted to highlight from our roundtable conversations.

And I'm going to pause there, and I have a couple questions, but let me move on to my Co-Chair, Chair Encarnación.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Hello again.

So, I'm going to jump right in because we are pressed for time, but I wanted to talk about the budget, MOIA's budget, and your headcount. It's always challenging to try to conduct oversight because of the programs, they're spread throughout multiple agencies, as was already discussed. I know that you highlighted some strengths and some challenges that we may have in calling for an independent agency. I'm going to continue to call for that because I really feel that there are some major wins that we can get there, but I appreciate the want and need for further communication around that.

In your testimony, you mentioned 10 new positions at MOIA that they are currently open. Under which agencies are those 10 new positions housed, and does that include the three vacant positions that we had spoke about during the prelim budget, or is it in addition to those three?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: Yes. That does include those three vacancies that we spoke about in the prelim, and these vacancies are spread through the Mayor's Office, DCAS, DSS, and SBS.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: What was the first one before DCAS, I'm sorry?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: DSS.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: Mayor's Office.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: The Mayor's Office, okay, got it. And this is all still with the same baseline budget of 781,962?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: Well, so our lines overall, they're spread throughout, you know, they're housed at different agencies. Over at the Mayor's Office, we have five lines that are currently housed there, and those, and the three vacancies that we spoke about, that's where those are, and that's the 780,000-dollar budget is specifically for the Mayor's Office, but we do have other lines that are housed under other agencies. While that's the case, the employees do sit within our office, right, and do carry out MOIA's, you know, work, you know, but they're essentially, you know, on payroll on other agencies.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: This is where it gets confusing. This is where I'm not really understanding. So, we'll get into that, because I'm trying to understand, like, so then as far as directives, mission, who tells them what they should be doing on a day-to-day basis? Is that coming from a different agency? Is it coming from your vision? If it's coming from your vision, then it makes sense that it's your staff, right? If it's coming from DSS or DCAS, then it's their staff.

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. Chair, you raise a very great question, and we're trying to demystify it, so I apologize if we're adding to the confusion. The staff that are currently at MOIA, even if their budget comes from a different agency, they are executing the work and the mission of MOIA. They are physically in MOIA's offices. I see them, I interact with them. Their core responsibilities are to, you know, implement our programs, our policies. So, the total PS budget, you know, across the agencies, including the Mayor's Office, is about 5.3 million for staffing that implement our program and our work.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: That is actually very helpful. I just wonder why the hesitancy to just call it MOIA's budget in that way, because then I can see growth there and I can see the importance behind the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs when we're talking about the millions of dollars for a budget versus barely a million dollars for the office, but we'll move on.

So under, which MOIA programs are RFP'd and which are not RFP'd?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: So, most immediately for FY27, we're not RFP'ing any new programs. Especially with the added baseline funding, our focus has been to extend contracts, right, to avoid break-in services. We're still in the process of making a determination and assessment on whether to RFP programs in the future. We're still in that process. And once we make that decision and, if we do move forward right with that decision, we'll definitely ensure that community-based organizations and other information is public with plenty of time for folks to be able to participate as part of that procurement process.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Can you talk about some of the metrics that you're going to use to evaluate those programs briefly? Like, what are you looking forward? How do you see success in extending those programs?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: On the current programs that we have, well, there's a variety of things.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: I know.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: So, I'll try to answer the RFP question, and then I think to the programs that we currently have. I think that's, again, conversations that we will have, as the Commissioner has been mentioning, we have been actively meeting with all of our providers to hear the good, the bad, and the ugly, and those conversations will continue in regards to what's working and what's not. What we have pride ourselves with, and I've heard this from Chair Lee as well, is we have tried to maintain our programs, at least some of them very nimble, so providers can respond in real time.

And then in regards to just the evaluations, it's an array of things. It's a combination of how many folks have been served, the types of folks that have been served, languages spoken, things to that extent. But it varies for, I think the number's at 11 right now, of the different initiatives that we have. But it's also a point that we're open to having conversations in regards to anything that you might be hearing from providers yourself, or things that you're learning on the ground in regards to what we should be thinking about as well.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: And are they currently in a contract cycle, and what year are they in most of these RFPs?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: So, I can start, I don't know if you want me to walk you through the different programs that we have, but the Legal Support Centers, they were part of an RFP that happened last year, and this is their first year of a three-year contract, so that's one bucket.

We have HRI partners that are in their renewal cycle now, and are starting again this year, same contracted partners.

We have our Immigrant Rights Workshop, same thing, as well as our hotline, which will continue with Catholic Charities.

The Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, as the Commissioner mentioned, there was an enhancement there, but that contract is also moving forward.

Our English language support centers as well, those contracts continue. I think I got all of them, but the only one I think that you can think of within the RFP cycle would be our Legal Support Centers, which are locked into a three-year contract.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Got it. Perfect. Okay.

Speaking of immigration legal services, we're very excited to see roughly 33 million comprised of 11.6 million added in the prelim for Legal Support Centers, and 21.3 million added for the expansion of immigrant legal services baselined, starting in Fiscal 2027, and there was no additional funded added in the executive plan. So, I wanted to know what exactly will this additional funding added in prelim be used for. For example, which existing programs will be expanded, will there be new programs?

COMMISSIONER ALI: The additional funding is going to allow us to continue the current programming while also expanding key support initiatives that we know the immigrant New Yorkers are depending on. As part of the funding that was baselined, we know that there is still a growing demand for immigration defense services. The City increased in baselined funding for the RLC by 3 million dollars. Our understanding is that, as we've engaged more with partners and organizations, that maintaining the support and growing that support is important with the baselined funding. I think having the continuity of service has been the biggest plus here. And the other thing I want to uplift, especially when it comes to our Rapid Response Legal Collaborative work, is that because of the fast changing federal policies and the changes in law as well, it forces the immigration attorneys to have to sort of chase all of those changes and be nimble, and we're proud that we were able to baseline some of the support, get additional resources in FY26 to make sure that they have what they need to actually be nimble in that space.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: So, it's an expansion, it's not creating new programs. Will any new programs be created? No?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. We're absolutely looking forward to, you know, having those conversations in the foreseeable future about, you know, I think the biggest important thing for me has been, you know, we've mentioned meeting with all of our providers. It was like a week-long marathon meeting of hundreds of providers specifically to understand not just what the needs are, but like are the programs that we are currently administering having an impact in the communities and how are we measuring that. So, those conversations for future programming are important for us to have. It just requires a little bit more community engagement and stakeholder input.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Yeah. And so what specific immigration cases or clients is the 33 million anticipated to cover?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Sorry. I didn't quite grab that. You said the 33 million dollars?

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Yes.

COMMISSIONER ALI: We're making significant investment in deportation defense. MOIA is directing 14.6 million of that to go to the RLC, to our Legal Support Centers, and to support New Yorkers who are facing deportation cases. I think that level of investment really shows the urgency, and my colleague just passed a note that we do want to uplift that there is additional resources that will be going to our habeas project and we can provide details on the breakdown of that particular funding.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: That would be very helpful. Thank you for that.

And do you know if any of this new funding will be allocated directly to vendors?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: All of it.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: All of it? Perfect.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Yeah.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: And have you thought about, and I'm sure you have thought about this, so that part is rhetorical, but how are you thinking about and planning for potential federal clawbacks of legal service funding or restrictions on who can be served?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. It's one of the things that keeps you up at night, but I think it's really important to highlight that our legal services are funded by the City, which shields them from direct federal clawbacks. However, we are actively tracking what can be trickle-down effects from federal funding cuts and restrictions on whom our organizations and providers can serve. We remain, like I said, in close communication with our agency partners regarding federal policy changes and any threats to accessing services. Specifically, we've been talking to our partners and agencies around the mixed status rule change that's being proposed by HUD. And of course, staying in close communication with our providers who they flag emerging issues that they see on the ground regularly.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: And do you know if there would be like budget reserves for those kinds of emergency situations or something that would happen, you know, it could be overnight with this federal administration? Are there any kind of reserves specifically for MOIA?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. That's something that I would have to circle back with you on. I'm unsure.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay. Can you talk a little bit about some of the advocacy you've done with the Office of New Americans and the State leaders to advocate for some of the services and the funding for legal services specifically, but anywhere you've done some of that advocacy.

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. This is a priority that we're actively working to address. You know, I mentioned earlier, most recently, MOIA coordinated with ONA on our family preparedness phone bank, and we're going to continue to build on that partnership to really, you know, identify and respond to whatever additional needs may arise. I think for us, a priority is to make sure that we're preventing any sort of gaps in services that may arise and are looking forward to continuing that partnership with ONA.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you for that.

And then the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, you've talked a little bit about that. Can you tell me how many people have been served through the work for Fiscal 2026 thus far?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Yes. Give me one, I'm just going to get the numbers.

COMMISSIONER ALI: We came with numbers just in case.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Love that.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: So, through this year to date, I can tell you that on some of the KYR efforts that we've done, there have been 383 students supported, grades 9 through 10. In quarter two and quarter three of FY26, the collaborative screened about 90 individuals under the expanded DOE scope and provided legal services to 50 of them. And

I'm going to circle back on the other bucket because there's two buckets of work that I just don't have in front of me. The one that I walked you through is connected to the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative in schools.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Yeah. It seems pretty low, the numbers, and maybe I'm just in skewing. So, can you talk about maybe whatever you've heard of some of the biggest challenges in supporting our students at that level?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. I think one of the biggest challenges right now is turnout for virtual and those in-person events. We're working really closely with our partners to look into how do we turn out for some of those future events? What does outreach look like? How can we better ensure that individuals are receiving access to the information that they need?

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Yeah. We've struggled with that, with the Know Your Rights as well so that rings very true.

And I'm going to get into the City's sanctuary policies across the agencies, Executive

Order 13 and what happened there, and then I'm going to allow my Colleagues to ask some questions. For many of you who may not know yet, on February 6th, the Mayor issued Executive Order 13 to strengthen the City's sanctuary protections and the report for this Executive Order audit, and its findings was published online just recently on May 22nd. I want to thank the Administration for giving the Council a briefing on this before it was put online. It was extremely helpful to hear about it before actually reading it. So, I had some questions. So, who in the Administration authored the report and what was your role throughout the fight before the findings came out?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. The report was prepared by the Interagency Response Committee, which, as you mentioned, it was created by Executive Order 13. It's chaired by the FDM. It includes direct consultation from MOIA, our Chief Counsel's Office, and the Special Advisor for Strategic Coordination. That's who prepared the report.

We meet and have met throughout this process in leading up to the release of the audit quite regularly to discuss how are we going to roll out this information. I was pleased to see that we had such great participation from our partners in the Council for the briefing as well.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: It was great. And then moving forward, will MOIA be kind of like the lead of those conversations and the ongoing audits, for lack of a better word here?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. MOIA is a member of the IRC in a leadership capacity, so we will be continuing our role in that process.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay. And in that report, the audit reports and talks about significant gaps in City agency reporting on interactions with federal immigration authorities. Can you describe in a little bit of detail what those significant gaps were?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. The audit revealed that many interactions between City agencies and federal immigration authorities were not reported at all, either because agencies weren't effectively tracking those interactions because incidents surfaced maybe after relevant reports had already been published or because the existing guidance didn't require reporting interactions such as subpoenas and warrants and other instances where federal agents forcefully entered City property. And I think to directly address these gaps, the Mayor has updated and approved additional guidance that will be issued by the IRC. And in this guidance, reporting requirements have been strengthened and clarified, including by expanding the types of interactions that are subject to that reporting. In short, you know, agencies are now directed to be over-inclusive in what they report to MOIA.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: And did you see any gaps from your own data analysis that maybe weren't in the audit, the official audit that you may have put in there from your own analysis or just recognize were missing from the report?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. You know, I think until now, the reports that were issued by MOIA, they categorize other instances as any types of interaction between City agencies and federal immigration agencies that were not otherwise subject to reporting. So that, as I mentioned earlier, was something that we also had identified as a gap.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: And one of the recommendations submitted by the NYPD is to establish a protocol requiring that the Communications Division notify Operations of any 9-1-1 calls related to the presence of federal immigration authorities or immigration matters. And the recommendation says that a patrol executive will be sent to the scene. What is a patrol executive?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. That's a great question. That is information that we can share after we have more discussion with the NYPD and other IRC partners.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Do you know what, like, as a uniform officer, is it, do you know that it's going to, well, you don't know that it's going to be a separate, the wording is interesting.

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. That's something I'll have to get back to you on.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay. So, I'll save those follow-up questions for this patrol executive for that time.

And then I know that EO 13, the six agencies had to make their policies and protocols regarding interactions with ICE available on their websites. Do you know if that they have done so, if all of them have done so?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Now that the Mayor has received the audit and adopted the recommendations for changes to the policies and protocols, agencies are beginning to implement those changes and will complete that process in the coming months. The IRC is going to continue in our role as leadership to work with the agencies as they undertake this process, which also includes a public engagement component. You know, the executive order actually, in terms of a specific timeline, requires the agencies to promptly publish their policies online, and that's something that the IRC is working to ensure that the agencies in fact do.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: But there's no like set timeline of when you're, I mean, promptly.

COMMISSIONER ALI: There's no deadline, but promptly.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay.

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: And then who monitors the compliances? You said it's the IRC.

COMMISSIONER ALI: The IRC.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay. Thank you.

Okay. So, I'm going to take a break so I can let some of my Colleagues ask some questions. I'll have Linda (INAUDIBLE)

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Sure.

Actually, before that, I just had a really, really quick clarifying question on the RFP question that the Chair just asked, because while I know there's pros and cons to not issuing out new RFPs, I guess my main concern, and correct me if I'm wrong, is that it also doesn't allow for new rates and increases, right? So, I'm just wondering if there's something baked in or a process where COLAs or the rates per case and those types of things will be increased or looked at.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ: For that, we're going to have to circle back with you. We're going to have to consult with our contracting agency to get more details on that.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. That would be great, because if there's a way where we could address that issue, even if there's no new RFP, I think that'd be great, because I know that that could be a way to increase some of the funds that they're getting.

So, okay, we have Council Member Joseph followed by Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Wonderful. Thank you, Chairs. Good to see you always, Commissioner.

Just a couple of follow-up questions. I know you said you provided programming on the HRI. The number of people served, 610 for 2026 thus far?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: That's correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Will there be an expansion of the HRI initiative? Is that something you're looking?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Currently, the providers are remaining the same at the same funding level.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Okay. So, I have another question. Are you considering maybe thinking about partnering with Council Member offices to provide those services in their offices?

COMMISSIONER ALI: That's something that was actually raised when we met with our HRI partners on how do we reach more deeper into communities, so it's part of an ongoing conversation.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Yeah. I think we should consider that.

How are you supporting asylum seekers? I noticed that they have a fee they have to pay by May 29, 2026. How are you getting that word out to the communities?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Well, one, to credit the Council, and also some of the work that we do.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: We don't get enough praises. Go ahead, though.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: I have to be honest here, but because of the partnership that we had last year during the budget negotiations, we were able to allocate funding for fees, including some of the filing fees that you're mentioning right now, which I think is a win overall. We have been working with our providers to ensure that they're aware that that's available to them, and we have been pretty successful of spending some of that funding down.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: How do communities, or for example, my office, or not-for-profit get in touch with you to know that these fees are available for members? Because I think today was the deadline for some of them to apply for those fees for filing.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Yeah. I mean, we are always available. After this hearing, I'll send you an email, Council Member, and then we're happy to make the connections with our legal service providers.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: I would love that. Thank you.

Thank you, Chairs.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Thank you.

Council Member Brewer?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

First of all, Commissioner, thank you for showing up at Open Arms District 3. They very much appreciated that.

Number two, as you know, Ruth Messinger is very involved with people who are here seeking asylum, and she has managed, thanks to money that you and previous Speaker Adrienne Adams allocated to the Jewish Hospital to have a teaching program for home health aides. Really successful. So, my question is, are you doing that elsewhere? In other words, it's my experience, because I have folks who are seeking asylum in my house, that the job situation is what they're looking for. Obviously, people are delivering, but they would like something more secure. Unfortunately, we're all getting older, and home health aides are desperately needed. So, my question is, are there other such programs? Will money be allocated? Is it something you're looking toward?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. Thank you, Council Member. I actually had a very good and lengthy discussion with Ruth.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm sure you did.

COMMISSIONER ALI: Specifically about the success of this program, because it was a pilot, and talked a little bit about ways to expand that into other job opportunities as well. So, it is part of an ongoing conversation that we are hoping to continue with Ruth on that specific teaching hospital, but also just using that model to see if it's something that we can scale up and support.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. And is there a sense of, I have no sense, I mean, I wish that every single person who came here was able to stay who was seeking asylum. We need the schools, we need them all. That's not the case with the person in Washington. So, my question is, do we have some sense of how many folks here are seeking asylum, and who are, obviously not everybody's in shelter, not everybody is able to be found. You can't find the people in my house, I bet. So, my question is, do we have any sense of the numbers, many of whom could use these programs that Ruth is trying to establish?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: I don't have that number handy, but we will get it, and we can circle back with that.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Because I think that would help us give some sense of where we're going in terms of those kinds of programs. The young people I know just got jobs as security officers. Very exciting, big deal. Better than delivering, safer, etc., from their perspective, more steady.

Second question is, everybody has to learn English if you want to get a job. Some of them are learning it from YouTube, that seems to be a way, but the adult literacy, can you bring us up to date on cuts, where you're looking? Obviously, the feds have been very unfortunately cutting, and I think this is as important as all the other topics that we've been talking about today.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Yeah. I can start. In regards to just overall cuts, we don't have that, but we are happy to say that via the MOIA English Language and Learning Support Centers, we have added (TIMER CHIME) and have extended and baselined funding for our English Language Support Centers at 500K per library system. We do have what we call We Speak, which is a way for folks who might not be ready to join adult literacy class, might be a bit too shy to speak out or speak openly and learn to try to learn the language, and encourages people to communicate amongst each other, but also learn about New York City civic engagement life and what other offices and agencies are doing around the city. So, it's a bit of a multifold way of integrating new New Yorkers into our city.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. The reason I ask is, it would be helpful, because I know you bring information and agencies together to have a sense of where we are with, in general, the ELLs, because it seems to me that if there are huge waiting lists, which there always have been, then that would be something that the Council and the Mayor should be looking at. It is the one way that everybody can get jobs. So, I'd love to know, again, it exists in different agencies, Libraries, DOE, you, etc. So, is that something that you can work on?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. I mean, we know, and you kind of hit it on the nail with both of your questions, that English learning is the pathway for civic participation, as Loretta mentioned, but economic mobility and just long-term stability for immigrant communities in our city. Through our English learning and support centers, we know they're designed in a way to strengthen language skills, but really connect immigrant New Yorkers to larger services. We see this as an important, it's a value, it's an important program that we administer at MOIA, and we would love to continue those conversations with the Council on how to provide additional support for adult literacy.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Thank you very much.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Thank you.

Council Member Avilés?

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you, thank you, Chairs. Thank you all for being here.

I have a couple of scattershot questions. In terms of the immigration legal support hotline, if I recall, it sounds like the number of calls that you've received, that there have been a good number of improvements to the hotline. Do you have a sense of what the increase is in usage from the prior Fiscal Year?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Yeah. I'm about to get these numbers, I know, because they're watching. So, I think we've talked a little bit about this in years past, but there was actually a decrease in some of the calls during the last Administration, and I think it was connected also to sort of the federal environment and things to that extent. But that's just overall. I know that now we have seen an increase in calls in other languages, Haitian Creole to be one, that is very significant, and that change really began January of this year. But I'll try to get you a number, because I know that you might be interested in that.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Yeah, no. I think our perpetual struggle is to make sure that these hotlines are as effective as possible, and I think, you know, we want to recognize that there have been investments and work to improve those things. So, I'm glad to see that, to hear that there are more languages incoming, that's a good sign.

I was also heartened to hear about, I mean, the 12,000 of the 19,000 being particularly referrals for legal support, kind of leads me to my next question in terms of the legal support partners. Obviously, they're bound by contracts with certain outcomes. And the improvement in the hotline will potentially mean more volume for the legal support centers who are bound by specific contracts and service limits. Is there a consideration to adjust support to the legal centers as that volume increases in referrals? Because I guess what I'm getting at here is that I feel like the volume of referrals probably coming to the legal support centers has increased from every direction, and the contracts are stagnant and not increasing with the same level. Obviously, it's not a one-to-one, we'd love that. But do you have a sense of how that is kind of meting out at the end of the day?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Yeah. I can, and I also just want to clarify that referrals are made to the legal support centers, the Rapid Response Collaborative, NYIFUP, as well as we were able to also provide connections to (TIMER CHIME) ICARE as well. So, there's a bit more support with that.

On the legal support center side, as you know, besides the three-year contracts, there's other providers as well who have a one-year contract, and as the Commissioner mentioned, that funding has been renewed so there's a bit of an expanded. But what we have done internally is we've created a capacity tracker as a centralized tool to support the hotline referrals and the legal support centers. So, we're not just like sending people without consulting with the legal support centers. Weekly, we send out and ask them to provide us with a real-time snapshot of what their capacity looks like. Then that really helps our hotline counselors as well as the legal support centers. So, it's not uniform. We're like, you have to take 100 people. We check in to see what their capacity is of that week, and then we inform our hotline counselors in real time so they have that as well.

COMMISSIONER ALI: And part of our sort of ongoing work with the hotline, and because we also recognize that we've been doing a ton of outreach and are about to roll out more outreach, and with this hotline number, what does that mean for capacity? I think part of the improvements that we have with Catholic Charities and some of our legal service providers is understanding better, what does the flow of information look like? How should legal service providers be receiving those calls? I think that there's been improvements being made to the coordination to just also address the capacity concern. Our intention is not to flood the legal service providers with all calls, but screen them so the appropriate calls are being sent to the appropriate organizations.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: And if I may add one thing, Council Member, the other note to make just data-wise is that the calls have, although we have received lesser calls, the call time and like duration of the call has increased. So, from FY25, when the average was about four minutes, and FY26, it's about seven, which talks about just the complexity of the calls that we're getting as well. So just wanted to add that as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: No, that's helpful. And I think I'm heartened to hear about the capacity tracker because it is a concern, I think, where we can be more targeted and precise in our understanding where the gaps are in the field then I think we'll be able to kind of build on that, right, so I'm heartened to hear that.

If I may, one quick? I guess just we can talk some more about that. I think we still have a whole three years with the Orange Chupacabra and a complex system, right? As we see every day, more and more changes are being made, which brings more complexity to the legal field. So, I think there's just going to be an ongoing issue to make sure that we check in and be very precise with like how we're supporting the building of the capacity to find lawyers.

In terms of adult literacy, I'm sorry, I didn't, I think some of these questions probably for DYCD, but I'd like to know if MOIA is advocating for the new proposal around the 20 million dollars for the called the Education for Integration and Equity Program, an important allocation. I'd just like to know what those conversations have been like.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: We have been in touch with and have received a proposal that has been put out for the 20 million. I think I see some folks in the space who are here now, and we have touched base with DYCDs, but those conversations are ongoing. I don't have anything like new to share, but happy to, we will be listening into the DYCD hearing as well. As you know, adult literacy is very important to MOIA and connected to the language justice work that we're doing generally, but that's what I have to share right now.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: No, I think we missed it. It was right before this one, but I think what's important to note here is obviously there is an RFP that has challenges that came out in '24. We're going to continue to ask critical questions around re-looking at that RFP for what we knew were the consequences were going to be, and in fact played out, that we continue to invest in adult literacy services. So even with the expansion, it's still woefully underfunded and a critical service, and I think we see that field is also under attack by the federal government. So, what I would really like to see is like some proactive planning around understanding some of that money being swept away and our city being prepared to step in that gap. So, thank you. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Thank you.

Okay. Really quick question about the 2030 census, because as we know, it's going to come up a lot faster than we realize, and in gearing up for that, knowing how important this is, just wanted to know what MOIA has done in the past few years to prepare for the upcoming census, and then how are you planning to collaborate with the new office of census once it's established and sort of what the role of MOIA will play?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. Unfortunately, the planning for the next, for the previous cycle predates my time and most of our teams, but it's really clear to us that ensuring a full and accurate count of immigrant New Yorkers requires long-term sustained groundwork and not just outreach in the year itself of the census. So, over the past several years, you know, MOIA has worked around expanding language access and strengthening community partnerships, investing in multilingual public education and ethnic media engagement that we believe has helped build the infrastructure that is essential for reaching historically undercounted communities. Those same systems are critical for the census outreach as well.

And looking forward, we are looking forward to playing an active role in supporting the census efforts by working closely with our community-based organizations and sister agencies.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. Chair.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Thank you.

Okay. We're going to do some rapid questions and responses. We have until 4 o'clock then we lose our translators and we can't have that.

So, for family preparedness and family separation, during our round tables, some of our CBOs shared, you know, that they are supporting community members preparing families for possible separation, and I know that MOIA has a flyer posted online. It is currently available, I think, online in eight languages. Are there plans to expand the amount of languages that it is available for?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Yes. So, right now, I think it's also available in Russian and we are working on the Urdu translation right now so it could be available in its top 10. We're always open to feedback as well. If there are additional languages that you might be encountering in your neighborhood.

And if I may, Chair on the RLC, because I just got that other number, just I wanted to make the note that the data that I provided was up until the end of March. So, there's more work that happened on the DOE side, as well as with the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, one of the main contract, there have been about 137 screenings. I will just note that although those numbers seem low, those are very comprehensive, complex cases that require, you know, very dedicated and experienced attorneys. Just wanted to say that because they're very traumatic cases too, that although they seem low, they're actually pretty significant in retrospect. But thank you for letting me add that.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: No. I appreciate that. And it was really about making sure and understanding that people knew about these services and knew how to get connected and that they were availing themselves when they needed support.

And so, other than the flyer and things like that, what other resources can CBOs look at MOIA to for family separation?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: I can take this, Commissioner. So, part of the outreach campaign, which we do do with our outreach team, that's one bucket. The Commissioner mentioned this at the top, but we also created, we had a MOIA legal hotline bank with ONA back in April, I think April 21st, when we received about 227 calls. We understand that this is an issue that the community really cares about, and that was a sort of the way that we provided that outreach. We worked with ethnic media at the time to spread the word and awareness. So that's another bucket. We also have the rapid response in schools in which families are provided KYR on what standby guardianship and their options, as well as our legal support centers provided in FY26, at least 14 guardianship clinics, observing a total of 364 people. And then the last one that I'll mention is that our legal technical mentor, the

Immigrant Justice Corp also delivered a five-part training series on special immigration juvenile status, although not directly on family separation, but it's also adjacent to the issue so I wanted to uplift that work as well.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay. And do you coordinate with ACS at all for that?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Yes, we do, and we talk to them frequently. I know that there are a lot of changing issues that happened. So as the Commissioner mentioned at the top, we have through our interagency efforts, we do connect with them as well on any federal changes and things to that extent.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Okay. I want to get into language access. As you know, we have some of the strongest language access laws in the country. And what we're seeing, obviously it requires agencies to appoint language access coordinators and to translate. But in 2023, there was an evaluation by the City's language access, like the secret shopper program, and it said that more than half of the sensors evaluated were in violation of Local Law 30.

And since then, the Council has been in Fiscals '23 through '26, the Council began investing in the creation of the language service worker cooperatives, as well as the community interpreter bank. So, can you talk to me a little bit about how can MOIA increase collaboration and coordination with the Council funded initiatives, the bank and the language service worker cooperatives?

COMMISSIONER ALI: We've had conversations with the Council-funded, both the community interpreter bank organizations and the community language workers. On the community interpreter bank specifically, MOIA organized a virtual convening this February where the NYIC has shared information about the services that are being offered by the community interpreter bank. 33 different agencies were in fact present. And our engagement really doesn't end there. You know, MOIA has also included information about third-party language resources, including information about the Language Justice Collaborative and other non-profits in our monthly language access newsletter and agency language access partners.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: And how do you measure compliance across City agencies when it comes to those kind of gaps that you're seeing?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. You know, MOIA is committed to advancing language justice really as a core principle of how we do our work. Language access is essential to ensuring that immigrant New Yorkers can fully participate in civic life and accessing critical services and engaging with agencies. You know, the City's responsibility goes, as I had said earlier, beyond compliance, and this is really for us about building systems that are responsive and inclusive. You know, MOIA coordinates across the City agencies through a combination of oversight and technical assistance that we offer and specifically with other agencies. You know, we monitor this technical assistance to all of the local law authority agencies and convene them on a regular basis. As I mentioned in my testimony just this April, we did do our large convening of language access coordinators across agencies to not just underscore the importance of language access, but make sure that there's an opportunity for agencies to share some of their best practices and talk a little bit about…

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: And that there's a law on it, right?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Correct, yeah.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Compliance is important, I think, in that sense, because, you know, the reasoning behind putting that law forward was that we need to start closing those gaps between those agencies. So, you know, just to pinpoint that, because I think that it is, and you know this, and I think that that's where you're getting at with making sure that there's a good relationship and collaboration there, but in terms of making sure that there's compliance, I want to just understand how we measure that and we fill those gaps and hold them accountable to making sure that they are providing those services.

COMMISSIONER ALI: I think part of it is also like having an ongoing, you know, communication with these agencies. You know, after that convening, Deputy Mayor Julie Su and I actually issued a memo to all the Local Law 30 agencies just reiterating not just compliance, I think that we need to have a larger conversation about how do we achieve language justice, and so we talked in that, you know, memo about how we're embedding language access really as a core government function. So, to your point, it is absolutely the law, but we can go deeper than the spirit of the law if we really want to ensure equitable access for immigrant New Yorkers.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Agreed. And I know with the immigrant worker protections, because I know you just mentioned Deputy Mayor Su, there were a lot of discussions, especially in some of our roundtables around having concerns about workers who may live in the city, but work outside of the city and having those protections applied to them. So, does the Administration plan to connect with local jurisdictions to talk about how do we coordinate, further protect, and how do we do that knowing that, you know, they're not necessarily a sanctuary city like ours?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. Absolutely. I mean, these are real concerns that affect people's willingness to move safely for employment and opportunity. We are open to coordinating with workers across the country.

Do you want to share about the recent roundtable?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Yeah. We are taking this international. We actually met with the Transnational Worker Advocates with Deputy Mayor Su, where advocates came from actually Latin America to talk about some of the issues that they have been having. Another touchpoint we've had most recently has been with workers and in connection with the Chief Climate Officer to talk about the impacts of heat and climate on workers as well. So, there have been new touchpoints that we've made with the worker specific issues that you flagged.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: I love that. Thank you so much for that. I think that that's great. And, you know, it's that kind of innovation that we hope for when we're looking at how do we really support people in a real world way.

And as you know, we held a joint hearing with the Housing Committee to talk about some of the housing issues that we were seeing and the intersectionality around immigration and housing. Do you know if any of the increased funding for expansion of legal services in executive plan will be involved in anti-harassment outreach in collaboration with HPD?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: We don't have that information, but following that hearing, we have been working with them more on some of the gaps that you're hearing laid out and further strengthening the coordination that we have on the ground. So, thank you for hosting that because it was a very timely hearing.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: Yeah. You know, I really want to make sure that we are keeping people housed. I mean, it's one of the only ways that we can really make sure that, and properly housed, right?

Trying to make sure I get through. Okay. I have two more things really quickly. One, I really want to talk about supporting our LGBTQ-plus immigrants. You know, this is a subset of a subset that we cannot forget about and we have to keep uplifting some of the questions there. So, can you please provide an update on your collaboration with Director Taylor Brown of the new Office of LGBTQIA Affairs, specifically as it relates to how they meet the needs of our immigrant New Yorkers?

COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah. I think you said it best that it is government's responsibility to support the most vulnerable and sometimes we have communities that are far more vulnerable than that, and so I appreciate the question. You know, MOIA has been meeting regularly with Director Taylor Brown of the Mayor's Office of LGBTQIA-plus Affairs to discuss next steps in implementing specifically Local Law 73, which was passed by the Council last year. In conjunction with the Mayor's Office of Equality and the Mayor's Office of LGBTQIA Affairs, through that local law, there is a conducting a comprehensive assessment of the services that are currently available to TGNC communities, specifically transgender and gender non-conforming, non-binary, intersex immigrants, and the findings of this assessment will directly inform a phased implementation plan really designed to address and identify any of the service gaps across the city.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: And just in the same vein as the last question, you know, I'm hoping that some of that translates into actual dollars there to support those programs, outreach and things like that. So, I know that you may not know similarly to the last one if it's there yet, but if we can continue advocacy for that.

And then lastly, I know the Mayor's Office of Mass Engagement was newly created this year. It received 2.8 million in baseline funding started in Fiscal 2027. Can you talk a little bit about your partnership with them? How you may use that office to help support some of the programming that you have?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Yeah. I'm happy to say that I just spoke to them again yesterday. So, we are very much in close communication and in lockstep in regards to us sharing information regarding immigrants, as well as supporting them with some forward-facing information, coordination, and some outreach efforts that we've made. I know that we've partnered with them on a couple of things already, and that partnership will continue. We're also in the same building so we see each other on the elevators as well, but we are working very closely with them and across teams, not just one, but the whole office as a whole.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: I want to be in that elevator.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LUCERO: Come by anytime.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: To help talk and speak with some ideas. I'm going to stake out the elevators now.

We will be in communication. There's a lot more. I had 11 pages of questions, obviously. So, you know, I know, but, you know, it is extremely complex, as you know. There's many layers to it, many subdivisions and answers that I really wanted to get in terms of the executive budget. It's difficult to go through and make sure that we properly are supporting each and every aspect of it. I'm going to continue to fight for as much as I can on my end and I hope that internally you're fighting for our immigrant neighbors. I know you are. And I'm actually really, really impressed with some of the stuff that

I've seen so far and some of the answers to the questions. Thank you for being so prepared.

I'm going to give it over now to my Co-Chair.

COMMISSIONER ALI: I want to just say thank you to the Chair for being a fighter and whatever questions, I'm happy to have a follow-up conversation with you just so you can get the answers you need.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ENCARNACIÓN: We'll be sending it over. All right. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER ALI: Great.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Thank you.

Actually, since we have like two minutes, one final question that's more fun about the World Cup that's happening right now this year. But just out of curiosity, because we have so many great small businesses, immigrant-owned parts of our city, especially Queens. I mean, I think the Queens Council Members fight over who has the better food in their District, but we know that this is coming up. And so just was curious to know, I know that the Mayor's Office is launching New York City Neighborhood

Passport, and so are you guys working with them at all to encourage folks to explore a lot of different neighborhoods in the city and get out there and explore?

COMMISSIONER ALI: I'm glad to end on a fun note. Yeah. The New York City Neighborhood Passport is a citywide program. It launches on June 11th. And the idea is to encourage New Yorkers to visit and explore the five boroughs and many of the immigrant neighborhoods that make this city so great. Participants are collecting artist design stamps from hundreds of community organizations and cultural institutions and public events from dance performances and film screenings. It's really a great opportunity for the community to get involved and explore our great city.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Great. And if you want recommendations from all of us in terms of which restaurants are the best in our area, let us know, add it to a list. We'll be sending that out.

COMMISSIONER ALI: Okay.

CO-CHAIRPERSON LEE: Yeah. I think with that, we are done for the day.

So, thank you so much, Commissioner and everyone else for being here.

And, again, public hearing Wednesday, June 10th. Make sure everyone signs up.

So, thank you so much, everyone, and that concludes our third day of hearings. [GAVEL]

C E R T I F I C A T E

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

Date ____June 30, 2026_______________