

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY
WITH THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER
EDUCATION AND THE COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS, STATE
AND FEDERAL LEGISLATION

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May 15, 2025
Start: 10:08 a.m.
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HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Justin L. Brannan,
Chairperson for the Committee on
Finance

Eric Dinowitz,
Chairperson for the Committee on
Higher Education

Lincoln Restler,
Chairperson for the Committee on
Governmental Operations, State and
Federal Legislation

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Diana I. Ayala
Gale A. Brewer
Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
David M. Carr
Amanda Farias

COUNCIL MEMBERS: (CONTINUED)

Kamillah Hanks
Crystal Hudson
Farah N. Louis
Francisco P. Moya
Chi A. Ossè
Keith Powers
Yusef Salaam
Pierina Ana Sanchez
Althea V. Stevens
Nantasha M. Williams
Julie Won

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

Felix Matos Rodriguez
Chancellor of the City University of New York

Hector Batista
COO CUNY

Sherif Soliman
CFO CUNY

Provost Alicia Alvero
CUNY's Interim University Provost

Paul Seamus Ryan
NYC Campaign Finance Board

Amanda Melillo
NYC Campaign Finance Board

Heather James
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Jen Gaboury
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John Dennehy
Professor of Biology at Queens College, CUNY

Constance Lesold
Medger Evers College, CUNY

Akkeem Polack
Student at York College

Daniel Reden
University Student Senate Chairperson and the
Student Trustee for CUNY

Davia Willis
student at John Jay

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

Sakena Trice(SP?)

Senior Staff Attorney in the Disability Justice
Program at the New York Lawyers for the Public
Interest

Christopher Leon Johnson

Self

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Mic check, mic check, this is
a mic check on the New York City Council Fiscal Year
2026 on the Committee on Finance, Higher Education,
and Government Operations. Recorded in the Chambers
and recorded by Walter Lewis.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and welcome to
the New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing on
the Committees on Finance jointly with Higher
Education, jointly with Governmental Operations State
and Federal Legislation. At this time, can everybody
please silence your cell phones? If you wish to
testify, please go to the back of the room to fill
out a testimony slip.

At this time and going forward, no one is to
approach the dais. I repeat, no one is to approach
the dais. Chairs, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Sergeant.

[GAVEL] Okay, good morning. Welcome to the fourth
day of FY26 Executive Budget Hearings. Today, we'll
be hearing from the City University of New York. I'm
Council Member, Justin Brannan. I live here now and
I Chair the Committee on Finance. I'm pleased to be
joined by my colleague Council Member Eric Dinowitz
who Chairs the Committee on Higher Education. We've

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been joined by Council Members Brewer, Williams,
Carr, and Salaam. Welcome Chancellor Rodriguez and
your team. Thank you all for joining us today to
answer our questions. As a reminder, this is a
government proceeding and decorum shall be observed
at all times. As such, members of the public shall
remain silent at all times. We'll be taking public
testimony on the CUNY FY26 Executive Budget today.
After CUNY has testified, instead of holding one day
at the end for all public testimony.

If you wish to speak later today on the CUNY or
the CFB FY26 Executive Budget, please make sure you
fill out a witness slip with the Sergeant at Arms.
On May 20 - I'm sorry, on May 1, 2025, the
Administration released the Executive Financial plan
for FY26 to FY29 with a proposed FY26 budget of \$1.48
billion. CUNY's proposed FY26 budget of \$1.48
billion represents 1.3 percent of the Administrations
total proposed FY26 budget in the Executive plan.
This is an increase of \$199.5 million or 15.5 percent
from the \$1.28 billion originally budgeted in the
FY26 Preliminary plan back in January.

This increase results from several actions,
mostly baselined PEG restorations and collective

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bargaining agreements for unionized CUNY workers. As
of March 2025 CUNY had 273 vacancies relative to its
FY25 budgeted headcount.

In the Council's budget response, we called on
the Mayor to add \$174.8 million to CUNY's budget for
various programs and \$211 million in capital dollars.
CUNY remains a key pathway in providing upward
mobility for working class families and the budget
should demonstrate that commitment to creating and
presenting secondary quality education to New
Yorkers.

Everyone knows how important CUNY is to our city.
Why this Administration has been so proudly cavalier
on underfunding CUNY is beyond me but the Council has
fought very hard for CUNY over the years. My
questions today will largely focus on the tuition
adjustment, CUNY's headcount and vacancies and CUNY
reconnect, which is very important to this Council
and to Speaker Adams.

I now want to turn to my Co-Chair for this
hearing, Council Member Dinowitz for his opening
statement.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Chair Brannan
and welcome to the Fiscal 2026 Executive Budget

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Hearing. The City University of New York jointly
with the Committee on Finance. I'm Council Member
Eric Dinowitz, Chair of the Committee on Higher
Education and importantly a proud CUNY alum, son of a
CUNY alum, the brother of a CUNY alum, the husband of
a CUNY alum and today, special today, the Co-Chair of
a CUNY alum.

I want to thank - and I want to thank Finance
Chair Brannan for holding this joint hearing today.
CUNY's Fiscal 2026 Executive Budget totals \$1.48
billion which includes close to \$1 billion in
personal service funding to support 6,024 full time
positions. The budget also funds Other Than Personal
Services for \$426 million. CUNY's Fiscal 2026
Executive Budget is \$114.3 million greater for the
\$1.37 billion budget we adopted last year. The
difference mainly due to the baseline restoration
funding of about \$96 million from the program to
eliminate the gap.

In addition, the budget does restore funding for
several programs, such as CUNY ACE, ASAP and STEM
Institute long priorities of this Council that we
have often had to fight tooth and nail for in the
budget. However, many other essential programs

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remain unfunded including CUNY Reconnect, CUNY Flex,
Access and Inclusion, Application Fee Waiver, and
free Commuting Pilot Program. It is imperative that
CUNY is granted adequate funding to support our
students and their needs. I look forward to hearing
about CUNY's programs for our students with
disabilities, such as CUNY Leads and CUNY Unlimited.

Given this federal administration's policies on
higher education, there are attacked on our students,
we remain alert on the financial and policy
implications that our students and facility will be
impacted by and on the detrimental impact this can
have on the future of our city.

Before we begin, I would also like to thank our
Committee Staff for their work including Allie
Stofer, Florentine Kabore, Julia Goldsmith Pinkem and
Regina Paul for their work. I would also like to
thank Adam Staropoli my Budget and Legislation
Director and Jenna Klaus, my Chief of Staff. And
with that, I will now pass it back to Chair Brannan.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Chair. Before we
get started, I also want to take a quick moment to
always thank the mighty Council Finance division
staff for their efforts behind the scenes preparing

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for these hearings, especially Allie Stofer for
today's hearing, Committee Counsel Brian Sarfo, my
Senior Advisor John Yenin and all the Finance
Analysts and support staff back at mission control
who make it all work.

I'm now going to turn it over to Brian, the
Committee Counsel to swear in the witnesses and we
can begin.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning. 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? Chancellor
Rodriguez?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Officer Batista?

JONATHAN BATISTA: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Officer Saliman?

SHERIF SOLIMAN: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And Provost Alvero?

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: I do.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: You can begin, thank you.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Good morning Chair
Brannan, Chair Dinowitz, and other members of the New
York City Council Committees on Finance and Higher

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Education, staff and guests. I am Felix Matos
Rodriguez, the Chancellor of the City University of
New York and I'm joined by CUNY's Interim University
Provost Alicia Alvero, our Chief Operating Officer
Hector Batista, and our Chief Financial Officer
Sherif Soliman.

I want to thank Speaker Adams and the entire City
Council for your steadfast commitment to CUNY, our
mission, our programs, and most of all, our students.
Your support, along with Mayor Adams, Governor
Hochul, and the State Senate and Assembly have been
critical in enabling CUNY's vital contributions to
New York City.

I want to begin by acknowledging the
unprecedented times that we are in. Many in our
community are coping with stress and anxiety due to
evolving federal policies. As a system, we are
facing losses in funding that threaten the research,
innovation, and scholarship in this ISS as well as
the arts that are a core part of our mission as a
great public university.

CUNY and campus leadership remain fully committed
to supporting all members of our community including
immigrants and international students, and the vital

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transformative role that public higher education
plays in New York City.

Despite the uncertainties of the times, I always
bet on CUNY and we have continued to build on our
efforts to expand academic excellence and opportunity
and to promote equity.

I want to start with a program that many of you
are familiar with, CUNY Reconnect. The brain child
of speaker Adams. That program continues to expand
educational access for those seeking to return to
colleagues to complete a degree or earn a credential.
Now, in its third year, CUNY Reconnect has enrolled
over 40,000 students across the university with more
than 8,400 graduates now contributing to the city's
workforce.

One of our most important advances of the past
year is the CUNY Transfer Initiative, which has
created a seamless transfer process for students
moving from community colleges to four year programs.
Faculty have aligned six of the most common transfer
majors ensuring that most transfer students retain
credit in their majors. We have also developed a
tool which enables every student to view their
transfer credits immediately upon acceptance in the

college, allowing them to make more informed
decisions about the academic path and saving them an
average of \$1,220 in tuition.

At CUNY, we aren't just preparing students for
jobs after graduation. We are transforming their
path to career success by reimagining how thoughtful
planning and real world experience can become core
parts of their college journey. We now have more
than 31,000 employers of every size, in every field,
actively recruiting in the CUNY system. We've
connected with more than 16,000 students directly to
paid internships in the past three years.

Our focused approach is being infused into our
students degree path and that begins the day they
step foot on a CUNY campus. That is why we're
getting up for the full launch of CUNY Beyond, a
campus roadmap for career success. This wide ranging
strategy may skew to the first system in the country
to scale proven strategies at every step of the
student experience. We also continue to strengthen
our partnership with the City Public School system
through initiatives like College Now, Future Ready
NYC and College and Career Bridge for All and College
and Career Advising Tunnels.

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Last year, this program has helped nearly 55,000
graduating seniors with post-secondary planning and
financial aid, employed recent graduates as full-time
college advisors and enabled more than 28,000
students to earn college degree credit through
preparatory courses.

In the fall of 2024, more than 55,000 New York
high school seniors apply to CUNY colleges during a
four week fee waiver period. In collaboration with
the public schools, we send letters to seniors
offering community college acceptance and encouraging
applications to our senior colleges driving a 13
percent increase in applications during the fall
semester. One of the key indicators of our success
in this partnership is the impact of enrollment as it
reflects that more New Yorkers are accessing
opportunities for a brighter future.

For the second consecutive year, CUNY student
body has expanded, adding nearly 12,000 students over
two years representing a five percent growth. Our
pioneering ASAP program welcome its largest new
cohort since 2019, 2020 recruiting nearly 12,000
students.

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The program is now serving more than 22,000
students across CUNY. CUNY will launch ASAP for
part-time students in the fall of 2025 and this will
enable us to address a wider range of needs to even
more students. ACE, the sister program of ASAP,
supports nearly 3,000 students across seven senior
colleagues and continues to demonstrate strong
outcome.

In the past year, we have completed 73 capital
projects, totaling \$760 million in capital funding, a
critical advance in our ongoing project to modernize
the university. So, noteworthy projects include
replacing air handling in at Hostos Community
College, installing a new cooling system at Kings
Borough Community College and replacing the boiler
plant at Bronx Community College.

I will now turn to the Mayo's Executive Budget
for Fiscal Year 2026. Let me begin by highlighting
the importance of the food restoration of the \$19.5
million in PEGs that have previously hurt our
campuses. As you know, the reduction in funding has
negatively affected our students, faculty and staff
and the case of restoration has been a theme in my
annual budget testimony before you.

Indeed the road to PEG restoration has been
challenging but we were fortunate to have strong
support from this Council along the way and on behalf
of the entire CUNY community, I want to thank you for
standing with us. By baselining the food PEG
restoration we have an opportunity to thoughtfully
develop a long term plan to rebuild what was lost and
to chart a course for enhancing our student centric
mission for years to come. We are grateful to the
Administration that the Administration restore a
sustainable funding stream and also for the
additional \$50 million in onetime general operating
support.

This support would allow for a meaningful one
time investment in priority center on student
success. And also included in the executive budget,
is one time funding for successful programs including
\$10.1 million for ACE and CHAMPS, and additional \$4.5
million for ASAP and \$1 million for the Brooklyn
Recovery course at Medgar Evers College. In
addition, \$1 million was baselined for City College,
CUNY STEM institute. The financial outlook for our
community colleges has been strengthened by

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additional support from our partners at the state
level.

The 2026 state budget enacted last week continues
100 percent of the community college funding floor,
meeting that state base aid will be no less than it
was last year. We are also excited about the New
York Opportunity Scholarship program, which will
provide pathways for current and prospective students
in pursuing an associate degrees in high demand
fields. We ask that you support the inclusion of the
following students centering priorities in the
adopted budget.

These priorities include application fee waivers,
CUNY Reconnect expansion, funding security support,
additional mental health services for students,
programming to prevent religious and ethnic
discrimination, support for Citizenship Now, more
services for students with disabilities, support for
a Metro Card pilot, and CUNY Beyond.

Lastly, the Executive Budget Capital Plan
includes \$1.57 billion in city funding and \$4.3
million in non-city grants over the ten year plan
through 2035. We appreciate the funding allocated in
the Capital Plan and the focus of the City Council

ensuring that our facilities are in optimal
condition. I want to highlight a couple of our top
priorities for additional capital funding. First, we
request \$150 million in capital funding for the
Hostos Health and Natural Science building, which
would deliver a state of the art facility with
modernized lab spaces and other instructional spaces
to the Bronx and it was one of my last projects when
I was president at Hostos, so I would like to see it
come to fruition.

Second, we request \$200 million for the state of
good repair projects. As you know, CUNY has set an
admissions goal to bring 55 percent of our vital
building systems into a state of good repair by 2030.
We have made some good progress but there is more
work to do and the resources are needed to drive the
number higher.

In conclusion, I would like to once again thank
the City Council for supporting CUNY priorities.
CUNY success is the state and the city's success. We
look forward to working with you to deliver much
needed resources for this invaluable institution.
This is an abbreviated version of a large testimony
that I spare you the time but I provided for the

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record, and I thank you again for the opportunity to
testify and we look forward to your questions.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Chancellor.

We've also been joined by Council Members Moya and
Louis. I want to jump right into the PEG
restorations. PEG, just a fancy word for cuts. The
Executive Budget includes a PEG restoration of \$95.5
million in FY26 which is baselined. A large part of
these restorations are allocated to personnel
service. Could you tell us how many vacancies does
CUNY currently have and if you can, what is the
vacancy breakdown by college?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, let me turn to our
CFO Sherif Soliman for those numbers and that data.

SHERIF SOLIMAN: Sure, thank you Chair for the
question. Out of a total head count at community
colleges of 10,291, we have 90 vacancies for
pedagogical positions, 276 vacancies for non-
pedagogical positions. I do not have the breakdown
by college of the vacancies. I do have the breakdown
of the colleges by full-time, part-time.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And how does that - is that
better or worse than it's been, about average in
terms of vacancies?

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SHERIF SOLIMAN: Well, I think overall and I
think you've heard from us, the impact of the PEGs
and when you really look at comparing current
headcount to Fiscal 2021, community colleges were
down over 496 positions, so when we look at sort of
the PEG restorations, which we're appreciative of, it
will begin as the Chancellor said to rebuild what was
lost and so, part of that of course will be to shore
up some of those positions in particular areas that
were cut.

So, for example, areas of great need, like
financial aid counselors, certainly today, more
important than it ever has been. Academic advisors
at certain colleges certainly today, more important
than it ever has been. Academic advisors at certain
colleges, so those are just a couple of examples of
some of the restorations in terms of you know
addressing the vacancies.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And do you need to hire or
will you hire for additional new positions in
addition to what's existing, the existing vacancies?

SHERIF SOLIMAN: Yes, I think the opportunity now
and again, we're having the discussion with the
chancellor and the executive team about not only

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rebuilding what was lost but to really rethink and
reimagine right?

It's been you know a few years. So, what is it
that really we want to invest in for so our community
colleges can thrive and so we can really invest in
student success.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And when you what is the uh
- what's the plan for now that you have some of the
PEG restorations seeing things through an equity lens
in terms of all your colleges? How do you triage and
prioritize who gets what?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Well, I mean that is a
conversation that we have with our college presidents
right? Some of the other factors that will be
included there is the enrollment trends in some of
those colleges, right? In terms of some of the
support that they might uhm, I mean enrollment drive
some of the funding for some of the colleges. We're
also watching the overall fiscal health of the
campuses, right? The CFO and the team work very
closely with the campuses in addressing some of those
things. There might be some new opportunities in
terms of new programs either both in fields that are

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in demand, that we want to make sure that we have
them for folks.

We've also been very fortunate with programs like
CUNY Reconnect, right? It's been not just really
great for the students that have come back but in
doing all of that, we have learned a lot how to
better serve students who have been out there with no
degree or some college credit, so we'll be taking
some of those lessons to work with the colleges into
staffing. I don't know if you want to add anything
else Sharif.

SHARIF SOLIMAN: No, I think that was perfect.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And keeping on the PEG
restoration. So, the other portion of the restored
PEGs includes funding for OTPS, Other Than Personnel
Services. It's \$2.3 million which is baselined in
FY26. Which specific items - what specific OTPS
items would these funds pay for?

SHERIF SOLIMAN: I think uhm we will be looking
anew at what those needs are. If those needs are
relevant today, like they were back then. Some of
those OTPS costs could have been funded with other
funds. Uhm, particularly from the state for example
for community colleges, so we're taking you know a

renewed look, not only on the PS side but the OTPS
said and as you know Chair, the PEGs effected a
number of different areas, including fringe and
vacancy sweep backs.

So, it was a smaller portion of OTP and again, we
have to look at also how one time funds have been
used from the state and additional general operating
support that we've received that may have filled
those OTPS needs.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, I want to talk about
tuition adjustment. So, the executive plan includes
a reduction of \$50 million in FY25 only for a tuition
adjustment related to student enrollments. This
reduction was also reflected in FY25- the FY25
November plan, counting for a total reduction of \$100
million in FY25 for a tuition adjustment. So what
was CUNY's projected student enrollment versus actual
enrollments in FY24 and FY25?

SHERIF SOLIMAN: So, I'll speak to the adjustment
and then I'll maybe ask my colleague Alicia Alero to
address the enrollment. The technical adjustment is
essentially what it is. Each year, OMB will ask us
for our revenue projections and we essentially give
them those projects and then they do a technical

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adjustments to align the actual revenue budget with
what we expect to collect.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And do you anticipate an
additional reduction in FY26?

SHERIF SOLIMAN: We are hoping that won't be the
case because we're hoping that we will have a nice
uptick in enrollment that we're working really hard
on so we are hopeful that our communication to the
Administration next year will be - we anticipate more
revenue from collections because of the uptick in
enrollment.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, overall you - does CUNY
anticipate an increase in overall enrollment?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, let me - She can give
you some of the numbers. Let me also say that some
of the investments like adding the funding for the
application fee waivers. We've seen the impact that
that has in driving early enrollment applications and
us to work more closely with the students. So, we
assume that should we receive the funding that we are
asking to sort of make everybody complete, that would
also be helpful with enrollment but let me allow
Provost Alvero to give you some numbers.

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PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: Yes, I can tell you that
comparing May 12th this year to the enrollment of May
12th last year, we're up in the senior colleges four
percent enrollment at the comprehensive 16 percent at
the community colleges 18 percent and graduates 7
percent. And so, that's a snapshot at a moment in
time where we were same time last year and we are
really excited about this working hard to hope that
that momentum continues.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, I want to talk about
the FY26 Capital Budget. In the Executive Plan,
CUNY's Capital Commitment Plan for FY25 to FY29
totals \$1.1 billion which is roughly \$400 million
greater than the capital budget in the preliminary
plan back in January. Are there any new projects
that are added to the Executive Plan since the
preliminary plan?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Do you want to talk that?

HECTOR BATISTA: So, as the Chancellor said in
his testimony, our main focus right now is really
focused on the state of good repair. There is - uhm,
we currently have about 800 active projects and
really it is to really focus on a strategic goal,
which is to get the system to 55 percent. So,

there's a lot of projects connect across all our
campuses. You know uhm, to really focus in on
systems that we believe are going to have a problem.
I testified in front of the Council, in front of the
Chair of the Education Committee and we talked about
a facility, we did an assessment, condition
assessment of our system and what that has done for
is it allows us really be more targeted on how we use
capital dollars to make sure that we don't have the
same problem we had several years ago with Bronx
Community College when the boiler went down. Now we
know and we could be more strategic in terms of
targeting our capital dollars.

So, a lot of the focus is really connected to the
state of good repair and I'm happy to report that
because of that, we've started out with a base of 24.
We're now up to 27 percent, so we're really making a
great headway and really what's a targeted approach.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Have you requested any
additional capital funds from OMB?

HECTOR BATISTA: Well, as the Chancellor alluded,
we have requested money to on a couple of major
projects such as Hostos, right? \$150,000 million to
really focus on that project. We've obviously also

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have talked to OMB about making sure that SPARKS,
which is a project that we're very committed to which
is connected to a life science project in Kips Bay.
Those are projects that are very important to the
university. Plus we have a couple of projects at
Hunter, at York that we are very concerned about
connected to water filtration and things along those
line. So, those are projects that we really targeted
to make sure that you know those - that we don't have
those kind of challenges that we foresee at least on
those facilities that are in the state of bad repair.
So, those are the kind of the focused areas.

SHERIF SOLIMAN: And in terms of the budget, the
Executive Budget includes the allocation of \$9.2
million in new funding for borough presidents and the
breakdown is as follows: In Brooklyn, it's \$100,000.
In Queens it's \$6.5 million. In Manhattan, it's
\$1.288 million and in the Bronx, it is \$1.4 million
for a total of \$9.288. And I just add to what CO
Batista said, which is you know we're also in terms
of request of the Administration, we are constantly
on the state of good repair and the number for
community colleges is \$200 million based on the
replacement value of the building stock, right, so

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that's something that we, we also emphasize that
would really allow us to make headway on the state of
good repair percentage.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And I think you mentioned
in your testimony that on the ongoing work at Bronx
Community College, right?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: That's correct, yes.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, I just have a couple
of more. So, the threat of federal funding cuts is
obviously casting a shadow over this entire process.
In FY24, \$112.4 million in federal funding for CUNY
Sunset. Did the sunset of these funds cause any
of CUNY's programming to be significantly reduced or
eliminated?

SHERIF SOLIMAN: So, I'm not sure that \$112
million. If we focus for a second sort on the tax
levy side of the equation, there's also the research
grant side, which I'll let my colleagues address. On
the tax levy side, the biggest chunk of federal aid
that CUNY receives is from Title 4 federal funding.
That includes Pell grants. That includes federal
loans. That includes federal work study.

To give you an idea of the magnitude of those
funds, in Fiscal Year 2024, \$888 million was received

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in Title 4 federal student aid. So, that is
essentially the bulk, the major chunk of federal
funding that CUNY receives on the federal research
grant side, that number is \$200 million and I know
that you know the Chancellor and the Provost can
address some of the impacts there. Clearly, we are
concerned about the budget reconciliation bill moving
through Congress and there are certain provisions in
there that would affect Pell. Uhm 57 percent of our
students receive Title 4 federal aid. That's not
only PELL but that's the loans, that's the federal
work study, so that's a big, big chunk obviously of
our students that we serve that come to CUNY for an
education. So, we are really concerned that the
provisions that are moving forward that seek to
change sort of full time credit load to qualify for
full Pell from 12 credits to 15 credits, will have a
real big impact as well as the impacts on the loans.
So, that's something that we're watching very
closely.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And do you have an
accounting of the latest numbers of the canceled
research grants?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, we have uhm -

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PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: Yes, we received a total
of 78 stop work orders and 7 were rescinded. So,
right now it's uh -

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, there's 78 stop work
orders on research grants, right and what does that
amount to? How much money?

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: So, \$17 million that we
anticipated receiving for research has been - is at
risk because -

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And what kind of research
do these grants fund?

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: A variety of research
from environmental to research that looks at the
impact of disease on underrepresented populations.
It varies all over and no real rhyme or reason to
which ones were cancelled.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: And I mean two things
Chair Brannan. First, we'd be happy to send you and
the colleagues a list of what we have. It's a list
that changes every day right, as we receive new ones
and also, we've been creating a taskforce that works
with the principle investigators to - when we receive
one and we think that the grounding for that is not

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the soundest, we're challenging that. Also, the
opportunity later to sue, right? By exhausting all -

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: That's a good point. So,
what is the process for you know appealing the stop
work orders? How does that work?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: It varies depending on
the agency that's issuing and the rationale. That's
why we build a taskforce that has personnel from the
Offices research that reports to the Provost from
each campus office that has the sponsor research
office in the campus and the research foundation,
they look when the work order comes and then they
give guidance to the PI and depending on how the
letter is constructed, we provide advise as to you
can challenge to the ground or/ and in some cases too
on the ones where we you know they said that we had
to start immediately, we also try to provide some
bridge funding to keep some of the folks employed.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And what's a typical
reasoning they give?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: It's - I mean it's pretty
tough to in some - they will site generic compliance
with new executive orders from the federal
government. In other ones, they might be more

specific about changes in priorities for the
Administration that some of the language, for example
that's coming in the recent - the most recent letters
from the National Science Foundation, but again, we
are under the Provost leadership creating
opportunities for bridge funding to support some of
the grants. We are trying to be aggressive in
defending when we believe that the grounds for the
stoppage is inappropriate. We're also working at the
state level with some of the cases that have been
taken in this case, by the State Attorney General
against the Administration on the indirect, NIH,
Department of Energy and considering NSF and we're
also leveraging some of our national. I have the
timing honor of being the Chair of the American
Council of Education, which is the largest higher ed
membership organization and we have never been a
plaintiff in a lawsuit for 100 years. We've been a
plaintiff in three related to this matter. So, all
hands on deck.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much
Chancellor and your team. I hand it over. We've
been joined by Council Member Sanchez and I'm going
to hand it over to Chair Dinowitz.

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CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, thank you Chair
Brannan. I want to follow up on two of the items
before I get into my questions. The federal grants,
so you said \$17 million at risk, 78 stop work orders
and how many positions are at risk due to this \$17
million cut from the federal government?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, so about so far 98
employees have been effected by the grants that have
been stopped. As I mentioned to you before, we have
been working with each campus at sometimes if a grant
is in the middle, we've been able to provide bridge
funding to keep some of the employees. Campus have
also made decisions on the value of the research.
Meaning in this grant, if we stop now, all the
research is gone right because you know it's a year
of work to get to where we are.

Uhm, so that is - but just to give you the worst
possible outcome, right? If all the federal funding
that we get, which is about \$200 million overall
stopped, that will be like 14,000 employees.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, that includes that uh
the other - I'm sorry, the- you said a Title 4 was
888. The \$200 million is all the research funding?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: This is research, yes.

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CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: All research.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, that figure has to
do more with Pell and money that comes that way.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay and how many students
are involved in these research projects?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: I mean, we - I think we
have a breakdown by project. We can provide you
that. We wouldn't know that.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But it doesn't just effect
employees, it effects the very students doing the
research, right? And so, I mean to summarize, the
federal government is trying to unemploy CUNY workers
and make our students dumber, right? Like, is that
fair to say?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Well, the point that
you're driving, I want to be fully supportive because
this is not just numbers and figures which are
important. This is careers. These are mentorships.
These are potential next generation of scientists and
or artists that are being cut short by not being able
to be part of this grant. So, absolutely disaster of
this investment in research.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And of course, you
mentioned diseases, health, environmental. It

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appears the federal government also wants us to be
less healthy. That's my opinion. I guess our
President disagrees.

In line with federal policy, the Department of
Homeland Security has revoked student visa's at
various universities throughout New York City
including at CUNY. Have CUNY students been effected
by this and if so, how many CUNY students have been
effected?

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: Well, 25 student visas
were revoked and have since been reinstated.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: All 25?

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: All 25. Of those 25, 3
students had made the decision to go back home and to
their country. All three are completing their
degrees online.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And what types of support
has CUNY provided for these students and other
immigrant students who are facing similar challenges?

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: Well every campus has a
designated school official, a DSO for international
students and at CUNY Central, we really mobilize that
team. The moment our offices received information
about a student Visa, we proactively reached out to

the student and said come to us. We will provide you with all the information necessary in order to make an informed decision about what you should do, connecting them to citizenship now, which provides free legal counsel and support and explain to them what the process is.

In CUNY, the biggest question and fear of the students and dropped immediately from one day to the next and the answer is no change in status. It does not change enrollment status and so we provided them with all of the information necessary to make the best decision for them.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you and thank you for bringing up CUNY Citizenship Now. It is a wonderful program funded and we support and fund in this Council that we've held seminars in my district to help people get their citizenship. I just have to say it's a wonderful, wonderful program that CUNY does.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: And it's on the green sheet so we could do more if we get additional funding.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, don't worry and what financial investments in supporting immigrant

students have been made; are highlighted in the
Executive Budget?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, I mean a number of
things. As you heard when our CFO was answering,
what are some of the services that could be restored
as a result, for example of the PEGs being restored.
Clearly there is a new area, I mean there's an
ongoing area of need. We always have had a large
number of undocumented immigrant students
international students. That's part of the CUNY DNA.
So I would imagine that some other consideration as
we decide you know which services to bring in would
be working. Several of our campuses have either
specific offices that support immigrant and
undocumented students or they have an office that
does that, right? So, there might be additional
staffing that goes to those areas as a result of the
PEG restoration.

Obviously any additional funding that comes for
advising and all those things will have an impact on
also supporting the students.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, supporting immigrant
students is part of your sort of general fund.

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There's no specific allocation designed to help New
York City - immigrant CUNY students?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: No, I don't think
specifically but some of the offices that do that are
supported by state and city dollars.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, okay thank you.
Thank you for that. I also have to share, it is my
opinion that it's ridiculous, the very students who
you want to be getting an education and you know are
trying to do their best for their families and for
our city seem to also be the target of our lovely
federal administration.

I just want to follow up on the capital projects
because it was mentioned in Chair Brannan's
questions. You should know your successor Daisy is
doing a fantastic job advocating for the Allied
Health and Science.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Hostos certainly got an
upgrade in its residency.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, I will remain
neutral on that. That's a no win thing for me to
respond to but the Executive Capital Commitment plan
includes \$5 million in Fiscal 2025 for the Allied
Health and Sciences building. \$4.5 million of which

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was added in the executive plan to the total five
year \$6.5 million and in your testimony you used the
number \$150 million. Can you talk a little bit about
the discrepancy as well as of course the scope of the
project and the timeline for that project?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, let me turn to our
COO whose been deep in the numbers of this particular
case.

HECTOR BATISTA: Yeah, so thank you for the
question Chair. The \$6.5 million is really to
demolish the assistant site that's there. Recently,
because of some work that the university has done in
partnership with the local, with the private owner,
we - there was a park that was fixed there and so now
we have the potential squatters being in that space.
There's all kinds of bad situations that could
happen. And so, the building has some structural
issues, so we're going to demolish the space and then
fully pave it in preparation for a future project,
which we're advocating for.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And do you have a timeline
for the completion of the entire project?

HECTOR BATISTA: Of the demolition?

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CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Of demolition and
construction of the building.

HECTOR BATISTA: Well, the construction of the
building, we obviously hope that through your good
offices and others here, we were able to secure the
\$150 million that we need but we think this is a step
in order to secure that space, which is really
becoming a real problem for the local community.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: And as you know we need
to secure the city side so that we can unlock state
funding for the part of the project too.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That's right. That's
right and I will once again say I'm reminded of that
because Daisy's doing a fantastic job advocating for
the college. You left it in good hands.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: The Executive Budget, so
onto operational and the expense side or back to the
expense side. The Executive Plan includes an
additional \$15 million in Fiscal 2026 for operational
support for CUNY's community colleges. This is one
time funding and what are these funds allocated for?
How are they divided among campuses and how were
those decisions made for this one time funding?

SHERIF SOLIMAN: Sure, thank you for the question. So, last year was the first time the \$15 million onetime was allocated. Clearly at that time, we still had baselined Pegs. So, it took the baseline Peg to \$80 million. The community colleges still have structural deficit of about \$21 million. So, that \$15 million was allocated out last year to the community colleges based on full time equivalent in terms of students. We're putting the money where the students are, right? This year with the restoration of the baselined PEGs plus that \$15 million, it opens up new opportunities to look at things anew. Again, as the Chancellor mentioned, we may look at bolstering up some of the support for our immigrant students. Some of the other supports on academic advisors, financial aid counselors. We'll look at library hours. We'll look at the whole you know spectrum of different opportunities to make investments.

It's one time funds that's not recurring so we want to make sure that we emphasize as we always do, to be cautious about PS expenditures with respect to one time funds but all and all, it's going to help and we're going to look anew again at the PEG

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restoration plus that one time to see what kind of
investments we can make.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. So, let's talk
about some of the programming that perhaps the \$15
million could go to in some spaces, CUNY ACE. The
Executive Plan includes the restoration of \$9.1
million for CUNY ACE and \$5.5 million for ASAP,
including a \$1 million baseline for ASAP's leasing
cost. So, can you remind us, you mentioned in your
testimony, how many students are enrolled in the ASAP
program and of course how the restoration of the PEG
funding and perhaps the \$15 million additional
dollars may impact the ACE and ASAP programs.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: You think you want to
talk to that?

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: Yeah the annual, sorry,
on and off. The annual enrollment is 22,450 students
for ASAP and ACE 2,646 students.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And then with a
restoration of funding, how those numbers may be
impacted.

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: With a restoration, the
goal has always been to reach 25,000 but the PEGs
have impacted our ability to reach that target.

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CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, with the restoration,
can the ASAP, with the restoration of the PEG, can
the ASAP program reach your goal of the 25,000
students?

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: We would like to aim for
that. We are actually starting a part time ASAP
program because so many more students are part time
students and so we are finding creative ways to meet
the needs of our students and aim to increase
enrollment and we'll evaluate based off of that but
definitely be able to increase.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But we're not 100 percent
sure if we can meet that goal of 25,000?

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: 25,000, yes from one year
to the next, we will have to review and revisit, so I
can't make a promise.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And when do you - that's
alright. When do you know the enrollment numbers for
ASAP?

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: When will we know the
final? I mean students are currently enrolling now.
So it's still very early for fall enrollment
protection.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: And we did an entire
exclusive in addition after all of you have seen when
we do our CUNY campaign that we take over the city
and the subways and we wrap around as many places as
we can letting people know they can achieve their
dreams. We decided to do a specific ASAP focus
campaign to be able to bring back some of the
enrollment. It's something that we also emphasize in
the relationship with the uhm where we've done the
recruitment with the New York City Public Schools and
other institutions.

So, we assume that that's going to help to drive
the numbers. We also the New York Opportunities
Scholarship program right, which is the new state
program of free community colleges for individuals in
certain disciplines. We believe that that is also
going to drive traffic to the community colleges by
people who want to be part of that program but you
know they come with questions and then when we have
them there, we might be able to say, you may or may
not qualify for this but ASAP is right here for you.
So, we feel in a very good space in terms of being
able to rebuild and be able to reach that number. We

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have a much better sense probably by mid-summer in
terms of what the enrollment might be for the fall.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I mean, we know in this
Committee, ASAP is one of the most successful
programs for our students. I think it was 13 months
ago that we had a hearing on this before the
Executive Budget. There's a significant amount of
data. The one area - one of the main areas I think
of growth was that ASAP, the program is not changing
its target goals. It's had the same target of I
think 50 percent to graduate in three years and even
though you're meeting or exceeding that goal, the
ASAP program is not pushing itself forward and I
think this appears to me to be in the same category.
Where we know it's a successful program. We know in
the City Council; we have fought for funding. We
know now you're getting the PEG restoration and it
seems like an opportune time to set a goal and commit
to reaching that goal to embrace more students in
this wildly successful program.

And while you're at it, move the goal post for
yourself and make it more - have more students
achieve that success and have you guys you know set

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those goals a little further because CUNY can meet
those goals.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Can I, can I?-

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: I was going to say hot
off the press that as of today, enrollment is 3.6
percent higher in ASAP then it was last year. But to
your point about setting the goals, we are very
strategic in setting the goals and we set targets for
each of the community colleges for ASAP but it's
always dependent on finding out news about the
budget, so we are very actively now that we have more
sense of the restoration of the PEGs and the budget,
setting those targets and working with the individual
colleges.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, this is ying and yang
because the comment that I was going to make is that
and I know that this is something that the Council
has been in entire support, so I'm just reaching to
convert it, that baselining programs like ASAP allows
us to do the planning to be able to make - because
when we bring somebody on, we're making a promise of
having you in the program for two or three years,
right? So, it's challenging to do that when a
component of that continues to change every year and

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so, I know that I'm saying something that they have
full support here but the more of the things like
ASAP will be baselined, it will be a lot easier for
us to work on targets because you know exactly what
the funding is going to be year to year.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I want to ask
about high school programs and disability service
funding. The plan includes \$14.8 million in Fiscal
'25 only for CUNY's College Pathways program, which
provides college courses to high school students to
allow them to earn college credits early.

What's the total budget for this program and how
much does it cost per student?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: We'll have to sort of
find that. Do you have the data for that? I don'
have -

SHERIF SOLIMAN: It is an intracity program.
Uhm, which means that we have through the agencies
that come through total, we have about \$150 million
in those intracity programs for pathways
specifically. We can get you that number.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you and do you know
how many high school students are enrolled in any of
these programs?

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FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: We'll have to get you
that information. I don't think we have that handy.
I don't know. Nope.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: By the way, I don't think
everyone like who's maybe watching now can see. I
love all the turning heads. You have like 500 CUNY
employee's here like someone's got to have the
answer. Uhm, so if I asked, what would the actual
full funding amount needed be for Fiscal 2026? Would
you know the answer to that?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: No but we can get that to
you. Oh -

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I saw a note passed.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

HECTOR BATISTA: Okay, so the current is for
College Pathways, \$14.8 million is the current. In
terms of the ramp up to cover more, we'd have to
model that and get back to you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay and you've proven
that in this class it is okay to pass note, very
helpful. And there are a couple of programs I want
to ask about. CUNY Unlimited provides students with
intellectual disabilities the chance to experience
college through a non-credit credential program. How

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many students are enrolled in this program and what
does outreach for this program look like?

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: We will have to get you
that information. I do not have enrollment.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I looked at about a half a
dozen different heads and they went like this.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: We'll get you the number.
I don't want to give you the wrong information.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, uhm I'm going to
move on to questions from the Committee Members and
then we'll go back to us.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have questions
starting with Council Member Brewer followed by
Williams.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. On
childcare because I know that helps keep us in school
in terms of parents. I didn't know how many colleges
have them and how many slots are available, and is
this an ongoing issue in terms of waitlists or is it
something that you can address?

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: I am looking at the tab
but I am happy to tell you that we do not have any
current waitlists. One of the strong collaborations
that we were able to implement is if a student - if

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the capacity has been reached at one campus, students
can take advantage of the seat at any of the CUNY
campuses, so just because they're a Hunter College
Student it doesn't mean that they can't take
advantage of something that might be closer to home
or their workplace and it has worked wonderfully and
so we do not have a waitlist for any of the childcare
centers. And what was the first question?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: How much is it costing or
how does it get paid for or that kind of question?
Just the numbers. How many slots do you have across
the -

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: Yeah, so we have a total
capacity of 1,452 seats.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: Current enrollment at
this point and time is 723 and that varies based off
of age range.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay and it's paid for by
vouchers or by students or depending?

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: A combination of both.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, next question is
dorms. I think when you did that, you know I'm not -
the Chancellor knows I'm not crazy about that thing

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down at Brookdale but lost the dorm. So, did you
lose dorms at that point? Are you providing more
dorms for CUNY students? CUNY students need dorms.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Yup.

HECTOR BATISTA: Good to see you Councilwoman.
We have - at CUNY currently we have about 2,858 dorms
so we have - and then we have -

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: 2,850 - what do you got?

HECTOR BATISTA: 2,858.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

HECTOR BATISTA: And we have uhm, we did an
analysis of the demand at CUNY because we wanted to
understand, it was a question that have raised at one
of the hearings.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I did.

HECTOR BATISTA: And that analysis concluded that
we needed some additional dorms in Manhattan and a
couple of the other boroughs, so we're in the process
of you know sort of determining that and looking for
sites that sort of make sense. I think one of the
things that the Chancellor has charged me with is
trying to find dorms affordability, right? And
trying to sort of - and I'm happy to report that on
one of the projects that we did recently in

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Manhattan, we were able to not only address the
Brookdale dorms overall which were -

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: You lost them there,
yeah.

HECTOR BATISTA: A lot less than the market
place. We also were able to create an additional 120
dorms, really low affordable and soon we'll be
announcing something along those lines. So, really
focused but the total of dorm growth over the next
five years for CUNY is 1,172.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, you'll need that many
in the future.

HECTOR BATISTA: Yes, yup.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, next question
quickly is Gutman is you know is one of my favorite
places since I was there at the beginning. They need
to have more space. I don't want them to leave
Manhattan so what are you doing to help them find
more space in Manhattan? What happen to the north
building etc.?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, thank you for that
question. It will secure more space for them in the
current arrangement that they have in Bryant Park, so
that's Manhattan. So they have space to address some

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of their more immediate needs and we continue to
assess you know what is the overall plan for North
Hall and whether the government is part of that not.
I am looking forward to the next time that we convene
that you can scratch that question off your list and
have a definitive answer and move to other topics.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, it's almost - it's
not in another borough. Is that promise that you're
not going to move them to another borough? The
Gutman family doesn't want to go to another borough
and they're suing you.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: And I cannot talk about
litigation as you know.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright, just one more
quick question. I think the schools that CUNY runs
like Hunter Science and others are excellent. Are
you planning to do - how many students do you have in
those schools and are you planning to take over more
schools because CUNY does a great job?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: We continue to partner
with the Department of Education. I don't think that
we are foreseeing taking over additional schools.
There might be opportunities with some of the early
college funding that the state has made available for

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additional opportunities there, right and we're very
proud of the 19 schools that we have there. You know
we're also partnering one, in the new space in
SPARTS, so we want to continue to do some more, maybe
MSLE taking you know control over the schoolboard in
partnership with the -

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Partnership.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: And also really, really
expanding future ready college now. All of those are
great pilot programs in which we are defacto teaching
the next generation of teaching. So, thank you for
your support.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Williams
followed by Louis.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you. I'm going
to start with a general question, which is how do you
determine which schools to prioritize in your capital
budget? So, like how do schools make this green
sheet?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Okay, so do you want to
talk about the process?

HECTOR BATISTA: Good to see you again
Councilwoman. Well, the way we sort of do it as I

1 stated earlier, we recently did a facility assessment
2 of our AILEY University and we really are sort of
3 leaning into the whole notion of the state of good
4 repair and making sure that we really are focused on
5 systems and making sure that we really are focused on
6 deferred maintenance.
7

8 Across the system, we try to address how the
9 capital budget in terms of that needs that are
10 happening. If we feel that a boiler is going to go
11 on a particular building, school, then we obviously
12 allocate a lot more resources to that particular
13 school to address because we know a year from now
14 that boiler is going to be off and it's going to
15 create a real problem for the school.

16 But normal - the Chancellor across the system,
17 we've allocated for the community college, kind of an
18 even number of \$33 million and this new request that
19 we're putting in for at \$200 million and that's
20 broken down into various sort of system but it's all
21 connected to the same.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Wait you're saying that
23 like each community college gets the same amount of
24 capital money?
25

HECTOR BATISTA: In one bucket and then we have another bucket we focus on those systems that that particular college, we feel is going to go offline and because they're going to go offline, we're going to allocate that college additional.

So, the point of that, the way I laid it out for you was that everyone gets something but we also some schools get a little bit more because of the reports that we get and connected to the state of the facility. So, the challenges they have in one of those systems.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Like in Bronx Community College, years of not investing in that created a situation in which in a large campus right, which also matters in terms of what we have to make sizeable investments of capital. So, they will be seen as having more but because of the aging infrastructure, forced us to do that. So that's some of the ways in which there might be some unevenness depending on more emergency situations or things that require a lot more immediate attention.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. So there is a true assessment though. It's not just like anecdotal, like oh we want to give money to this

1 school because they said this. Like, do you actually
2 look at investments from previous years, look at the
3 current state of the school? Because I think from
4 our vantage point sometimes it seems like arbitrary
5 because for different CUNY campuses that we have in
6 our districts, they also submit various capital
7 projects year after year and then like CUNY, like
8 you, CUNY Central, you then kind of like prioritize
9 certain college campuses, certain projects over other
10 projects, over other schools, so it doesn't really
11 seem like there's an equitable process for
12 determining which schools and campuses you think
13 deserve to be further prioritized by your advocacy.
14 So, I'm just trying to understand that.

16 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, let me as someone who
17 was a campus president of two campuses, let me tell
18 you that no campus is ever happy with the allocations
19 they get of capital, right and I was not - when I was
20 president at Queens or at Hostos, right?

21 There's only so many dollars to go around and the
22 leadership here of CO Batista and Mohamed Atelia has
23 now done with that state of good repair. A much more
24 scientific analysis of where we are in other
25 different infrastructures so we can say, you need to

really invest more here at this point because this boiler system is going to blow off in a year versus something that might have 10 and 15 years. So that might provide some of the perceptions of discrepancies but we tried to allocate the resources in a balanced way based on the number of students in the schools and things of that nature, so we take that into account. Conversations with the presidents in the campuses and also with some of the elected officials who comment at times and support projects.

So, we try to do this scientific way and that we're trying to be of service to all of our campuses.

SHERIF SOLIMAN: I mean, I could just add one thing. I mean just because you don't see it in the green sheet doesn't mean we're not advocating right? There is a capital book that's put out every year and that capital book, we're out sort of making sure that and that has the priorities of all the presidents.

Every year a Vice Chancellor for facility manager meets with the president, the leadership and talks about the priorities and that's how we go into what we're going to talk to the Chancellor about but it always starts with the state of good repair, right? What other kind of systems that we need in order to

keep that college continually running and then it
gets triaged in sort of different ways?

So, that green sheet is just one. You know you
can't - if not that green sheet would be 100 pages
long, right? We got to have one that is for us to
focus on priorities.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I know but it does
signal like what you're prioritizing even though you
might have a larger list of requests. Okay but just
moving on specifically to your college. CUNY has
indicated \$30 million allocation for addressing
ground water flooding at your college, yet this
appears to be a reallocation of existing funds rather
than a new investment. Can you clarify whether this
funding is indeed additional or simply a shift and
budgetary responsibility? Furthermore, how does this
impact the existing commitments and allocations
previously made by the City Council for this critical
infrastructure issue? And then, I'm going to just
ask my last question because it's also about your
college.

While the short-term and medium-term mitigation
efforts at your college are appreciated, the long-
term solution, such as replacing the basement slab is

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not currently budgeted and is projected two decades
into the future giving the historical under
investment in Southeast Queens. What concrete steps
is CUNY taking to ensure that long-term sustainable
solutions are funded and implemented in a timely
manner to address the persistent infrastructure
challenges faced by this college?

I saw that basement slab myself multiple times.
I have toured it. It's the foundation wall of the
main academic building that is corroded because of
ground water flooding and there's no investments that
have been made. So, if you could just answer the two
questions on the \$30 million and any type of long
term investments and just so you know, I have also
been asking the Administration and the MTA to waive
the fee because your college also has to pay \$1
million plus every year to pump water into the subway
system to get it out of their basement.

So, I am not just coming to CUNY to solve for
this problem but I am also asking the other powers
that be to address this issue. As you know, your
college has a ton of funding issues and to have to
spend a dime or a penny to pump out water for an

environmental issue that is not there problem is like
a big issue for me.

HECTOR BATISTA: Well, thank you and thank you
for being such an advocate on behalf of York. I will
say this to you a couple of things. Number one, we -
the \$30 million project, one of the things that our
Vice Chancellor for city manage has done, is kind of
look at budgets and projects that where we had excess
- the project came under budget or resources weren't
allocated and we're now using a strategy to
reallocate those resources because those are
resources that are available. And we're prioritizing
certain projects within colleges across. It's safe
to say that as part of the ongoing problems that
assisted with the water, this project, the \$30
million is a critical project and it's connected to
the foundation, right? We got to address this issue
in order to begin to address the larger problem.

Second, I think the launch at CUNY overall has a
in its capital in the state of good repair, we have a
need for about \$6.2 billion. We get about \$1.3
billion a year. I mean in the five year plan.

And so, we, in order for us to be able - we need
to address things in a strategic way to begin to

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address the facility challenges. Yes, it is a
priority for us but it's a big number.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I don't think I
understood your answer. So, the \$30 million, where
did that money come from? Did you just move line
items around or did you find money - like, where does
that money come from? Like are you shortchanging one
particular project to fund this one? Like, did you
just change a purpose of the funds or is it new
money, additional money, actual investment into your
college?

HECTOR BATISTA: Okay this \$30 million came from
remaining funds from other projects that we've -

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: At York or other
places?

HECTOR BATISTA: Other places at CUNY.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: And then the long term
investment to support the academic, the main academic
building?

HECTOR BATISTA: It is a priority for us.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: It's a corroded
foundation wall holding up the entire building.

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HECTOR BATISTA: I think phase one is for us to
address the media problem, so we can then focus on
the larger problem.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, thank you Chairs.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Council Member.
Now we have questions from Council Member Louis.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you Chairs and good
to see you Chancellor and your whole team. I have
one quick capital question and the rest of the
questions on OTPS. In your testimony today, you
mentioned that the ask to the Borough President was
\$9.28 million, of which \$100,000 would be
particularly for Brooklyn. So I wanted to know if
you could elaborate a little bit more on that but
which new capital projects or campus expansions are
being prioritized in Brooklyn? Because I'm trying to
figure out where that \$100,000 goes and how does CUNY
weigh campus needs and enrollment demand when
allocating infrastructure resources, like these
capital projects and my quick OTPS questions.

In August 2024, the state legislature passed a
new law requiring menstrual products to be available
for free at CUNY campuses. So, I wanted to know has
CUNY implemented this law? Has CUNY allocated

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additional funding from the state for this particular
program and if yes, how much? And what is the yearly
cost to supply menstrual products to all CUNY
campuses and is this included in the FY26 budget
request? Thanks.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, that's - you going to
take the capital for Brooklyn question first?

HECTOR BATISTA: Sure, I mean we're going to have
to look into the \$100,000. I don't have the answer
on that, so I will get you that.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Alright, you guys
mentioned your Borough President ask was \$9.28
million of which \$100,000 is going to Brooklyn in
your testimony today.

HECTOR BATISTA: We're going to have to get it to
you.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: In the testimony?

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Because you have three
CUNY campuses in Brooklyn, so I'm trying to figure
out where does -

SHERIF SOLIMAN: Yeah, so this one is uhm Kings
Borough. Kings Borough for the child development
center expansion.

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COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: And the remaining of the
\$9.28 million?

SHERIF SOLIMAN: The remaining is all in other
boroughs.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Got it. Now regarding the
OTPS?

HECTOR BATISTA: Sure, on all our campuses,
except for one, we're working with have - we're in
compliance. We have all and the campuses are -

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Fully adhering to the law.

HECTOR BATISTA: To the law, correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Okay and how much is the
ask in the budget?

HECTOR BATISTA: That I have to get you.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Is this sustained or it's
the same amount?

HECTOR BATISTA: I think we're funding that. The
central office is funding that.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Okay.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, we can get you the
number yes.

HECTOR BATISTA: We could get you a number.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: That would be good to
know. Thank you Chairs.

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CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. We've also been
joined by Council Member Feliz. I just have a couple
more questions. Every college library in the country
is staffed by work study students, right?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: I mean I think I mean,
not just by work study students. I mean that's one
of the positions where normally many other campuses,
work studies are located among many other things they
do in the campus too.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, what would it mean to
our libraries if we lost all those work study
students?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Well, I mean, I mean so
two things. The work study A, there's an impact to
the student because that is part of the financial
packaging, right? So that student could potentially
have to stop right because they don't - they're
counting on that work study position to be able to
support their education so there's an impact there
and then also the work studies are you know part of
the work that we do, so I mean I don't have a precise
number. We can do that deep dive if you want but
that would be sort of the generic answer to that
question.

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CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And were there any
additional new needs that CUNY requested from OMP
that were not included in the executive plan?
Anything specific?

HECTOR BATISTA: No.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: No, okay. And lastly from
me, May 5th, the US Department of Education began
collecting on defaulted student loans again. What
support and guidance is CUNY providing to students or
alum who may have defaulted on student loans?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, there we uh you know
we were very happy with some of the forgiveness
programs before. Many of our student benefitted from
actually, not just of our students, many even members
of the CUNY staff right benefitted from those loans.
So, I mean on our end, we've been making sure that
people have the right information. I mean as you
know in this landscape of forgiveness and things,
there's been a lot of confusion, so we've been
working with our students and letting them know the
financial aid offices on the campuses, but we've also
been as an employer talking to our staff members who
might be in that situation, so that they know exactly
A, that the clocks are ticking again and then what

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are some of the programs and alternative they might
have to be able to deal with that.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Chancellor. I'm
going to turn it over to Chair Dinowitz.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. In the Fiscal
2026 state adopted budget included \$18.8 million for
the New York Opportunity Promise Scholarship, which
will cover the cost of tuition. Fees and books for
community colleges, students ages 25 to 55 pursuing
selective associate degrees in high demand fields.

So, you had mentioned this or you referenced this
earlier. Can you talk more about the specific
outreach you're doing to ensure eligible New Yorkers
are aware of this program?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: So, very timely as we
organize a really big team meeting, specifically for
this, which involves marketing and communications and
advisors. We've been working very closely with all
of the Provosts preemptively identifying all of the
programs so that all of the campuses are ready to
kind of start marketing and advertising these
programs.

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It involves, it's multifaceted because it's not
just about marketing and promotion, it's about making
sure we have the right infrastructure, ensuring that
we're collecting the right data. Because there's a
lot of reporting requirements for the state.

The advisors getting the academic advisors well
trained but we are very excited to roll out the
publicity for it but it's the infrastructure part
that we're really working on and the campuses working
on the promotion at the individual campus level for
the programs.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Your promoting is at the
campus level but wouldn't some of the outreach be at
the high school level?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Well, the challenge has
been that until the budget was adopted, which was
last week, right? You couldn't be out there
promoting a program that you were not sure was going
to be approved, right? So, we have been building the
infrastructure assuming the funding was going to be
there right and now that the funding is there, we can
you know sort of be using, leveraging all our asses
which include the links with the public schools.

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CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And does that include the
goals we have in the Council for example and our
shared goals of the fee waivers? Are those programs
going to be aligned?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Well, so remember for the
students, I mean that will begin in the fall, they
already applied, right? So, this is people that are
going to be part of the summer, so we will have to
sort of see - this is influx right, so we just found
out that the funding was there last week, right, so
we would be happy to come back to you and give you a
better sense of that. We will be planning on getting
ready assuming that we're going to get promotions.
We're going to interest for it. All of the fine
tweaks of the partnerships I think would be sort of
worked out through the summer.

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: The program criteria is
25 and older for the opportunity programs. So,
probably less of a focus with the high school because
uh and for the older students.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for that
clarification. The Fiscal '26 State Adopted Budget
does not include funding for mandatory cost increases

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for annual salary increments. OTPS inflations,
building rentals and energy.

So, what is the estimated cost that CUNY will
have to bear to these being unfunded? And of course
how will that impact student focused programs?

SHERIF SOLIMAN: Sure, so thank you for the
question. On average, our mandatory needs unfunded
cost, university-wide could be up to \$25 million. We
-

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: \$25 million?

SHERIF SOLIMAN: Could be up to \$25 million.
That's on average. Some years more, some years less
but there have been general operating support
appropriations that have been included in the state
budget. Last year, there was \$36 million for the
senior colleges in general operating support that
continues this year, right? There's also the year
prior was \$17 million that's been allocated out to
the colleges. That has also continued and then of
course, the state this year covered the full bonus
and retro for the PSE contract and the FY26 wage
increases for the PSE contract.

So, we'll manage the senior colleges will manage
those unfunded costs within the budget because of

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those other appropriations. But clearly over time,
they start to add up and so if the additional general
operating support dries up from year to year and we
just have that baseline of what was offered in the
past, then you start to have - then you start to have
a real problem. So, we always watch it very closely
but we are appreciative to the Governor, to the
Assembly, to the Senate for a budget that meets our
labor needs.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right and just going back
to that \$15 million onetime funding. I think you
would use the phrase we hope colleges don't use it
for personnel services. Did I get that right?

SHERIF SOLIMAN: Yeah so whenever, sorry.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But I'm just saying you
know why is it hoping? What instructions can you
give to make sure that we want to hire more faculty.
We want to make sure that they are paid a decent
living wage for educating our students but also
schools shouldn't be using one time funding to do it.
Is that a recommendation or is that a mandate from
central?

SHERIF SOLIMAN: So, if I said hope, scratch that
from the record. Let's be more resolute. We

1 constantly communicate with our colleges that one
2 time funds, we always throw out the caution flag, one
3 time funds should not be used for recurring PS
4 expenses because we don't want to exacerbate the
5 structural deficit. So, that is a recommendation
6 through regular communications with our campuses
7 about the nature of the funding.
8

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, thank you. Six
10 months ago Chancellor, you were here at our hearing
11 regarding the Lippman Commission Report and you
12 testified at that hearing that that morning you had
13 put in an RFP for a new reporting portal. And to
14 refresh everyone's memory, this is the portal through
15 which students and faculty can report instances of
16 discrimination. It was one of the 13 recommendations
17 of the Commission report. At the time, you had just
18 got the RFP, can you please share with us the status
19 of that contract?

20 FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, that has been moving
21 along the process and we have - can I say that we
22 have an identified vendor? Yes, I just want to make
23 sure that I didn't mess up any procurement rules
24 right that would have me here in trouble. So, we
25 have completed the procurement selection process.

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Now we are in the moving with the state comptroller,
all the other steps that need to be taken for that
contract to be finalized. So, we are hopeful that we
can begin implementing the system when in the fall
semester.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And as part of - and as
part of the implementation, what investments are you
making in training and retraining, staff and students
not just about the portal but about making sure a
campus is welcoming for all students?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, thank you for that
question. So, on the portal specifically one of the
things that we're really excited about, the company
that we ended up selecting is that they're very
committed to assist us in the training phase as an
entire system adjusts to a new way to not just input
complaints but also manage them and provide
information and use them in systemic ways to be
helpful to address policy issues so that we have a
commitment from that company to help us in that
journey and not just a one shot training seminar but
as we do that implementation systemwide. So, that's
the portal side.

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This year, every new Chief Diversity Officer,
anybody in the campus with investigations receive
Title 6 training. All the personnel that is ongoing
receive Title 6 training beginning in the fall
semester. Title 6 training will be mandatory for all
full time faculty and staff systemwide, so not just
the individuals who are working in the investigation
and complaint space right but faculty and everybody,
support staff and everybody.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm sorry to interrupt. I
missed it, it is available or required for all staff?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: It will be beginning in
the fall, all full-time faculty and staff.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Available or required?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: It will be mandatory.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Mandatory, thank you.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Yes, right now, right now
so that you know we'd be providing training to
specific audiences, HR directors, public safety, so
we've been working with some of the folks that have
more direct connection with the discrimination cases.
We also have a training online version which is
available for folks. We also have a manual, so we've
been working very hard on the training and the

information and making sure that everybody
understands the Title 6 matters in a complete way

But then in the fall, the training will be
mandatory.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: In previous preliminary
budget responses and across the country we're seeing
colleges hire a dedicated Title 6 coordinator. What
discussions have been had at CUNY to hire a person
who is in charge dedicated to coordinating and
managing all of the Title 6 needs including these
trainings.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, some of those things
will be handled by the new center that we created,
right? One of the recommendations going back to how
you began your question with the Lippman report was
about centralizing a lot of this work, so there would
be more consistency so there can be better outreach
and all those things. So, some of that Title 6
coordination will be done by the center. There would
be specific staff in the center assigned to each
campus right, and I know there's also legislation
being proposed in Albany about making this mandatory,
which we have supported. So we started to figure out
whether in our case to do something like that, it

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would be the personnel that is in the central office
who is responsible for the campus, who will get a
designation such as that one or it would be somebody
who is physically on the campus. So, that is
something that we are determining as we build the
center and we do the way that that infrastructure is
created.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And what is the cost of
the creation of the center and what is the cost of
the contract? The reporting contract?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: I can get you those
numbers, I don't know them off the top of my head on
the - uh you're talking about the portal, right/

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: The portal contract and of
course the center itself. The cost of developing the
center training, etc.. How much are you allocating?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: The center we do know and
we do the portal.

HECTOR RODRIGUEZ: The center if \$4 million that
we budgeted.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, \$4 million. We'll
get you the number on the portal, I want to make sure
that we get the right one.

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CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, thank you and on
this topic lastly, of course there was another
protest at Brooklyn College where campus safety were
involved, police were involved. Can you one, just
talk about you know the steps leading up to the
decision to call campus police. The time between
sort of the protest net and of course, as you had
testified last year when there was a protest at City
College. It was testified that that costs \$3 million
in damage. Can you share if there were any costs
associated with this recent protest and if so, how
much they were?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, let me begin by the
last part of your question. I mean to my knowledge
right; we haven't seen any information from Brooklyn
College about any cost or any destruction of property
or things of that nature as a result of the protest
last Thursday at Brooklyn. Again, we are - you know
we are an educational institution and we value
peoples freedom of expression and that's part of our
democratic system in people being able to voice their
opinions and we want them to be done a way that is
consistent with the norms and procedures that we have
set in every campus for that to be done. And even if

it is done in a passionate way, that is done in a way
that doesn't infringe on anybody else's right or
creates a sense of discrimination and harassment and
those are our overarching values right?

In the case of the Brooklyn College situation, it
was an event that was supposed to occur in another
venue and it was moved to the part of the quad at
Brooklyn College. They were exercising their right
to comment right on different things on the campus
and for demands and other things. A tent went up and
we've made very clear to the campus community that
that is a signal that maybe an encampment might be
getting organized and that we have no tolerance for
that.

We share that - the Brooklyn College staff share
that with the uhm, with the individuals there. We
actually tried to remove some of the tents with our
public safety personnel. They were blocked and
impeded by the folks who were there and the college
continue sort of what a standard procedure in terms
of trying to deescalate right? The protest there,
the protesters insisted in keeping tents and some of
those things and after they progress, we had some
concerns about the overall safety. If those

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individuals decided not to leave, right? Which was something that consistently we asked them to do with numerous warnings from the team at Brooklyn College and so when we were concerned that it was getting late and that potentially these individuals might want to stay longer, make an encampment, stay overnight. Some of the other things that we have learned from campuses across the country is that you know when you have a situation like an encampment or of people that want to stay overnight in campus property, you also have the chance of people then wanting to go into building and take over additional space and really create a much more complicated safety situation for anybody involved. A lot more disruptive right if they get into a building and that's when the decision was made to call the NYPD and assist in the clearing of the protest.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And just - there were no additional costs. Have you authorized in anticipation of perhaps any other protests, authorized additional funding to spent on campus security?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Yes. I mean, I could give you a sense of those things. So, so that you

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know, first and it happened at Brooklyn College, we
mobilize additional resources from the nearby
campuses, at CUNY Safe Campuses. We have given
instruction to the campuses that they have the
authority, they have some contracts that can bring in
additional public safety staffing to assist them,
right? If they feel they might have situations
coming up that might be complicated. After the
experience last year CCNY, we invested in additional
guards that we have deployed across the system that
can then be redeployed in the case of an emergency
and the CO can give more details on that.

SHERIF SOLIMAN: Sure, thank you Chancellor. So,
systemwide, we spent a little bit under \$100 million
in safety for the university. That translates into
roughly about 875 permanent security personnel and
then through contracts, we have an additional 275 but
a total of about 1150.

Uhm that represents about 14 contracts throughout
the system. The presidents are always instructed to
use those contracts when they need to in order to
whether it is for security reasons or they have you
know an activity that's going on that they need you
know across the system and obviously we then provide

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additional personnel because the central office also
has not only personnel but it also has a security
contract and we send out what we call these safe
teams over to the campuses depending on what the
situation is. So, uhm, we think that you know
obviously we feel that this is enough in order for us
to be able to manage the system.

As a university, we've had challenges recruiting
permanent personnel. That's why last year we were
very happy with the contract that we were able to
negotiate on behalf of those public safety officers,
the teams of this contract and we feel that through
that and some other things that we've done, we're
starting to see some traction but you know across the
nation, you know this space has been a space that's
been challenged to recruit people but right now, we
feel very confident that you know we have the
personnel that we need in order to continue to
address those things. But in some cases, as the
Chancellor alluded, the numbers are just our number,
what we could provide and we have to do what we need
to do to keep the system, the college safe.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. The Office of
Disability Services, the Council's Preliminary Budget

response includes a request for the Administration to
allocate \$2.1 million to support CUNY's Office of
Disability Services, which this was not included in
the Executive Budget.

Please speak about how that's going to impact
your ability to provide services for students with
disabilities.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Well, so we - you know we
are very proud of the work that we do in that space,
servicing the students there. We made great strides
through CUNY Accommodate. I know that you're
familiar with that program and from previous hearings
and your own interests in the area and the fact now
that we have a system that is far more efficient and
user friendly for the students to be able to schedule
support that they might need and for the - it also
means that we're going to have more demand for the
individuals that provide the services that are being
demanded there.

So, the request for funding that you have in the
green sheet will go to be able to address precisely
additions in person as well, we can better meet the
demand that is growing for those services and if you
want to add anything Alicia on that?

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PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: Yes, I do want to add
that the Association of Higher Education of
Disability, the ratio of staff, student ratio
recommendation is 1 to 130 and at CUNY, it's 1 to
over 200. And so, to the Chancellor's point about
staffing needs, uhm, at some of the campuses, there
are greater staff needs for the support. We also are
in need of the skilled assistive technology
specialists. There are some, half of the campuses do
not have somebody there to help the students with
disabilities, with the technological support. Both
to the students and to the faculty on how to change
and use the technology for example, on some of the
assignments. How do you transfer them so that
they're accessible to students? And so we have hired
two people at CUNY Central to help try and support
some of the campuses but the demand far exceeds the
ability to provide it and I would say that all the
position are arguably related to local law 18.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Tell me more about Local
Law 18.

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: I knew and I came
prepared this time and up for upcoming meeting next
week to discuss this further.

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CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: We have been in great
conversations with the Mayor's Office about how do we
provide that streamlined support of information from
the high schools to CUNY to make sure we can
proactively provide support for the students and
connect them to the services necessary. So, we're
looking forward to the conversation next week.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes, of course the
ultimate goal being streamlined. Local Law 18 was my
legislation that did streamline the transition of
students disabilities from high school to college by
allowing the electronic transference of the IEP and
assessment data but CUNY needs to be able to receive
that data and then act upon that data. So, this \$2.1
million would be critical in providing students with
disabilities who don't always declare they have a
disability. Don't always know how to or know where
to go or even if they do, don't always have access to
their assessment data or their IEP data. It would
significantly expand the way we are supporting
students with disabilities at CUNY.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: CUNY Cares, the cost of
CUNY Cares Fiscal '26 is \$1.6 million. CUNY states

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they currently only have \$1.28 million allocated for
this program. How do you plan on funding the entire
\$1.6 million for CUNY Cares?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Well, I mean if support
from the Council, that would be helpful in doing
that. We didn't receive any funding in the state
budget for that so we will continue some of our
efforts in with dollars to be able to meet the needs
of that pilot. We've been fairly successful given
some of the early results, so that's uh-

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can you talk more about
the early results because we haven't received data
about the impact of this program?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, we'll be happy to - I
mean I'm more familiar with particularly for example,
something which I know is very dear to your heart is
that we have data that in getting students recruited
to Fair Fares program right and making sure that we
maximize the people that qualify in that program,
which has been a common interest of yours that we
have data that shows that the engagement of the
students navigators means higher rates of students
who are eligible are taking advantage of that.

So, we're seeing a lot more engagement of individuals in something like that in additional requests for SNAP benefits and we would be happy to share some of that preliminary data with you.

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: I have some information since the fall of 2023.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: CUNY Cares had almost 20,000 interactions with Bronx students assisting them and to gain services for those benefits that the Chancellor addressed. So, 20,000 interactions since then.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you and if you could please share further data with the Committee that would be very important. CUNY Reconnect; it was created to focus on supporting adults returning to higher education to complete their degrees. In Fiscal 2025, CUNY Reconnect was funded at \$5.9 million. In our Preliminary Budget Response, we urged the Administration to restore, enhance and baseline CUNY Reconnect for \$11.8 million in Fiscal 2026.

They didn't do that. How many students has CUNY Reconnect served to date?

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FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: We have 47,000 students.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And what is the limit to
the number of students CUNY Reconnect can assist in
any given year?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: I mean well, that's a
tough number to quantify right because the needs and
particularly with that population, that is
individuals were coming with some college degree and
needed to complete just so the advising is a key
element in doing that. I mean - don't know if we have
predictions for that but -

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, and another way to
ask it is what would additional funding allow you to
do in CUNY Reconnect? How would that help our
residents here in New York City?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: It would allow us to
continue the outreach to bring even more individuals
to participate in the program. Remember, we also
want to make sure that the folks that come are
retained and they get to stay. A large majority of
the students, which is typical of this population,
are coming part time right, so you need to make sure
that those students remain engaged for a longer
period of time in the work that they do. They need

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additional support services. Council Member Brewer
was asking questions about daycare. It's something
that we have learned with CUNY reconnect and that we
have capacity and that has been very vital to the
students there.

So, some of the services that would allow us to
do more outreach and retain more students.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Chair Brannan.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have questions
from Council Member Brewer followed by Salaam.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. The
building that is at 450 West 41st Street. I don't
know what is the future for that building. I know
some people talked about it for affordable housing.
I know who owned it before, which university and now
I guess it's under your development possibilities, so
what's going to happen to that building?

HECTOR BATISTA: Are you referencing the MFA
building, is that what you're referencing?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: No, 450 West 41 Street.

HECTOR BATISTA: Yeah, I think that's the one,
yes. Well, now Council woman we have an RFP out to
determine what potential uses could be in that space.
I think it is as part of our financial challenges

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that we were facing in the university, the board had
made a decision to sort of look at our real estates
and see how we could monetize some of those real
estate to try to bring additional resources to the
university. And so, right now there is an RFP out
and we're determined to see what the market place
sort of uh -

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It is my opinion, I'm
going to say this bluntly. It should either be for
affordable housing, dorms, I don't know if it's big
enough for Gutman. I understand you always want to
monetize; I got it but at the same time, we can't
talk out of both sides of our mouth. We need
affordable housing. We need dorms. So, I would just
suggest maybe you do a combination but when you just
say monetize, that says to me screw affordable
housing, screw the dorms and screw Gutman.

So, I just think you should be a little bit more
understanding of what our real needs are. Are you
looking at those?

HECTOR BATISTA: Of course, I mean as trying to
be a good partner in the City of New York, we always
look at all those things. I mean my response

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COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So does the RFP include
the need for all those things that I just listed?

HECTOR BATISTA: I think the RFP allows for any
of those things to be available and in conversation
with the local Council person -

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: They want affordable
housing.

HECTOR BATISTA: In conversations, we stated that
if he has folks that are interested in the site, that
we will be more than happy and we've done that to
provide them with the information. So, we're you
know we're open to whatever it is the marketplace
will bring.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright, okay, thank you.

HECTOR BATISTA: Thank you Council Member.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, questions from
Council Member Salaam.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Thank you and good
morning. I wanted to touch back on the adult and
returning learners. Harlem has a sizable population
of adults who started but never finished college.
With zero funding allocated to CUNY Reconnect or CUNY
Flex or for our part-time adult learners, in this

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plan, how does CUNY plan to reengage Harlem's adult
learners?

PROVOST ALICIA ALVERO: Thank you for the
question. So, we - our goal with funding for CUNY
Reconnect, we have learned a lot on reconnecting with
the adult population and what their needs are and how
to connect that with them and we are - our proposal
really is to expand that outreach and we have
partnering with local organizations for and including
disability service organizations and there are adults
who have some college credit that have disabilities
and reaching out in creative ways to other
populations because the onset of CUNY Reconnect was
reconnecting with students who had stopped out of
CUNY but to your point, there are many adults in New
York City who have some college credit, whether it be
CUNY or not and so now this next phase of CUNY
Reconnect is reaching out to that student population,
working with local organizations who may have staff
who want to upscale and how do we reconnect them and
reach out and coordinate with them.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Yeah, because we
definitely want to make sure that they get the

opportunity to go back to school, especially as you
know constituents, my constituents in particular.

About affordability and equity, me and my
constituents are first generation college students
facing financial hardship. Why does the executive
budget still exclude funding for the CUNY application
fee waiver or the CUNY Free Community Pilot and how
can we fix this in the final budget?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: So, thank you for your
question. So, the application fee waiver to your
point is one way of eliminating barriers, which I
think is the point that you're trying to make about
this population, so thank you for your leadership and
support in that arena and we saw the momentum in what
eliminating the fee waiver even for weeks did in
bringing more students to apply for the New York City
Public Schools right? So, we want to build in that
momentum to eliminate all barriers for the students
that we serve. So, we think that we can get to do
that so nobody has to debate whether \$65 becomes
something that keeps me from applying. So, we're
very committed to that. The Council's support on
that and the Speakers support would be huge in making
that happen and I can see how the eyes of students

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you know lit bright with enthusiasm when they are
told, you are worth it. You don't have to do that we
just want you at CUNY.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Well, thank you for your
commitment. I just have one final question. Faculty
and staffing. City College in Harlem has long been a
beacon of opportunity but it also faces high vacancy
rates and faculty burnout. What is the plan to fill
vacant pedagogical and non- pedagogical positions in
Harlem based campuses and how will CUNY ensure
faculty diversity?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Thank you for your
question. So, the funding for faculty in City
College is something that falls mostly within these
resources that come from the state and I know that
City College has been increasing their enrollment
right, so they've been investing in new programs.
They've been traditionally a very strong campus in
stem, right, which means that not only do we want to
your point, very diverse faculty to make sure they're
teaching our students but we also need to at times
pay a premium because those faculty tend to be you
know larger than man and therefore more costly. So,
you know we are committed to that work and we've been

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supporting the work of the campuses in advancing the
diversity. Something that is very much dear to
President Boudreau's interest and we continue to
support them.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Actually Chair I just
have one final quick question if possible.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sure, go ahead.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: So, City College, which
is also located in my district, is home to the high
school of math, science, and engineering. One of the
best high schools in the city. I would like to know
if CUNY is developing a pipeline system that will
allow for City College to work with and prepare
students in our district to be able to be accepted
and enter the school?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Oh, so absolutely and the
stem school is one of those beacons of great hope.
One of the things that I'll add to your comment to
that as we're trying to do more work to get many more
students connected to potential careers in stem, in
science, that math background is really, really
important right? You cannot take upper level courses
in high school if you don't have that math background
right to be able to get college credit. So, we are

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very much building on that pipeline. There's
additional money on the state budget to support early
college funding, which will create sustainable paths
to do that but we're entirely supportive of that line
of work and you have a stellar program in the
district doing great work.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Thank you. Thank you
Chairs.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Council Member
Salaam. Lastly, on the CUNY School of Medicine, I
had the pleasure of visiting this campus. You have a
lot of gargoyles on the City College Campus. It was
a little unnerving and if any of you are a 90's kid
like me, you know the cartoon. I don't think any of
you are.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: It's a great place to
take trick or treating on Halloween.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: If you want to traumatize
your kids I guess, sure. I don't but one of their
needs is a new - is their own building. It just
became an independent school. It needs its own
building and dorm. Can you please update the
committee on the status of the CUNY School of

Medicine acquiring a space including a building and a
dormitory?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Well, so thank you and
thank you for your visit and the School of Medicine
is a great institution and we want to be fully
supportive. They've been working in their transition
into an independent school. We've been more focused
lately. The team under CO Batista and Vice
Chancellor Alvero has done a preliminary study about
what - the space needs that might be for an
independent school in a building for the school.

So, we're beginning to have that conversation.
Hoping that we can attract some philanthropic dollars
given the uniqueness and the results of the mission.
So we are working on that arena. Right now, we are
working with the current location and space at CCNY
and so we're very, very committed to them. We got
again \$4 million in the state budget, which is not
enough, right? But we begin to continue to make
headway in that direction and many of the students
there are part of the - take advantage of the dorm
that City College has on campus.

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In some of this attempt to get additional
dollars, we've been looking at potential to help the
med school with some of those issues.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But as of now, there's no
location identified, anything like that?

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: No, there's no location.
I mean obviously we would love to find a site that
would be entirely close to CCNY to keep the chemistry
going but that's you know that would be our next set
of asks coming down the pipeline to you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Sure, although and I'm not
going to say this Gutman because I don't want to get
involved in any litigation, we do have room in the
Bronx.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: No.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Don't do that Council
Member Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: No, Manhattan.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You know part of
Manhattan's on the main land, so maybe we can find
some common ground. It's called Marble Hill, 41ST
Street.

So, but just to clarify, there's no timeline for
CUNY School of Medicine getting their own building?

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FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: The beginning is to do an
assessment of their space needs, right and then sort
of put that on the pipeline of the work that we have.
So, that's what we're doing now.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I think I heard Council
Member Brewer just say the Bronx is fine. She's not
protesting, so very good. Thank you.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we've been joined
also by Council Member Brooks Powers and I think with
that, we're going to close it out. We appreciate
your partnership and look forward to delivering a
budget that delivers for CUNY.

FELIX MATOS RODRIGUEZ: Thank you for your
support. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We're going to take a short
break and then we're going to hear from the New York
City Campaign Finance Board. [01:54:55]- [02:10:41].

Okay, [GAVEL]. Good afternoon and welcome to the
second part of our fourth day of FY26 Executive
Budget hearings. We're now going to hear from the
Campaign Finance Board. I am still Council Member
Justin Brannan, Chairing the Committee on Finance and
I'm pleased to be joined by my good old friend,

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Council Member Lincoln Restler who Chairs the
Committee on Governmental Operations. We've been
joined by Council Members Williams, Brewer, departing
Dinowitz, Council Member Carr, Hanif, Brooks Powers
and Moya. Welcome Executive Director Paul Ryan and
your team. Thank you for joining us today to answer
our questions.

As a reminder, this is a government proceeding
and decorum shall be observed at all times. As such,
members of the public shall remain silent at all
times. We'll be taking public testimony after CFB
testifies. So, instead of holding one day at the end
for all public testimony, so if you wish to speak on
either CFB or CUNY, just make sure you fill out a
witness slip with the Sergeant at Arms.

On May 1, 2025, the Administration released the
Executive Financial Plan for FY26 to FY29 with a
proposed FY26 budget of \$115.1 billion. CFB's
proposed FY26 budget of \$109.5 million represents
less than one percent of the Administrations proposed
FY26 budget in the Executive Plan. This is an
increase of \$98.1 million from the \$13.4 million
originally budgeted in the preliminary plan in
January.

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This increase is a result of campaign match
funding. As of March 2025, CFB has 39 vacancies
relative to its FY25 budgeted headcount. My
questions will largely focus on vacancies and
oversight of public matching funds. I now want to
turn it over to my Co-Chair for this hearing, Council
Member Restler to give his opening statement.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much Chair
Brannan and I just want to take a moment to say that
we are very fortunate in this Council to have your
leadership in the Finance Committee. And we've also
been joined by Council Member Yusef Salaam.

The Campaign Finance Board as we all know is an
independent agency that provides campaign finance
information to the public. Enables more candidates
to run for office by granting public matching funds.
Increases voter participation and awareness, and
combats corruption in city elections.

As an independent agency, to see if B sets a tone
budget and the full proposed budget is included only
in the executive plan. So, this is our first and
primary opportunity to discuss the needs of the
agency.

Today, we look forward to discussing the CFB's operations, staffing at the department, the new needs in the executive plan, CFB's work to increase voter engagement as well as the boards efforts to enforce compliance with our campaign finance laws and ensure New Yorkers remain confident in the Administration of public matching funds. The majority of CFB's budget in a competitive election year is public matching funds at \$82.6 million in FY25. Matching funds are over 50 percent of the CFB's budget.

NYC New York City has the biggest public matching funds program in the country which creates a more equitable landscape and gives candidates from all backgrounds the chance to run for office. Indeed, our renowned matching fund system is a key contributor to this being the most diverse City Council in our city's history.

As the steward of these funds, CFB has an enormous responsibility in ensuring that they not misused or abused. Existing regulations have reduced the influence of large well healed donors but it's clear that more rigorous accountability is needed to close loopholes and prevent candidates from misusing for misusing public funds.

Unfortunately in 2021, we saw campaign received \$10 million in matching funds despite flagrantly ignoring the rules and exploiting every possible loophole. Now, as we approach - that's in reference to Mayor Adams, now as we approach - in case it wasn't painfully obvious. Now as we approach a competitive 2025 primary, we are again seeing troubling signs of campaigns including the front runner for mayor acting as if they are above the law. The Cuomo for mayor campaign has reportedly benefited from at three undisclosed bundlers who are lobbyists. And despite CFB rules, the contribution solicited by lobbyists are ineligible for matching funds. The fund raising pages shared including language about the CFB matching funds program, and it will be noted that it's been reported that when the campaign engaged those lobbyists and when the lobbyists engaged the campaign and we're advised that there contributions that they raised were not eligible for matching funds, the campaign encouraged them to find somebody else to be listed as the intermediary.

The campaign has also failed to report a single intermediary until it was questioned by the press. Ignored multiple warnings by the CFB on its failure

to properly solicit donations for matching funds and even after being fined for legally coordinating with the fixed - the city pack around an advi - it was revealed that the add cost nearly double the original fine. This is about the CFB protecting its reputation and integrity by doing its job and holding the Cuomo campaign accountable and any other campaign accountable that breaks the rules.

It is imperative that we identify these issues before public funds are disbursed and not in an audit or investigation two years after the fact. We cannot put the genie back in the bottle after election day.

With great public investment comes a serious and urgent obligation to ensure that funds are not used improperly. I have great respect for the CFB team, for Mr. Ryan to all the employees who work diligently to administer our complex campaign finance system. And part of our responsibility at the Governmental Operations Committee is advocating for the CFB to have the necessary resources to operate effectively. I look forward to discussing today how we can work together to ensure the CFB remains a national model moving forward.

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I'd just like to thank the Committee Staff that
worked on this, especially Julia Haramis, Senior
Legislative Counsel, who does a phenomenal job. Our
Committee Counsel Jasari Ganopathy and Legislative
Policy Analyst Erica Cohen and Nieve Mooney our
Communications Director and Molly Haley our Chief of
Staff.

With that, I'll turn it over to Committee Counsel
to swear in Mr. Ryan.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Chair. I want to
also thank the Council Finance Division staff for
their efforts preparing for these hearings. Kudos
again to Julia Haramis or today's hearing. And now
I'm going to turn it over Brian Sarfo, Committee
Counsel to swear us in and get us going.

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? Executive
Director Ryan?

PAUL RYAN: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And Deputy Melillo?

AMANDA MELILLO: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

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PAUL RYAN: Good afternoon Chair Brannan, Chair
Restler, and members of the Committees on Finance and
Governmental Operations, State and Federal
Legislation. My name is Paul Seamus Ryan. I am
Executive Director of the New York City Director of
the New York City Campaign Finance Board. I'm joined
today by Amand Melillo, First Deputy Executive
Director. Thank you for the opportunity to testify
regarding the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2026,
which I am proud to share as the first budget
developed under my leadership. We look forward to
answering any questions you may have.

Fiscal Year 2025 represented the biggest year in
the four year election cycle as it covers the
November 2024 presidential election and the June 2025
citywide primary. Presidential elections are
consistently the highest turnout elections in New
York City with around 60 percent of the electorate
participating, which increases voter demand for our
services. In the agencies seven year strategic plan
adopted early in FY25 as one of my first priorities
as executive director, we articulated a strategy to
leverage high interest in the presidential year to
spread awareness about NYC Votes, the Campaign

Finance Boards Voter Education and Engagement
Initiative, and build our audience so we can engage
and encourage New Yorkers to participate in citywide
elections.

In FY25, the CFB delivered on its mission to
inform New Yorkers and engage them in elections
during a high intensity, high visibility election
year. Years ago, we collaborated closely with the
City Council on the passage of Local Law 30 of 2017,
a pivotal piece of legislation that significantly
expanded and formalized our language access practice.
FY25 saw the publishing of the agencies first
language access implementation plan and the
translation of key resources into 13 languages other
than English. We set a new standard for
accessibility at public events, developing internal
expertise and securing vendor support to provide
American sign language, live captioning, in language
interpretation and more. We further enhanced our
groundbreaking youth leadership programming with an
outstanding cohort of 16 youth ambassadors in 2024.
The partnerships team helped more than 400 events in
our priority neighborhoods throughout 2024. We also
scaled our outreach, sending millions of texts, kept

in touch with thousands of New Yorkers regularly by
email and for the first time, we supplemented our on
the ground outreach work with a paid canvassing
operation. This outreach resulted in collecting and
mailing more than 7,000 pledge cards to voters we
spoke to in person and another 15,000 pledges we
collected online for the 2024 general election alone.

Looking ahead, the CFB's FY26 Executive Budget of
\$109 million, 460 thousand, 239 dollars reflects a
total decrease of \$44 million, 953 thousand, 597
dollars compared to the FY25 current modified budget
of 154 million, 413 thousand, 836 dollars.

The bulk of the budget decrease comprises a
decrease of \$60 million, 400 thousand dollars in the
election funding unit of appropriation, which totals
\$22 million, 200 thousand dollars in FY26. Compared
to \$82 million, 600 thousand dollars in FY25. This
encompasses the cost of public funds for the general
election to be held on November 4, 2025 and the
potential for a special election in FY26.

There's no primary election for covered offices
scheduled to be held in FY26. The primary election
held on June 24, 2025 falls in FY25. The breakdown
in each unit of appropriation is as follows: \$59

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million 863 thousand, 829 dollars for other than
personal services, and \$27 million, 396 thousand, 410
dollars for personal services.

FY26 will continue to be shaped by our seven year
strategic plan that will target improvements across
the agency to meet ambitious north star goals for
2030, including faster audit completion, higher
satisfaction among candidates and voters, increased
civic participation, and stronger staff engagement.
The CFB remains committed to filling its charter
mandated responsibilities with transparency,
efficiency and equity.

During FY26, the implementation of the CFB's new
seven year strategic plan, which takes the agency
through the 2029 citywide election cycle will
continue an earnest and translate the strategic plan
goals into programmatic changes. As I have
previously testified before the Council, we have an
agency north star goal of completing 90 percent of
audits within one year of the 2029 election for
candidates who do not request and receive extensions
with minimal increased risk.

In the short term, we've committed to a benchmark
of completing 50 percent of audits within one year of

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the 2025 elections and are committed to starting
post-electro audits immediately after the June
primary for candidates who are not in the general
election. We are also engaging an outside consultant
to help us develop a roadmap for improving the
candidate experience and optimizing the audit
process. This effort will support a more efficient
and streamlined matching funds program.

In FY26, the CFB will continue updating our
legacy process and technology systems. This
multipronged approach begins with process mapping,
leading to process improvements and then the
implementation of supportive technology.

We are also addressing a high vacancy rate within
our tech team. While we work to fill these roles and
bring more technical capacity in house, we continue
to rely on vendors to ensure continuity and progress
on critical projects. Through FY26, the Campaign
Finance Board is committed to providing comprehensive
voter facing education on the matching funds program
to highlight its benefits. Including first time
public funds education mailers that began arriving in
New Yorkers mailboxes last week. Some highlights of
our plans include the Voter Guide, printed and

digital educational materials, and a targeted
multimedia advertising campaign. The Voter Guide is
mailed to all registered voters and published online
for the general election. This information will be
communicated not only in English but also in 13
additional mandated citywide languages. We will also
have a video voter guide with ASL interpretation and
closed captioning available on our website.

Beyond the matching funds awareness campaign, we
build campaigns around ranked choice voting and
education pursuant to Local Law '21, which was passed
by the City Council in 2021 and runs through 2025.
We're also supporting the visibility of our debate
program throughout the year with marketing and
advertising. Our increase in personal services
represents a headcount increase of 45 new positions
representing a 21 percent increase from our current
headcount of 213 positions.

The 45 additional positions will support work
related to our technology contract portfolio,
strategic plan implementation and to support general
operations.

As our budget has grown to accommodate expanded
mandates, particularly around language access and

other legal requirements, we recognize the need to scale our internal infrastructure accordingly. We have built new programmatic teams. We have not scaled our staffing levels and operations in finance in tandem. Adding staffing in these areas will provide the necessary support to carry out our mandates and contract with outside vendors who are partners in this work.

To support timely production schedules and ensure compliance with legal mandates, we have begun strengthening our people operations functions to better manage hiring, recruitment and onboarding. We have also prioritized laying the ground work for more specialized roles and a more robust administrative foundation to support the agencies expanding structure.

As always, our work is guided by a deep commitment to empowering New Yorkers to make a greater impact on their elections and strengthening our local democracy. We are grateful for the support of the Council in advancing these goals. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. My colleague Ms. Melillo and I are happy to answer any questions you may have.

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CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. We've also been
joined by Council Member Paladino or and Deputy
Speaker Ayala. The Executive plan includes \$91.9
million in addition city funding along with 171
positions in FY26. Only for the Campaign Finance
Board. We know this is the typical annual adjustment
made each year in the executive plan based on CFB's
projects for the following fiscal year. Could you
provide us with a breakdown of this funding? How
much is budgeted for staffing and operational
expenses?

AMANDA MELILLO: Yes absolutely. So, our FY26
budget request is for our personal services and
staffing is for \$27 million 396,000, 410 dollars.
That request is for 258 budgeted positions and
headcount.

Our OTPS requests for everything Other Than
Personal Services is \$59 million, 863,000, 829
dollars and finally our election fund and that covers
our public matching funds budget request is \$22
million, 200,000 dollars.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay so how much is
budgeted for public matching funds for campaigns next
fiscal year?

AMANDA MELILLO: So, this covers the November
general election. We have budgeted \$22 million,
200,000 dollars.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And how do you determine
that amount?

AMANDA MELILLO: That is a great question.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank the staff.

AMANDA MELILLO: So, we always -we come up with a
projection far in advance of when elections are
happening. Generally, what we do is we look at data
from past elections. We will look at every single
seat whether they are considered open seats, meaning
we have no incumbent running for reelection or if we
do have an incumbent running for reelection and then
we will look at the averages of how many candidates
tend to run for those seats. Whether or not an
incumbent is running, those draw fewer competitors in
those contests. In addition, we look at the average
amount of public funds and come up with a projection
for each election.

What I will tell you, the challenge of coming up
with that projection is each election cycle has been
very different and there have been a lot of changes
in the intervening years. So, for example, we came

up with a projection for the 2021 citywide election
and what we couldn't factor in at the time was rank
choice voting, which does draw a lot more candidates
in every single race.

So, when we were looking at first of all, the
entire 2025 citywide election, we came in with a
number of assumptions and I think it's fair to say
that those assumptions were upended as the election
cycle proceeded. So, generally, we would look at
especially citywide races that tend to drive costs
and in a typical election, you would see when you
have incumbents running for reelection then they will
draw fewer competitors and that we will end up paying
out fewer matching funds in those races.

I think that we changed our projection mid-year
and this was due to the fact that the top of the
ticket was drawing far more in competition than we
would have anticipated absent some of the
circumstances that were happening this election year
and because the top of the ticket was drawing so much
more competition, we also saw a lot of movement in
down ballot races as well.

So, because the Mayoral contest was more
competitive and people were thinking of leaving the

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seats that they had to run for higher office. We saw
that happening all the way down the ballot to
Comptroller race to City Council races and we have
amended our projection for the June primary. So, I'm
happy to get you more detailed stats after this
hearing. I do not have them at this time but that's
generally how we would project our public funds.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And what types of
operational expenditures are included in the funding
added? Were there any new positions or new
expenditures added for FY26?

AMANDA MELILLO: Yes, would you like to talk
about headcount or other than headcount?

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I could start with
headcount.

AMANDA MELILLO: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What's your total headcount
right now?

AMANDA MELILLO: So we are budgeted at 213 for
headcount.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: 215?

AMANDA MELILLO: 213.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And what are you at 171?

AMANDA MELILLO: I believe we're 175 as of today.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay.

3 AMANDA MELILLO: It shifts from week to week
4 depending on our new hires.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay.

6 AMANDA MELILLO: So, I'll talk about the
7 positions that we've requested adding. First of all,
8 I'll talk about a division that I started as part of
9 my new role that I took on in September. I am
10 forming a strategy products and innovation division
11 to drive our strategic plan and innovation across the
12 agency. So I will claim credit for having the
13 biggest staffing requests because I'm starting
14 building that division from the ground up. I
15 requested 15 positions to build two new teams. One
16 is a new product strategy team. When Paul first took
17 on his role as Executive Director, this was one thing
18 that he identified right away that I think has been a
19 major gap in our agencies innovation in the past.

20 Where I think that we wanted to fill in these
21 gaps and have a team that was really focused on
22 strategy for technological innovation. What do we
23 build when and why do we build it and who are the
24 constituents that we are best serving.

So, what this team will be doing is really creating and leading this product roadmap that is going to take us through the four year election cycle and beyond, as is the case with many government agencies, we have a lot of legacy technology that we have to rapidly overhaul and technology is changing every day.

So, this product team is really going to focus not only on modernizing us to where we need to be today, but also where we need to be for the 2029 election cycle and beyond.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And where do you think there are - where are the holes? I mean where are we behind?

AMANDA MELILLO: In terms of our technology?

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah.

AMANDA MELILLO: I would say it's a mix right now. I think for a long time the agency pursued a strategy of building a lot of our technology in house. So it's heavily customized code and that's just not the direction that a lot of the technology field is moving towards. So one of the major shifts that we've made in the past couple of years is to really start to work with one, taking off the shelf

products and customizing them rather than building from scratch. That enables us to customize for our needs but actually sort of like get to market faster to adopt that terminology for a moment. I'm doing these in example of something that we deployed recently which is sales force, which we have started using for all of our external communications.

In the years past, our team might have looked at replicating that in house and that's just not how any agency does business anymore. So one of the things that we have done is started exploring off the shelf solutions, particularly with low code, no code applications. I think a really good example where on the cusp of launching a new application for cutting public funds payments. Right now we are making those payments out of our legacy system, which is known as CBIPs. This application that we're using now requires a lot less coding in the back end and a lot less customization and it's just much easier to build applications faster.

So, these are the sorts of things we're looking for and particularly what is our strategy for when we engage with outside consultants who have inhouse expertise and can build technology faster versus what

do we use our in house team for in terms of
maintenance and continued enhancements.

So that is one thing I'd say. Another major
change that we have made, uhm, within the past year
actually, is that we have moved our dataset. We have
a very complex dataset, as I'm sure anyone who has
ever had to file a disclosure statement can attest to
our in house database for as long as I have been at
the agency, which is over ten years now has been
housed on premises. Literally in a server room in
our agency. This is also not how people do business
anymore. So, one of the things that we did was took
our dataset and moved it to the cloud, so that our
data is now in a data link in [INAUDIBLE 02:34:26]
and that will enable us to build application faster.

So, this is the backend work and some of the
strategy work that has already taken place so that we
can start to build things for candidates for
campaigns, for modernizing our audit process on the
back end that will just I think be an end to end
improvement in how we do customer service. So,
that's really where we're looking to invest in the
upcoming year.

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CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, I have a question I
guess that sort of ducktails with the migrating to
the cloud, which is great. CFB doesn't have a
capital budget but some of the operational costs CFB
has incurred in the past and is budgeting for in the
coming year are capitally eligible.

So, have you considered ways you can access
capital? I'm assuming you're able to move to the
cloud because you used expense funding instead of
because right? The city is very reluctant to spend
capital money on the cloud.

AMANDA MELILLO: I can't speak to what the city
has is - spends capital funds on and does not because
to be honest with you, this question only came up
very recently in conversations with the Council
Finance division. What I can say is that the agency
traditionally has spent what might be considered
capital funding out of its operating expenses. Which
we are able to do because of our budgetary
independence and our partnership with the Council on
that.

I do know that capital funding would require
approvals from OMB and working through other agencies
and I could just say, as someone that we do work off

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of citywide requirements contracts that are held by
other agencies, we used to run our advertising
campaigns through the Department of Health and Mental
Hygiene. Generally, when we can procure our services
directly, that enables us to do the work much faster
than when we have to work through -

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And have you had
conversations with OMB regarding capital funding?

AMANDA MELILLO: Interestingly as far as I know,
this has not come up with OMB. They have just always
had us - we have always worked to fund these things
out of our operating budget.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I just have a few
more. Uhm, when comparing the funding added in the
Executive Plan for FY26, there's some differences
when compared to the budget for FY25 that we just
wanted to get some more clarity on.

In FY26 CFB budgeted \$22.2 million for public
matching funds, dropping 73.1 percent from 82.6 in
FY25. Could you tell us why is the budget for FY26
so much lower than the FY25 budget?

AMANDA MELILLO: Absolutely, great question. So,
the election year itself in the calendar year is
split between two fiscal years. So, the June primary

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is covered in FY 2025 and the November general
election is covered in FY 2026. Historically, we
have spent far more in funds during the June primary
where we have a lot more competition across races and
where uhm, the party primaries draw a lot more
candidates in each race. So, we have traditionally
paid out far more in public funds in June than we do
in November in the primary as opposed to the general.
Anything that is unused for the June primary this
year would be rolled over to cover the general
election.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And there's a CFB has \$10
million in the budget code for strategy, product and
innovation. Is that the group you just mentioned?

AMANDA MELILLO: Yes, that is my new division.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Okay, we've been
joined by Council Member Stevens and I'm going to
kick it to Chair Restler. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you Chair Brannan.
Just as the Chair noted, there's a significant
increase in the proposed headcount for the CFB for
the upcoming fiscal year adding 45 positions and
going from a budgeted headcount of 213 up to 258.

Could you provide a breakdown of where those positions will be within the agency?

AMANDA MELILLO: Certainly, so in terms of the new positions that are requested, I think I just mentioned a minute ago, 15 of those are in strategy products and innovation. So, that's the new division that I am currently starting up.

Ten positions are added to our public affairs division. That's where our voter education and engagement initiative, NYC Votes is housed. So, there we're looking to add staffing for language access and to our partnerships and outreach team to expand our community engagement and partnerships that we are doing out in neighborhoods around New York City and we are also looking to add staff to our content team, so they are creating everything from what you might see on social media to the emails that voters are receiving, to the products that we are distributing out in neighborhoods like one pagers and palm cards and things like that.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: So, 15 in the strategy and product division, the new division you mentioned ten in the public affairs division.

AMANDA MELILLO: And then eight requests for in
our technology division. I'll just make a note that
since this budget was submitted, our chief technology
officer departed the agency in March and we actually
folded technology into strategy products and
innovation. So, right now I am taking a look at this
part of the budget and how we can allocate our
headcount to best achieve our strategy and what we
think we need to do in terms of building new
products.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, is there -

AMANDA MELILLO: I'll just very quickly - in
addition to that we added six in operations and
finances director, Executive Director Ryan mentioned
in his testimony, that is to expand our
infrastructure and really to support contracting and
budget that have expanded as our agency has taken on
new mandates over the years and then finally, we are
adding four to our people operations team to support
recruitment onboarding, learning and develop for all
of these positions.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, as you can imagine,
you have a group of people who have been through the
campaign finance system and the auditing process and

I think have been pleased that Executive Director Ryan has made improving and streamlining the audit process and priority since joining the CFB but are any of those 45 staff going to support audit operations and to streamline those efforts further?

AMANDA MELILLO: So, I'll say that many of the staff are supporting audit operations. I would hope that the entire strategy products and innovation division and tech team are meant to support audit operations.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay.

AMANDA MELILLO: One of the things we took a look at this year, uhm was really our headcount. What we've tried in the past is adding more auditors and I think a lot of times, we have found this and we have also read about how this is true in other government agencies with processes like ours. Adding more staff does not necessarily speed a process. Sometimes you just have to look at the process.

So, that is really what I have been partnering with our audit division and doing is looking at our process, looking at what are the improvements that we can make? At the same time that we are looking to

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build new tools to help to streamline these things on
the back end to help our staff who are here.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay. You know I
appreciate the goal of completing 90 percent of the
audits within a year of the primary election that
we're about to hold. Could you just share an update
with us on the status of audits from the '21 and '23
cycles?

PAUL RYAN: Yeah, I'm happy to do so. I'll also
make one more note about staffing on that team, which
is that our active headcount right now is 52 and
we're heading to a 2026 headcount of 61. So, we will
be adding 9 new staff to the audit team in the coming
months. So, we have a vacant - we have some
vacancies.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Right. The budgeted
headcount increase from 60 to 61, is that right?

PAUL RYAN: Correct, so we go from active of 52
presently to budgeted headcount for 2025 of 60.
We're adding one to 61 but those will be 9 new hires
in the coming months, 6 months to a year.

In terms of the current status, we have sent out
27 final audit reports in the last 30 days. That's
the good news. We are working through the backlog

from 2021 and 2023. Right now we have distributed
draft audit reports, almost 100 percent. We're at I
think 97 percent of draft audit reports, which as you
know from conversations I've had with you in prior
hearings, most of the audit work actually takes place
in the lead up to the production of the draft audit
report. The stages that happen after the draft audit
report response that comes from the campaign is
analyzed by our auditors and then referred to legal
and they take things over the finish line in
collaboration with our auditors by disposing of the
audit in a variety of different ways including
payment or repayment notices, close out letters,
issuance of final audit reports or enforcement
notices. Issuance of enforcement notices.

Right now for 2021, we have completed 43 percent
of our audits. 186 out of 431 campaigns and but
again we're - so we're between 97 plus percent have
gotten their draft audit reports, so we're taking the
rest over the finish line but 43 percent have crossed
the finish line.

For 2023, we have issued draft audit reports in
56 out of 99 campaigns and we have completed 20
audits so far from 2023.

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CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, so if I have my
numbers right, we've got 50 some percent or about
nearly 250 audits from 2021 that are not yet
completed and about 80 percent of the 2023 audits are
not yet completed?

PAUL RYAN: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And any timeline you can
share for when you expect to complete the
preponderance of those audits?

PAUL RYAN: Right now they are - most of these
matters from 2021 and a handful from 2023 are with
our legal team. That's another area where in my
first year on the job, I have identified along with
our general counsel, it was an interim position, a
temporary position when I onboard with the agency
we've completed. We now have a permanent general
counsel Joseph Gallagher who has begun adding staff to
his team. He's added three lawyers within the past
year, has a vacancy that he will be filling in the
coming months to expand capacity specifically to work
through what is a sizable enforcement backlog. We've
changed some policies in order to speed things up,
both for - I'll also say that we are principally
looking at system improvements for 2025 and into the

future. While we are inevitably and necessarily
working through this backlog but we are - you know
splitting resources right now between the 2025
election which is underway and as you know as a
candidate running in the public financing program,
our audit team, they are the ones that process every
disclosure report. Send the statement review,
process the statement review response and then
determine public funds eligibility for the next
payment date, which immediately coming up is May
30th. So, this is, you know it's tough to get
through. It's tough to make progress and you're
looking for windows among auditors and the legal team
between the active engagement with the 2025 election
work to administer the public financing program. So,
I don't have a date certain but I will tell you we
have plans, concrete plans that are presently being
implemented to speed these things up. One of the
reasons for example, for these backlogs that we've
discussed in the past are that going back to 2021,
the agency began granting extension requests very
liberally to candidates and candidates routinely
asked for both many extensions and long extensions.
They were granted upon request. We've changed that

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policy in October of last year. We've implemented a
new policy at Striclon that's on extensions for
candidates at every stage of the audit and
enforcement process.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Can I ask a question on
that in particular? The Eric Adams campaign from
2021, I'm just trying to understand the status of
that audit. My understanding was that the CFB that
you had previously noted that the Adams Campaign was
not being granted any additional extensions but last
week, the board granted the campaign yet another two
week extension in response to their request for
additional records. What happened there? Is that
the last extension that the Adams Campaign is going
to be granted? Are we ever going to - does the board
require any evidence of good faith efforts to comply
before granting an extension like this? They've
received so many extensions and we've been eagerly
trying to get to the bottom of what's going on.

PAUL RYAN: So, I want to make two things clear.
One is that this new policy would strict limits on
extensions, applies for candidates running in 2025
and into the future. In large part because we
thought it unfair to change the rules of the game for

1 candidates midstream to treat some candidates
2 differently than others.

3
4 The other thing I want to make clear is I'm not
5 at liberty to discuss any specific candidates with
6 ongoing audits or investigations or enforcement
7 matters before the board.

8 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Right, it's just when we're
9 looking at the issue four years later and trying and
10 potentially instilling accountability, to see the
11 campaign to reimburse the city for millions of dollar
12 of inappropriately spent taxpayer dollars, it just
13 feels totally unrealistic because they don't have
14 millions of dollars to spend to pay back the city and
15 it just underscores the need for rigorous enforcement
16 in real time in the election cycle, which is where I
17 want to shift a few of my questions.

18 And I'll just do a couple topics now and then
19 shift it to colleagues and come back for more if time
20 allows. I just want to start with intermediaries.
21 Earlier this cycle, CFB implemented a new policy
22 requiring a response to suspected intermediary
23 reports and withholding of matching funds if
24 donations are suspected to be linked to an
25 intermediary that goes unreported. How many

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campaigns have had suspected intermediaries flagged
so far and how many have actually responded to your
request for more information?

PAUL RYAN: I don't have the number of campaigns
that have had suspected intermediaries flagged. I do
have the number of matching funds claims that have
been denied as a result of failure to respond to our
suspected intermediary reports. Since this policy
change, there have been 587 invalid matching claims,
codes attached to specific contributions that were
claimed for match. So, that represents about three
percent of all invalid matching claims so far in the
2025 election cycle. So, it's a pretty small
percentage but we are tracking the implementation of
the new policy and it is having an impact. We're
seeing a significant number of matching funds claims
denied as a result of failure to respond to our
requests for information about suspected
intermediaries.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: That's good to hear. My
understanding is the CFB is only withholding funds if
there's no response after statement review of
disclosure report 8, which was due in April. Is that
right?

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PAUL RYAN: The policy will remain in effect. We
will not be matching claims for which they don't
respond to and a suspected intermediary. The timing
is going to change a little bit with the four day
turnarounds that are coming up for the next two
payment dates.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I guess the question is why
not go back earlier? Why start in April?

PAUL RYAN: Oh, it went -

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: It does go back?

PAUL RYAN: It does go back to the beginning of
the election cycle, yeah because the statement
reviews carry over from a one to the other. Anything
that's unresolved in the statement review and one
disclosure filing stays on that statement review for
future disclosure files.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And does the CFB have
access to the records that are needed to adequately
access suspected intermediaries? For example, a
campaign has a hyperlink that they give to a lobbyist
to send around requests for donations. Do you know
what contributions are linked to that hyperlink or is
it just what the campaign tells you?

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PAUL RYAN: We have access to the back end of our
fund raising platform which candidates, some choose
to use, some do not. Others use other platforms like
Act Blue for example. Which we don't have access to
that information unless we request it from the
campaign -

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: But if candidates uses NYC
Votes, uses your platform, creates a hyperlink for
somebody on that platform, then you can see the
donations that are associated with that - with those
contributions?

PAUL RYAN: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And suspected intermediary
reports, is there an intension to make them public?

PAUL RYAN: They are an attachment to a statement
review and statement reviews themselves are available
via foil request. I'll say this also, which is on
point. I am aiming our agency to a future state of
essentially no needs to file a foil request.

Anything of this foil gets posted on our website.
Not quite instantly because redaction is typically
needed but within a matter of days or weeks of us
receiving the document it goes up on our website
eliminating the need for foil requests themselves.

So, that's the direction we are heading with foil practice.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: That is helpful and sounds like a very positive development. If a campaign is aware of an intermediary, that - the requirement is that it be reported at the time of the filing that includes the bundle donations, correct?

PAUL RYAN: Yes, so -

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: You know I get that all campaigns occasionally misreporting things and have to file them into disclosures but if a campaign fails to report any intermediaries, that raises red flags for the CFB if there's a substantial amount of donations?

PAUL RYAN: Well it certainly could trigger a suspected intermediary report and it will be noted in the statement review; the contribution won't be matched. There are consequences for it but it is quite routine for most, many, most candidates to not get their disclosure reports 100 percent right. We review them closely and we send the statement review asking for more information, clarification, correction of what we consider to be errors or at least open questions in this disclosure reports and

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intermediaries but pretty much every other aspect of
disclosure and reporting to our agency.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And are there penalties for
chronically failing to report until questioned or
does that suggest to you that a campaign is just
hoping to not get caught?

PAUL RYAN: I'm not going to speculate on what
campaigns are hoping for but you know we audit
everything very closely. That's one of the reasons
it takes so long. We audit so thoroughly. The
upside is -

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I am attacking you from
both sides with this today. That's fair.

PAUL RYAN: That's just about everything. It
takes us a little while longer than we'd like to get
to that end result and for any violations, any
failure to report to us, required information, there
are penalties.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And noted that you have
access to the back end information on NYC Votes but
don't have access to enact Blue for example, should
the Campaign Finance Board have access to
contributions through kind of hyperlink, blue
hyperlinks to understand how donations are bundled?

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Would you request access to the platform for a
campaign to share that information if there are
suspected intermediaries that are not reporting the
contributions accurately?

PAUL RYAN: Uhm, one priority for us is to
strengthen the Campaign Finance Act Provisions around
intermediary reporting. You know, my team and I,
we've had conversations with you. We've really
enjoyed -

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: We're trying.

PAUL RYAN: Collaborating on envisioning what the
next generation of intermediary reporting is. One of
the things that has appeared at least in draft
legislation is to make clear to the regulated
community that the use of a personalized hyperlink,
created by a campaign makes one in intermediary.
That that is a form of solicitation known to the
campaign automatically triggering the disclosure
requirement. So, we'd love to continue working with
you both on legislation that would do that but also
to eliminate some of the exemptions to the definition
of intermediary that really resulted in some
loopholes.

We have - we can get access. We have subpoena power to answer your question more directly. Could we get a - can we require sharing with us information by Act Blue? One way or the other, I think we can get to that information. We can request virtually anything we want and need from campaigns themselves as a criteria including as a criteria for public funds. We also have subpoena power to go to outside vendors but I think our preference would be to just creating more robust, more effective, intermediary disclosure regime and some changes in the Campaign Finance Act are necessary to accomplish that.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Well, we certainly are doing our best to push that through and appreciate your partnership on it.

Uhm, contributions bundled by individuals who are lobbyists or appear on the doing business data list, you know as we all know are not matched. Are campaigns obligated to inform donors that those donations will not be matched when there's a solicitation by a lobbyist or somebody on the doing business data list who has a significant business interest before the city? Is there a penalty for failing to do so?

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PAUL RYAN: I don't know off the top of my head
if there's an affirmative requirement to notify
potential donors if the intermediary - if the fact
that intermediary is involved makes that contribution
not matchable. I would certainly be happy to look
into that question, confer with my legal team and get
back to you.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I just want to ask a couple
questions about the decision this week to withhold
\$662,000 in matching funds from the Cuomo Campaign
because the CFB quote, "has reason to believe that
the fix the city's super pack had improperly used
information shared by the Cuomo For Mayor Campaign."

Yesterday it was or earlier this week, it was
reported that the Fix The City Pack actually spent
\$1.3 million on that add, not the previously reported
\$662,000. Any update that can be shared on if the
CFB is seeking to recoup addition funds from the
Cuomo Campaign.

PAUL RYAN: I am not at liberty to discuss any
investigations or enforcement matters that are
currently underway, so I can't comment on that.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Could I ask more broadly?
If an independent expenditure turns out to be larger

than had previously understood by the CFB and the CFB
later finds out there was an illegal or an
appropriate collaboration between the campaign and
the super pack, what is the process for recouping
those funds? Is there a process that occurs before
the election that we could anticipate or how do you
communicate with voters that campaigns have violated
rules?

PAUL RYAN: And your reference to recouping
funds, are you referring to public funds disbursed to
campaigns?

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Yes.

PAUL RYAN: Recouping public funds require is a
finding of breach of certification by the board and
that is typically something historically that has
come in the context of an enforcement action after
the election. That's the process by which a campaign
that has received public funds and the board later
determines that that campaign itself had violated a
law to such a significant degree, there are specific
grounds for breach of certification spelled out in
our rules and in the law that through an enforcement
action, the board would haul both the candidate and
the candidate could be personally liable for

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repayment of those funds jointly with their campaign
committee.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Copy. The Charter is
really clear in stating that expenditures that are
independent only when a candidate or a Committee has
"not authorized, requested, suggested, fostered or
cooperated in any such activity." Right, a candidate
staff or agents cannot be involved in the planning of
any outside advertisements. These are incredibly
broad prohibitions, as they should be but how is the
CFB able to enforce this?

The CFB has a rule that lays out 13 factors that
the board can consider in determining whether or not
a specific expenditure is or is not independent from
the campaign that it's associated with or supporting
or the opponent of-

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Are you able to access or
request phone information, texts, email information
between relevant parties in real time to be able to
get to the bottom of whether coordination is
happening considering such an exceptionally broad
prohibition in our City Charter?

PAUL RYAN: Not limited to coordination but
generally speaking, the Campaign Finance Board has

very broad subpoena powers to get information to
conduct investigations.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Have those subpoena powers
been used this selection cycle?

PAUL RYAN: I'm not at liberty to discuss ongoing
investigations and enforcement, so I'm not going to
respond to that.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I tried to do as broadly to
see if there was a way to sneak in there but I
understand. Are you concerned that donors with
significant business before the city like Door Dash
are making giant donations to super packs in a clear
attempt to influence city policies? A million dollar
contribution from a cooperation with significant
business interest before the city feels entirely
contradictory to the spirit of our campaign finance
laws?

I recognize there are limitations that the
Supreme Court has placed and you know them much
better than me but what more should we be doing to
ensure that our public funds aren't going to
candidates who are kind of relying on independent
expenditures as a backdoor around our campaign
finance system? When should there be any

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ramifications for candidates who are in our campaign
finance system accessing public funds, who are at the
same time taking these enormous contributions through
super packs from entities that do business with the
city?

PAUL RYAN: As you know I've spent 25 years in
the advocacy world, Campaign Finance and election law
as a watchdog. I had many opinions and many policy
suggestions. In my present role, uhm my number one
job is to enforce the laws on the books and I work
very closely both with my intergovernmental relations
team, with my legal team and with our board to come
up with policy proposals. We vet them carefully and
we are happy to work with you and other members of
the Council to come up with policy reforms or
solutions, way to address the problems that you've
just identified that are concerning you. I'm not at
liberty today to voice my own personal opinions about
their these - where policy development should go but
I am happy to do so in my professional capacity and
partnership with my team and my board and you and
other council members.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, we look forward to
continuing that conversation very much. I'm alarmed

by you know how things have been going this election
cycle. I'll just do one more topic. The - see I'm
just - could you help clarify for me CFB rules
regarding payment to staff members who work on a
campaign? Under what circumstances can a campaign
staff be unpaid?

PAUL RYAN: It's a great question and as a
general matter, people are not only permitted to
volunteer for campaigns but in my personal view, that
is a good thing for democracy, people volunteering
for campaigns.

Volunteers are - they are not making in kind
contributions through their volunteer efforts. So,
as long as an individual is uncompensated period,
working for a campaign for free, they are exempt from
the definition of contribution under both the act and
under board rules. However, the important thing to
emphasize here is that they are uncompensated. If an
individual is compensated by someone other than the
campaign or an entity other than the campaign to
perform campaign work, they're not a volunteer.
They're being paid someone and that someone who is
paying them is making an in kind contribution to the
campaign.

So, those are you know how this sort of plays out, that's how the - both the existing provisions of the Campaign Finance Act and the boards rules apply to that type of conduct. Volunteers have to be unpaid. That's the definition of volunteer.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: So, just to make sure I'm following you plainly, a volunteer has a full time job that they're paid for but for the time that they should be at that full time job, they're working those same hours on the campaign and volunteering their time. That is inherently an in kind contribution from the entity where that is allowing those staff members to work on the campaign?

PAUL RYAN: You know it's a fact dependent analysis so I will certainly allow you your interpretation of the law and your application of that law to the hypothetical. Or maybe not hypothetical facts in your mind but the reality is that if someone is paying a person to do work for a campaign, that person is making an in kind contribution to the campaign. The fact dependent analysis depends on like, does the employer require timesheets? Is the person filling out those timesheets? What does the employer do? I fill out a

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timesheet. If I were working for a campaign when I'm
supposed to be working for the taxpayers of the City
of New York, I would be violating the law.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Would unpaid staff members
who are registered lobbyists raise alarm bells for
the CFB?

PAUL RYAN: Alarm bells, no. I wouldn't say
that. Again, our job is to apply the laws that exist
today to the facts that are known to us and when you
know members of the public suspect that something
fishy is going on with the campaign, suspect that
something potentially illegal is going on with the
campaign, the appropriate course of action is to file
a complaint with us, which gives us the opportunity
to look into it, to investigate.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And if the individual
worked on a campaign in a previous cycle and is now
choosing to volunteer their time, would that raise
alarm bells for the CFB?

PAUL RYAN: That alone no, not knowing more
facts, no I can't say so. People change what they do
with their time in their lives pretty routinely.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, uhm, there are many
other topics that I would like to ask you about but I

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think I have uhm, probably gone for long enough for
the moment. So, we'll pass it over to colleagues and
circle back if time allows.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Chair. We've
been joined by Majority Leader Farias and we have
questions from Council Member Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. Picking up on
Chair Restler's question. So, if somebody works for
the city, like a city job, and they're volunteering
for the campaign but it's a you know a substantial
job in the campaign. Is that legal? It always
seemed to me kind of strange. You're working for the
city, you get a city paycheck and you are - have a
fairly substantial role in the campaign.

PAUL RYAN: I think we are now at least in part
perhaps in the realm of the conflicts of interest
board and not my area of expertise or my agency in
terms of any restrictions on specific types of
employees doing any sort of partisan work but setting
that aside and sticking to the Campaign Finance Law
Application, again the rule is if you are actually
being paid by someone or an entity by an employer to
work for a campaign and I'm talking literally the
hours that you're volunteering, you're knocking on

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doors for the campaign. If you're on the clock for
an employer, that employer is making an in kind
contribution to the campaign.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But if you're working for
the city, I don't know that that would be an in kind
campaign contribution.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It would be and you know
just because and it would still be subject to
amounts. The New York City - I suspect that the
individual who's engaging in that contact has bigger
problems perhaps even then the city would as an
illegal contributor to a campaign. That employee is
probably going to have problems with the Conflict of
Interest Board for city time violations but by the
books yes, if someone says that they're volunteering
for a campaign but they're not actually a volunteer,
they're being paid. An in kind contribution is being
made to the campaign.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright thank you.
Second, uhm, we're very supportive of doing more
voter education at Rikers Island and so, I'm just
wondering, we've been trying to get a polling place.
We learned that's not possible because people are
registered in their home location blah, blah, blah.

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But what can we do with some of your outreach workers
to help - I know legal services has been trying. You
know when you got- I'm making this up, 80 percent of
your individuals they are not sentenced. They're all
eligible to vote but I believe if my memory is
correct, I think 410 out of so much effort. Either
almost voted or did vote and so, that's a very small
number out of what close to 5,000. So, I'm wondering
how we can do more to help get them registered and
voting at Rikers.

AMANDA MELILLO: Yes, that's a great question.
First I will start by saying that we do have staff
from our partnerships and outreach team that
routinely work with a coalition of organizations and
government agencies to increase participation and
engagement at Rikers to make sure that people are
registering, getting their absentee ballot.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: How many people are
assigned there?

AMANDA MELILLO: We have one full time staff
member assigned there and then we routinely
coordinate with other city - with city agencies with
the Department of Correction and with the Board of
Elections as well. The Board of Elections is also

represented in those calls. You know I would say a few things about Rikers. You know we do our best to get voter education materials there. You know the detainees have very specific needs because they can't receive an internet connection, so we often will customize materials so that you don't need an internet connection. Particularly in elections where we are only publishing a voter guide online, but we do distribute materials there. I would also say that's highly dependent on the Department of Correction to be able to carry out and what I would say as a general rule is that uhm, you know I think the staffing there really try their best but this is not their primary mandate. So, this is really - sometimes a tricky area because I think they try to be good partners and we're all doing our best but there's always more that can be done.

One other note I would have is the Department of Correction is a Local Law 29 agency. They are required to offer voter registration as part of their front line services. We are required to give trainings to Local Law 29 agencies. The Department of Correction also has additional requirements that the Council passed and included in the City Charter

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about the information that they have to give to
detainees. So, we're always happy to work with you
in particular on different ways that we can increase
that education because I think a lot of times the
power of the mandate goes very far.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, I'm just - it's
good that you're doing all that. It's still very,
very difficult and I want to say that we need to put
extra effort into it. I would like to see more and
we can talk further offline. Rank choice voting. I
understand it. I don't think anybody else does.
It's a very complicated way of voting and so, I know
you're - I just want to get a little bit more
understanding as to what you're trying to do to
explain it to people. I will be interested to see
how many people vote, just one person etc..

I think we just need a little bit more creativity
about you know from the bottom to the top blah, blah,
blah and how that works. It's not - when I go out on
the street, I'm on the street all the time. They
don't know what I'm talking about.

AMANDA MELILLO: Okay, uhm one thing I do just
want to say is that we did not conduct this survey
but an outside organization did but it really tracked

with what we were seeing from voters, which is the coming out of the 2021 elections, which is the first time rank choice voting was used. The majority of voters at least reported that they understood it. However, when we lifted the data at the back end, once the results came out we did an analysis particularly of rejected ballots, so which voters accidentally ranked more than one candidate in the same ranking.

And we did find that specific areas of the city had higher rejection rates. I will say those generally were in the South Bronx and east New York.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right. So, what we are doing this time and I also should note that the Council passed legislation that we worked with the Council on in 2021 to codify what we should be doing from rank choice voting and that included things like advertising, like publication of materials, like inclusion of information in the Voter Guides and also community education.

So, in general, this election we're spending \$3.2 million on rank choice voting alone. That includes an advertising campaign across the city and it is driving people to our website where we have

1 additional tools, such as tools that will help people
2 practice rank choice voting. Specifically, we have
3 explainer videos on that website. We also publish
4 and distribute to now hundreds of locations,
5 thousands of pieces of literature, that we have one
6 pager and palm cards explaining rank choice voting as
7 well.
8

9 We're doing an additional mailer to the
10 geographic areas of the city I just mentioned that
11 had a harder time with rank choice voting when we
12 first rolled it out, so we're just injecting some
13 additional resources into those areas to ensure that
14 they get that education.

15 The last thing I would note one thing that we
16 particularly try to incorporate especially in the
17 community based work that our partnerships and
18 outreach team is doing is that a lot of times
19 language barriers further complicate rank choice
20 voting education and a lot of times, there are some
21 communities or some voters who just need more
22 intensive education. Like, they literally need
23 someone to walk them through a ballot and explain it.
24 So, those are the sort of things we try to
25 incorporate into our programming as well.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, it sounds good. I
mean you know lots of people don't go to the website.
Lots of people don't go online, so you got all of
those issues to deal with also.

AMANDA MELILLO: Yeah, we're trying to reach
voters where they are and we know that different
voters have different platforms where they're getting
their information and we're trying to take a
multiprong approach.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay and I assume you're
using What's Up and you're using some of those other
opportunities also?

AMANDA MELILLO: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, I mean we'll see
what happens. I think you're still going to end up
with a not understanding in some of the same
locations but we'll see despite all that work. Just
finally, how much do you spend on consultants? Is
there like an amount that is different than obviously
PS or OTPS? Is there an actual amount and how many
consultant contracts do you have?

AMANDA MELILLO: Yeah, so we pay for consultants
out of two main object codes. I'm going to talk
about one object code is 686. So, that's for general

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professional services and that's the part of our
budget where we're really spending a lot on those
voter education consultants. So, that includes our
design agency, so their designing advertising
creative, if you see NYC Votes ads around the city.
Those are the people who are doing it. They also
design and format the print voter guide, when we
publish a bunch of additions in a lot of different
languages. Our translation vendors come out of that
budget, our video vendors, where we make or explain
our videos in the Video Voter Guide. So that is
making up a bulk of the money in 686.

And then another object code 684, that is for
technical consultants. So, those are our tech teams.
The bulk of that money is coming from my division
Strategy, Products and Innovation where we're looking
to partners within the next year with a lot of
strategy consultants. We also partner with an
outside vendor for sales force implementation and
that's going to help us retire a lot of our legacy
software. That is the part of our budget where we
pay for our vendors to do NYC Votes Contribute. If
any of you use NYC Votes Contribute to collect
contributions. We also work with an outside vendor

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on things such as the Voter Guide Submission
Application. So when you're submitting your
candidate profiles or your scripts for the Voter
Guide and then finally for the nycvotes.org website,
we are continually enhancing that website based on -

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, you're going to try
to do some of that in house as time goes on, is that
what you're saying?

AMANDA MELILLO: Yes, that is the -

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, the amount for both
of them is what do you know?

AMANDA MELILLO: Yeah, so overall, of course now
I don't have the overall number easily in front of me
but I would say for 686, that is \$11 million 365
thousand and for technology services that is \$16
million 965 thousand.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much and
just finally Logan Gonzalez is wonderful. I just
wanted to add that. Thank you very much.

AMANDA MELILLO: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have questions now
from Majority Leader Farias followed by Stevens.

COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Thank you folks. Thank
you Chairs. Just a couple quick questions that are

kind of around the same realm of voter engagement and
accessibility. Has the CFB seen any increase in non-
Native English language speakers in voter turnout
during recent elections?

AMANDA MELILLO: We have. I will say a couple
different things. Uhm, one, we focus on non-Native
English speakers so people who speak English as a
second language or have limited English proficiency,
they are one of our priority audiences. So, we
actually spend additional resources in our
advertising campaigns and in our outreach strategy to
try to reach them in language and we have been
continually engaging more and more.

What I would say is in those neighborhoods where
they are primarily concentrated because we also look
at this when we're determining our priority
geographic areas around the city where we're going to
focus. I would say the voter turnout is persistently
lower than in some other parts of the city and when
other parts of the city turnout is going up, that's
true in those neighborhoods as well. And really some
of what we are trying to do is make sure that those
get to the same level.

So, that's something we're going to take a look at. We publish a voter analysis report every year. We're mandated by charter to do that, so that is something we'll certainly be looking at after the 2025 citywide election. That's when we tend to see drop offs in participation rates between the presidential and city election.

COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: And in terms of the outreach that you're doing, I heard your response to Council Member Brewer and the types of engagement you have vendors doing. Are you also looking at like nontraditional methodologies to reach the non-Native English speakers? You know a lot of the efforts that folks like the electeds have to do is where on the Facebook groups and where you know we're channeling the Facebooks, we're channeling the What's App. We're doing the you know uh most engaged games we're going to like ethnic media, "ethnic media" as people refer to it. Can you give me some examples of how we're doing that? Especially in light of us now for only the second election in a row utilizing rank choice voting and what you referred to earlier in that the ballots of people not quite knowing how to use rank choice voting to their advantage or leverage

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and getting people that are their value based in
those areas seem to be lower.

AMANDA MELILLO: So, I'd love to talk first about
our general approach that our partnerships and
outreach team takes because they go into communities
and tend to tailor their approaches to the needs of
that community. I think we're very mindful that one
size doesn't fit all and we want to be sure that it's
really community groups that are driving our
understanding, not only of what the community needs
are but what are the best ways to reach them. So
there's one thing I'll just say as a general rule and
what we've been doing is adding staff in partnerships
and outreach in our language access team as well.
So, that we are increasing the number of in person
events. We are now funding more in community events
then we have ever done before.

So, giving money to host organizations to be able
to rent their space, they are often either co-
presenting with us or we will bring in interpreters
to engage communities face to face. You know in
addition to that, I think we're always looking for
ways to continue to be more effective to assess
what's working and what's not and we would love to

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continue to brainstorm ways to do that with your
office and with other council members.

COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Sure, do you have the
number of events that you've done either last year or
since the last citywide election?

AMANDA MELILLO: Yes, I don't have that on hand
but I'm happy to get that to you. At this stage
we're running hundreds of events each election cycle
all around New York City. So we are happy to follow
up with the list and provide you that.

COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Yeah, that would be
helpful. I would be interested to even see how many
are in my either Community Board Districts or my
district depending on how you break it down.

I have one last question Chairs. I appreciate
your reference to the Voter Analysis Report. In
2024, I don't have it in front of me or with me today
and I don't know if you have it in front of you but
there's a couple, on page 41, I was looking through
the report on page 41. There's a figure that
highlights the areas across the city that are
considered priority communities, which are the areas
that have the lowest voter turnout due to lack of
education or resources.

But according to page 3 of that same report, the Bronx borough experienced the lowest voter turnout in the April primary and the November general election across the city. Furthermore, when looking at the same figure on the same report, titled Voter Turnout by Community District General Election, my district fell into the same section as all the other priority communities in the Bronx. Bronx 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, and 7 and that ranges from 43 percent to 50.6 percent yet Bronx Community Board 9 is not considered a priority community.

So, just generally around you know Bronx 9 not being pushed into becoming a priority district for voting if we can discuss that, if we can discuss the algorithm that defines what priority communities are labeled for CFB and any of the strategy initiatives that you folks are looking towards on this election cycle with just maybe 50 days away at this point to get more people either in my district to turn out, to vote, to participate in their own local governance and particularly around how we are engaging our CB.

AMANDA MELILLO: Yeah, absolutely. So, let me talk first about how we selected our priority geography areas. So we talk about two types of

1 priorities. One is priority audiences so these are
2 broad groups of voters that we can see through the
3 data have lower turnout or they have specific
4 barriers to participation. The other is we have
5 priority neighborhoods or geographic areas of the
6 city where we focus. And since I help determine
7 where those are, I'll just walk you through what that
8 process looked like.
9

10 As a first pass, we worked with very big
11 spreadsheets and looked at voter turnout across the
12 city and not just voter turnout in any one election.
13 What our data team has done is they've created what's
14 called a voter participation score for every voter in
15 New York City that looks at like a ten year voting
16 history and that allowed us through some statistical
17 models to find out what are the factors that would
18 impact whether someone might have a lower voter
19 participation score versus a higher one. What are
20 the geographic patterns of turnout over time?

21 So, some neighborhoods have very clear patterns
22 and I would say that the community districts you
23 named one through seven in the Bronx consistently
24 have some of the lowest voter turnout in the city.
25

And there are a couple other areas of the city where
that is true as well.

But we also did a second pass you know just
because somewhere isn't the lowest doesn't mean their
turnout is great. Let me start by saying that. We
sort of have our lowest turnout neighborhoods
relative to the rest. So, as a second pass we took a
look at in the data specifically voters with limited
English proficiency and what are the languages that
are being spoken and where are the areas of the city
with the most English proficiency and that allowed us
to pull in some other parts of the city that might be
considered like more closer to the middle. Like, I
would say our - it's not a great name, we call it
North Central Queens but it's really think of like
the Corona Jackson Heights Flushing Corridor where
you have a lot of different language communities and
those languages are the ones that are primarily
spoken. So, on that second pass, that was how we
pulled in some of the other geographies and that was
our quantitative look at it. Then we did a
qualitative pass and our partnerships in the outreach
team did an assessment of the communities that we
were identifying and then from there estimated what

are the areas where we already have civic
infrastructure in place and groups that are already
doing work. I think it's fair to say one thing we
would never want to do as a government agency, we
want support groups that are already doing the work.

We don't want to come in and supplant those
groups or big foot them in any way. We don't want to
duplicate work that's happening. So, there were some
neighborhoods that we actually dropped out of the
process because we were like there are groups there
doing great work and we don't need to come in and do
the same work.

Maybe we add some additional resources to those
areas through our advertising campaign or through
additional mailings but we feel really good about the
organizations that are already there so that was how
we sort of arrived in these geographic areas. What I
would also say is while we want to stick to them for
a pretty like for maybe like one to two cycles, we
also continually assess. Did we look at the right
things and we're always open to feedback about
whether or not we actually did that.

So, while we are focused in those specific
geographic areas and that's where we prioritize

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trying to host events and things like that. We're
still in every area of the city more or less. So we
partner with different organizations and Council
Member offices all the time. We tend to show up when
people invite us places and say yes, we will come
talk about whatever topic you would like us to. Like
rank choice voting of course being top of mind for
this election. So, we're always looking at ways to
do better.

COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Yeah, I'd love to keep
talking about my district particularly. I mean
there's a variety of even dialogue I'd like to have
with the upcoming and like you know, many - some
people might not be on the ballot. Some might be and
what the means for engagement in my district
particularly. And even just on the conversation
around the groups that you may be saying are doing a
great job. Like I have some groups that have come to
mind but they're not all- if any of them - I don't
think any of them are just focused on civic
engagement. My district also doesn't have any like
electoral clubs that help engage in any of this level
of civic engagement whether they're nonpartisan or
partisan. So, I'd be interested to see who you're

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looking at to say their doing the work there because
I feel like more times than not it's falling directly
on me and maybe I'm doing a great job in my office
but I'd love to talk about even looking or offering
some more expansive groups that I know would be
willing to receive information to help also
disseminate it out to the folks that they're engaged
with in the community.

AMANDA MELILLO: We always love that. One thing
I'll say is we find elected officials to be some
extremely valuable partners in getting community
information out. So, when we are distributing field
materials, some of our best customers tend to be
elected officials and we're routinely sending
materials out across the city.

We also work with elected officials all the time.
We would love to work with you to identify groups
that are in your neighborhoods because that local
knowledge is always extremely valuable.

You know since you are a reader of the Voter
Analysis Report, one other thing I would love to
mention is that in our report that we published last
year, one of our recommendations was that the CFB
should explore maybe creating a fellowship program.

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As a model and we actually are working with the
institute of state and local governance at CUNY
starting this summer to pilot that model in the South
Bronx, working to place up to 15 CUNY students in two
year fellowships early in their careers within
community based organizations and one of the things
we want to take a look at is - is this model really a
more successful model then maybe some that have been
tried in terms of tailoring community engagement and
education in making it very effective. We will look
at a number of measures to evaluate that program and
we'd love to connect offline and talk more about that
as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Yeah, that would be
great. I mean we have several different things
happening in our community between you know the CEC
engagement, the Mayor has like a public funding
engagement. Most Councilmanic office are doing
participatory budgeting. There is like a general
space where more civic engagement and education can
be going outward into community to partner up and do
that so, happy to continue the conversation offline.
Thank you folks and thank you Chairs.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Question from Council

3 Member Stevens.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Hello, good afternoon.

5 Uhm, I just have a bunch of follow up questions from
6 both of my colleagues. Just starting with the RCB
7 because you know obviously the districts that you're
8 talking about was [INAUDIBLE 03:29:51] right now is a
9 huge part of mind and it's not just the West Bronx, I
10 mean South Bronx. It's the West Bronx because they
11 always try to lump us all in and I just have huge
12 concerns because I've seen all the outreach done in
13 my community, in my district.

14 And so, I would love to just understand and get
15 more specific around like what exactly are the
16 additional resources as being sent out to these
17 districts and what does that look like because if we
18 have a high number of ballots in these places being
19 rejected, how do we use the last four years to really
20 educate and do this work and not wait you know a few
21 weeks before the election. So, I would love like
22 more specifics.

23 AMANDA MELILLO: Absolutely and one thing I would
24 also note is, the big election for rank choice voting

25

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was 2021 because we saw it the first time. We also
continue that education in 2023 and are looking to -

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: What did that look like?

Because again, I just want to be clear and not cut
folks of but I'm in the district and I've seen
nothing being done, only outreach and education that
has been done has been done by my office and that is
not fair, so I really want specific around like what
other additional resources happening currently that
you are saying that we saw that these ballots are
being rejected. Higher numbers in these areas. What
are the specific things that are being done and then
also how do we use the last four years to actually
educate people on it because I'm telling you - I'm
confused. I would love dates and like the groups
you're working with because I've seen zero being
done, except what I have done.

AMANDA MELILLO: I can provide at this time very
high level numbers but I am happy to connect with you
offline and provide more specifics about what we've
done in your district. One thing I'll note that we
have found is that when we try to engage the majority
of voters and I'm going start out by saying all of us
in this room are very plugged in in elections. We

think about elections all the time. One thing that we have found particularly because the Charter directs us to increase the participation of under represented voters is that the majority of people we are doing outreach to do not think about elections or voting until much closer to the election.

So, we have found that the best way to engage them is generally about six weeks out. So, we are launching rank choice voting ads like now basically to try to push before early voting and the election the rank choice voting is the method that we will be using in citywide races.

In addition to that, we are pairing that with a mailer to the South Bronx and I would imagine the West Bronx as well. Happy to pull those geographies to ensure that there's overlap.

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And I just want to stop you just a little bit because for you continue and I'll let you finish your thought but I just want to say like yes we understand that like trying to have things at the top of peoples mind is important but that did not mean that we should not have used the last four years to be doing outreach so it could be more familiar. And so, it's one of those things

where we know that this is - it's still a nuance and we also know that we had other elections that don't have rank choice voting.

So, understand the confusion and so, understand my frustration when you already have communities that already are disenfranchised with voting and already feel not a part of the system and we have not been consistently hammering them around this process. And so, to me, it feels and looks like we're continuously disengaging communities who already are struggling. And so, if we have a high number of ballots being rejected, we should have used the last four years to do education and not just the last six weeks. And all the things could exist so we could do the last weeks but we could have also been doing the last four years so people could have a better understanding of what this is.

AMANDA MELILLO: One thing I just will say at the top is I would never want to seem like we're disenfranchising any community and I know our staff that do this work day in and day out would not - they also feel the same. One thing we have found and I would love to talk further, probably not in this venue about how to best balance voter education and

avoiding voter confusion because one thing that we
have found is that when we're talking about rank
choice voting around elections that do not use rank
choice voting, it increases voter confusion. So,
that's part of the reason why we try to cabinet to
the election that's in front of us for when we will
actually be using it because we have heard from
voters. I went to the poles and it was maybe a state
race and I thought we would have rank choice voting
and we didn't. What's going on?

So, we're always trying to find some ways to
ensure that we're giving voters the information they
need at the time that they need it without adding to
the confusion or compounding the confusion because we
use different systems all the time.

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So I have a couple more
questions. Do you have a list of the in person
events that you've been hosting specifically in the
Bronx?

AMANDA MELILLO: I don't have that with me at
this time but we'll follow up with you after this and
get you that list.

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And how continuously are
they? Do you have them like monthly? Like what - I

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would love more like details? Because it seems very
high level.

AMANDA MELILLO: So, so we start our events - for
the upcoming election that's in June, we start those
events generally in March. We will take January and
February to reach out to community based
organizations, set up our calendars, reconnect with
our partners on the ground and then begin in -

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: What organizations are
you working with in the Bronx?

AMANDA MELILLO: I don't have that list off hand
but we will get it -

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: You don't have no
information, okay well uhm, I just and so just
understand the frustration with a person who is in
the Bronx who in the Bronx specifically have low
voter turnout and it consistently falls on the
elected officials to do this outreach and even to say
that you don't have the organizations that you're
working with, like how many are you working with?
Like those things are important because then that
also gives us uhm information that we can use to then
go to those organizations and partner with them and
continue to uplift this work.

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So, we can definitely have a continued
conversation offline because I clearly have a whole
bunch of questions and a whole bunch of concerns
about this and how we continuously kind of drop the
ball in a place that already feels like the
government doesn't hear them and don't have them -
and are not part of the conversation and I just want
to note this is one of the reasons why because like
we're not giving them the extra love and attention
that is necessary and in order for this to
continuously be rolled out effectively. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Chair Restler.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you Chair Brannan. I
just want to thank Council Members for their
thoughtful questions, especially around RCV
education. Just a few quick ones for me. In your
testimony Director Ryan, you mentioned that you're
engagement outside consultant in helping develop a
roadmap for improving the candidate experience and
optimizing the auditing process. Could you just
share who that consultant is?

AMANDA MELILLO: Uhm, we are working with Bloom
Works which is a company. They mostly got their
start in the federal government in the digital

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services office, which has now been abolished but
they have very deep experience in working in both the
federal government, state governments and in local
jurisdictions.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Say the name again.

AMANDA MELILLO: Bloom Works LLC.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay.

AMANDA MELILLO: Doing business as God's Bloom.
They work in with government agencies and really help
them to map out legacy processes, legacy tech and
figure out how to simplify and improve the delivery
of service. So, we are engaging with them in a
number of what are called discovery sprints where
there's going to come in and do a deep dive and map
out everything for us that includes the candidate
experience from end to end. What is it that
campaigns go through to register with us, to disclose
to get matching funds. They're going to map out our
audit process. Uhm and we're going to be able to
look at what are things that we can do to just
improve the experience overall and to streamline and
build new tech tools to support that.

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CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And I presume you'll be
talking directly to candidates and campaigns to get
their feedback?

AMANDA MELILLO: Yes, actually I think that is
one of the things that I find very exciting. I think
that we have had some methods of getting feedback
from campaigns but one of the things that we want to
do is prioritize more regular and real time feedback
and be able to incorporate that and I think we could
include anything from campaign focus groups to beta
testing of new tech tools before we release them to
wider groups and we're looking at any and all of the
options that are on the table.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And just to build on some
of my colleagues questions about rank choice voting
and education, appreciate the \$3.2 million in funding
around that and the importance of it but back in
2021, the Mayor's Office made a significant
expenditure around RCV I believe to the tune of \$15
million, is that right?

AMANDA MELILLO: That is what they said.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: What does that mean?

AMANDA MELILLO: I mean, there was a press
release that they were going to spend \$15.5 million

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but I am not - I don't know how much they actually
spent.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Do you have reason to think
they didn't spend the money?

AMANDA MELILLO: I would say given my experience
in government, it's very hard to spend that amount of
money on that timeframe, particularly around
advertising when you have to book far in advance.
It's hard to inject millions of dollars with weeks
before an election because other people have already
bought up all the ad space.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: We can go back and check
how much they spend - how much they effectively spend
down but under any circumstances they spent a lot of
money. Maybe they didn't spend all \$15 million but
they spent a significant portion of it to educate
voters around rank choice voting. There no similar
spending happening this cycle, is that right?

AMANDA MELILLO: What we are spending this cycle
is \$3.2 million.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: No, I understand that. I'm
asking there's no -

AMANDA MELILLO: Not from the Mayor's Office.

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CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: There's no spending coming
from any other city agencies to educate voters around
RCV? So, the full extent of the voter education is
here, so I need say, we've seen a dramatic reduction
in spending on the part of the City of New York to
educate voters around this process despite this only
being the second time really that this - that this
model of voting is being utilized.

I just want to underscore the concerns that have
been articulated by colleagues that I share.

Okay, uhm, a couple questions about hiring. The
CFB is not subject to OMB's two for one limitations.
Could you just speak to your relationship with OMB as
it relates to hiring and onboarding of staff?

AMANDA MELILLO: Yes, it's my understanding that
other city agencies and I know former colleagues of
mine who have gone through this process. Other city
agencies have to receive OMB approval to be placed at
agencies. We do not go through that process. So,
when we are hiring the only time between us making an
offer and someone getting in the door and filling
that seat is the amount of time it takes them to give
notice and for us to conduct the required background
checks.

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CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay and I just want to
come back to you know one follow up on some of the
earlier questions. It struck me Director Ryan that
you really underscored with broad subpoena power.
You're able to access the information that you feel
is necessary to properly investigate campaigns. We
also have an audit team that does this work and looks
at things post facto. Is there more - are there
investigative approaches that are currently used by
the auditing teams that should be done by the CFB mid
cycle to try to have - to try and ensure there are
meaningful consequences when they matter? Like, are
you looking at whether we should be expanding those
investigative powers or that investigative approach
in real time so that we're not in the same situation
with Eric Adams looking at these issues four plus
years, you know four years later, trying to fix them
when it's far, far too late?

PAUL RYAN: I'll say this. As during my first
year on the job I committed myself to examining every
aspect of the Campaign Finance Boards operations to
prioritize the hiring of a first deputy to help lead
us in this assessment and evaluation of all of our
processes and tools and approaches to this work and

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we will be building out an even larger investigations
operation in the coming months and year than the
agency has had in its past. It's one of many areas
that I think we can do a better job, a faster job.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Better job, faster job in
real time during the election cycle of getting to the
bottom of issues?

PAUL RYAN: Yes, and even and it goes for
auditing generally. Pulling up more of the auditing
processes themselves into real time pre-election or
immediately post-election. For example, one of the
ways that we're taking a big step to speed up our
audits is to issue our IDR's, our Initial Document
Requests immediately after the June Primary for
candidates who are not in the general election.
That's a major change in practice for the agency,
historically the agency has waited until after the
November general election to send out any IDR. So,
every step of the process in our - in the auditing
process is so integrated with our enforcement,
investigation and enforcement process. Every step of
it, we are reexamining or pressure testing, we're
looking for efficiencies. We're building out adding

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more resources and building out capacity where it
makes sense to do so.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Right, I mean I'll just, I
know you don't want me to talk in specifics because
you're not going to talk in specifics but you know we
have a campaign for mayor, a front runner for mayor
that's raising - we know is extensively raising funds
through lobbyists and people on the Doing Business
Data list. It's been widely reported. It's you know
it's known in the universe and yet we don't have the
information to know and understand, has the CFB
investigated this thoroughly? Do we know what blue
links are circulating and what information is being
shared and can we guarantee that the you know many,
many thousands of dollars that are being raised by
lobbyists illegally for this campaign are not
actually leading to matching dollars in taxpayer
funding inappropriately being disbursed? And so, I
am pleased that you are saying you want to expand
those investigative authorities, expand these
investigative actions by your team. Do more in real
time and do more during the auditing process and that
this is part of a review that you've undertaken and I

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2 have confidence in your commitment to continue to
3 improve the functions of the agency.

4 I don't though feel like there is any effort to
5 inspire confidence in the public for us to know that
6 things have been properly look at and investigated
7 and resolved. You know the actions from earlier this
8 week were a step but it feels like there's more
9 questions than answers and that you're not able to
10 share any information because things are still mid
11 review or mid process or mid-stream. And so, you
12 know we're -it's I think important to voters to know
13 this is what's been looked into. This is what was
14 found. This is what's being held accountable. This
15 is how a campaign is being held accountable during
16 the election right? And I just don't think we're
17 there yet and so, that's I hope that as you think of
18 that expanding investigative authority and doing more
19 in real time, also think about how do you inspire
20 confidence in the public and share that information
21 transparently so that voters can make informed
22 decisions. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, thank you all very
24 much. We'll take a brief break and then we're going
25

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to hear from the public on the CUNY budget and CFB.

[03:46:17]- [03:57:34]

Okay, [GAVEL]. We're now going to open the
hearing up for public testimony. I want to remind
members of the public; this is a government
proceeding and that decorum shall be observed at all
times. As such, members of the public shall remain
silent unless they are testifying. The witness table
is reserved for people who wish to testify. No video
recording or photography is allowed from the witness
table. Furthermore, members of the public may not
present audio or video recordings as testimony but
they may submit transcripts of such recordings to the
Sergeant at Arms for inclusion in the final hearing
record.

If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please
fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms
and wait to be recognized. Once you are recognized,
you will have two minutes to speak on today's hearing
topics. Either the CUNY budget or the CFB budget.
If you have a written statement or additional written
testimony you wish to submit for the record, just
give us a copy of that testimony, give it to the
Sergeant at Arms. You can also submit - you can also

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email us written testimony to

testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72 hours of this

hearing. Again, no audio or video recordings will be
accepted.

Okay, I'm going to call up the first panel now
Heather James, Jen Gaboury, and John Dennehy.

Good afternoon. Whoever wants to start?

HEATHER JAMES: You're stuck with me. I'm going
to lead.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Let's do it.

HEATHER JAMES: And I know you are serious about
time so let me speak fast. Good afternoon Chairs
Dinowitz, Brannan, and Council Members on behalf of
the 30,000 faculty staff represented by the PSC CUNY.
Thank you for your continued advocacy on behalf of
the City University of New York.

On May 1st, Eric Adams announced that all funding
cut by his administration over the past three budget
cycles would be restored. CUNY's community colleges
funded largely by the city have lost nearly 500 full
time positions since Adams took office. We heard a
lot about that today and his restorations of \$96
million in operating money plus \$30 million for ASAP,
ACE and Brooklyn Recovery Corps at Medgar Evers are

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critical and we thank you, especially you two
Chairman but the whole Council for the work that you
have done to get us to this point and we don't have
to tell you because as someone said, we're preaching
to the converted that this is critical but it just
gets us back to pre-COVID funding level. So, we are
here to ask you to do more to help us remain the
peoples university and to help us bridge the funding
gap created by the federal governments attack on our
students and on our research. Council Member
Dinowitz, I know you spoke about that at length so
thank you.

We are fond of saying that we move more students
to the middle class than the ivy leagues but how can
we continue to do that with I think we're now at 78
stop work orders as of CUNY's latest count. This
agenda is harming us when we're just coming back from
the Mayor's cuts.

So, what do we want? That's what I came to tell
you with 20 seconds. Well, we are hoping for
additional operating support to help us navigate the
cuts mentioned. We are hoping to continue to move
toward an ASAP for all model to expand our most
successful program. We support your ask Chairman

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Dinowitz for more money for CUNY Reconnect and of
course we love the metro card pilot and you will
receive student testimony on the importance of that,
so thank you Council Members.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What is the total amount
for your ask in addition to what's already in the
budget?

HEATHER JAMES: Well, in capital it's about \$400
million. In operating, we're falling right now
around \$100 million. It's a little bit influx
because to be honest with you, what we wanted to see
was CUNY's new report on the staff work orders so we
could give you a real number for the bridge money.
We didn't want to just make it up. As of their March
testimony, we were at \$26 million. Now the number
they used was a little bit different. I have a
budget paper that's going to be hot off the press,
similar to CUNY's green sheet that goes with this
that I will get you by the end of business today but
about \$100 million, just not exactly \$100 million
over exec.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, thank you.

HEATHER JAMES: No small ask of course.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: No, thank you. Go ahead.

JOHN DENNEHY: Thank you for the opportunity to
speak. I'm John Dennehy, I'm a professor of Biology
at Queens College, the City University of New York.
Our college moto, we learn so that we may serve
guided by action during the COVID pandemic. When a
biologist, I asked myself, how can I serve my city in
this time of great need.

My collaborators and I developed a waste water
COVID surveillance program for the Department of
Environmental Protection and the Department of Health
and Mental Hygiene. This program helped the
Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to keep track
of COVID transmission surges in the city's community.
During this work that we discovered that these
agencies face critical personnel shortages and
essential position.

I've actually testified before the New York City
City Council Committee on Environmental Protection in
2022. During this hearing, members of the Council
repeatedly emphasized the importance of expanding
capabilities and personnel training in the public
health arena to a drastic challenge, I secured a \$1.8
million grant from the US Health and Human Services
with representative gracious support to establish a

CUNY waste water epidemiology student training
laboratory at Queens College.

We also obtained \$1 million from the National
Science Foundation to create a waste water
epidemiology student training program helping stem
students transition from Queens Borough and LaGuardia
Community College to Queens College.

In the one year that this program ran, we trained
and mentored over 30 community college students and
many of those are now transferring to Queens College.
They would have spent this summer doing research and
attending a DNA learning center sponsored bootcamp at
City Tech. Tragically on May 2nd of this year, the
NSF terminated this grant without possibility of
appeal, claiming it no longer aligned with current
NSF priorities.

I believe the true reason was that we proposed
training a student from financially disadvantaged and
underserved communities for high position in the city
agency. I was [INAUDIBLE 04:04:58] the only CUNY
grant canceled. At least 30 grants totaling over \$25
billion in federal funds, all reviewed and allocated
by leading US Scientists with congressional backing
were rescinded through email providing no clear

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justification and the process has been so chaotic,
we're still trying to establish exactly how many
grants have been terminated.

Many of the grant funded student training program
that directly benefitted the citizens of this city.
These widespread grant terminations combined with the
proposed funding cut to NIH, NSF, NOAA, NEAA, the
USDA and other federal agencies and move to reduce
the indirect cost way that allowed college to support
faculty research proposed now roughly about 50
percent of every federal dollar that come to the
colleges it's being cut to 15 percent. And this
essentially has threatened the entire CUNY research
enterprise with extension. There's no way the
colleges can continue to support, faculty research in
it's environment.

These cancellations represent more than just lost
funding, they are a direct attack on the health and
wellbeing of all city residents, particularly those
in underserved communities who would benefit most
from these programs. CUNY is always good at the
beacon of opportunity and public service in New York
City. We now need your vocal advocacy, your
political engagement, and your unwavering support to

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continue our vital mission of sharing the residents
of this city through education and essential public
health infrastructure. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

JEN GABOURY: Good afternoon. I'm Jen Gaboury,
First Vice President of PSC CUNY. Like Professor
James, I would like to thank you Chair Dinowitz and
you Chair Brannan along with Speaker Adams because we
know that your leadership is what helped get that PEG
money restored. We heard a less than fully detailed
answer today from in our view, the CUNY
Administration on how they might as you pressed,
build back what was lost in the PEG cuts. We know
that just under 500 full time faculty lines were lost
in the pandemic and that was after years of kind of
like City Council funded stability in the de Blasio
years at the Community Colleges when that was not the
case at the state.

And so, that is what we need restored. We need
those full time faculty lines back and that's a
problem. That's especially a problem in the context
of the Opportunity Scholarship Program. We are
tremendously excited by the governors, like
opportunity to bring folks back to the community

colleges in these high need areas in nursing and
computer science and in teaching. Yet, what we have
is a kind of unfunded mandate that will cover student
cost but will not build the kinds of like faculty -
infrastructure like advising like the University but
also the faculty to teach in those areas as well as
the program money to do so. And that's unfortunate.
We now have a kind of like an unfunded mandate
through the Opportunity Scholarship program that's
going to hit the community colleges first. So, we
are excited about what this does but we don't want to
see a whole blown into the City Council and we need
nurses and we need teachers and we need computer
scientists and that's going to be an important then
component of how like we do it and the PEG
restoration going to full time faculty lines would be
one of the ways to kind of like stop that hole.

We really thank your focus on Citizenship Now.
One of the things that Citizenship Now doesn't have
that some of our graduate students workers need is
support and expertise on visas. That expertise did
not - there wasn't a need for that in previous time.
That's one of the kinds of things that we like are
struggling to figure out how to fill. We appreciate

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your attention to work study and the questions about
like what will happen to the libraries when suddenly
there are not hundreds of workers all across CUNY who
are doing the kind of daily work that keeps libraries
open and we are really grateful for Council Member
Brewer's attention to dorms and we're going to gender
size program where students come to me to talk about
domestic violence in their homes and there are not
currently like enough dorms like in an emergency
setting that I can send them to - to get them out of
their home and sometimes they drop out and they leave
the city like to escape.

And like there should be dorms available for many
reasons but that is also one of the other kinds of
reasons like for emergency housing and they just
don't exist. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much.
Thank you.

Okay, our next panel is Constance Lesold, Akkeem
Polack, Daniel Reden and Davia Willis.

Okay, you want to begin from the left?

CONSTANCE LESOLD: My name is Constance Lesold
and I am testifying today in regard primarily to
Medger Evers College, the City University which I

1 have been involved with in past years intensively
2 from the beginning. Just to give you one example of
3 the very great importance of Medger Evers, which I
4 see that you have some special funding programs
5 requested and I am sure that you're going to be able
6 to push them through but to give you an example of
7 the background, I spearheaded the funding of the
8 Franklin Avenue Shuttle Neighborhood Garden, which
9 was funded by the Eastern Parkway Coalition, which I
10 have represented before. And at this present, that
11 garden has gone on for about 50 years. The reason I
12 am bringing that into this is that we could not have
13 had that garden and we might not have had the shuttle
14 at all had it not been for Medger Evers College.
15 Dean Maxwell gave us the space in the college and the
16 materials for an outdoor summer youth program to
17 build the garden.

18 This way those summer youth people were
19 introduced to a college setting and participating
20 there as well as building a garden and a resource
21 environmentally and in terms of the neighborhood
22 recreation fund etc., which has gone on as I say for
23 about 50 years. And it's very important that you
24 encourage the community surrounding the colleges to
25

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be a part of the colleges in every way possible,
particularly the young people. You have other summer
programs, I know my son participated at Brooklyn
College, Hunter College, Medger Evers, it was not
possible that he not go to college and after as a
little boy being a part of all those programs that
you had in the summer time.

It is so important to begin with the years before
the high school even. And I hope you will encourage
all of the city university to stay involved. We are
worried about the future of Medger Evers as a college
that was built to serve primarily the Black community
in that area and the low income community. That
community is changing dramatically and we don't know
who the college will be serving now.

But we want everybody to be served in the City of
New York and I just beg of you to keep those young
people in the process. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Go ahead and
just say your name and you can begin.

DANIEL REDEN: Hi, good afternoon. My name is
Daniel Reden. It's an honor to be before you again
and testifying in this Executive Budget Committee
Hearing.

My name is Daniel Reden as I said, and I am the University Student Senate Chairperson and the Student Trustee for CUNY but I also am a son of immigrants who grew up in Brooklyn in public housing in NYCHA and I had to work every single day just to support myself and my family, right? And the swipes that I got growing up going to public school, those transit swipes, those MTA swipes, is really essential for me to be able to go to and from just to survive.

And 80 percent of those students who go to a public school in New York City go to a CUNY school and you know we did some data for some time and some surveys and a spring survey found that 64 percent of students worry about affording transit, 53 percent have skipped meals to pay the fare and 71 percent have arrived late or missed class because they lack to swipe. And we know that attendance loss is always the first step to you know dropping out and if a student is to truly graduate then we have to help them get to the classroom in the first place. And so, this \$5,000 appropriation in the green sheet this year from the CUNY budget request, is - you know it could possibly fund 4,000 semester passes and each pass would be linked to a student ID.

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This lets CUNY track attendance, credit
accumulation, GPA and report the outcomes to this
Committee. So, you know transit relief is the
sentiment and the overwhelming financial barrier,
small financial barrier that CUNY students have
highlighted. And so, we're here to reiterate that
and just want you know to say that one last time.
So, thank you. Thank you Committee.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Thank you very
much.

DAVIA WILLIS: Hi, good afternoon. My name is
Davia Willis and I'm a student at John Jay. I'm so
honored to be before you all this afternoon and thank
you so much for having me. Previously what my
colleagues have said is really what I am here to
echo. I'm an international student from Jamaica and
that means that my attendance is primarily out of
pocket for school, which includes me affording to be
able to travel to school.

My advocacy is not just for myself but for all
the students that attend CUNY because I know that one
of the primary issues that we students face is
getting to school and if we're not able to - in order
to reap the benefits of the resources available to

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us, we have to ensure that they are first able to get
there. And so, primarily what I am here to do is to
advocate and to once again reinforce the importance
of having students access metro cards and having them
not to completely rely on or worry about how am I
going to get to school? How am I going to complete
school or how long would I have to be here? And so
that is all we ask that you really strongly consider
these metro cards requests. Thank you.

AKKEEM POLACK: Hello, good day everyone. My
name is Akkeem Polack and I am a student at York
College and the Vice Chair for Legislative Affairs
for the university students in it, where we represent
over 245,000 students.

So, as previously mentioned, we're here to talk
about something fundamental, which is just getting to
class. You know too many CUNY students, they rely on
public transportation and this became a huge barrier,
not a bridge.

You know that's why we're urging the Council to
include the \$500,000 in the FY26 budget to fund our
pilot program for free Metro and OMNY cards for all
CUNY students.

You know through the USS we've gathered
petitions, over 5,000 students who shared who tied
their RFQ's in between the fare and their future.

And you know I have seen personally classmates
get meals, you know ask friends for swipes or even
walk long distances just to make it to campus. So,
it's not just an inconvenience, it's just unjust and
just to put all the numbers into play here, over
200,000 students, they depend on public
transportation and then the monthly metro cards or
OMNY card costs \$132 so that's around 1,500 a year,
64 percent they worry about affording transit. 53
percent of students, they have skipped meals to pay
for it.

Over 70 percent have missed or been late to a
class because of fare cost. That's a problem because
it effects your GPA and your attendance record and
overall your position in school. So, these aren't
just statistics. They're reflect real setbacks,
delayed graduations, and broken momentum. So, it's
about equity. Transportation costs, low income,
first gen and working students to hire this. Free
transit for CUNY students would immediately ease the

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pressure, improve attendance and help more students
stay on track to graduate.

So, we're not asking for the impossible. We're
asking for an investment in potential because there's
a chance for the city to put its values into action.
Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much for
your testimony.

Okay, now we're going to Zoom. First is Sakena
Trice(SP?).

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

SAKENA TRICE: My name is Sakena Trice. I am a
Senior Staff Attorney in the Disability Justice
Program at the New York Lawyers for the Public
Interest. Thank you for the opportunity to testify
today about the urgent need to support students with
disabilities and higher education here in New York
City. I am a person with a physical disability and
feel this issue is personal to me in many ways and I
identify with the struggle to have services that are
accessible and inclusive in my educational pursuit.

Over the past year NYLPI has expanded our work in
higher education accessibility and we found that
students with disabilities face significant, often

systemic barriers to inclusion particularly across
CUNY campuses.

Students come to our office detailing how they
are routinely denied reasonable accommodations. They
are met with hostility from the disability service
offices that are meant to support them. They are
harassed. They even explain how when their
accommodations are approved by the DSO certain
professors still do not implement their
accommodations. And so, this is not just an issue of
policy failure, it's a civil rights concern excuse
me. Yes, we support CUNY's \$2.1 million FY 2026
budget request to improve its disability services
office. These offices are severely understaffed and
undertrained and the third, we hear from students
make it clear that staffing alone will not solve the
problem.

Ongoing training and accountability must also be
prioritized. Although the budget includes some
increases, which indicate little progress, it is
still not enough to provide the proper support to
students with disability. We urge the Council to
investigate ongoing discrimination, allocate critical

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funding and help us build a more inclusive system for
all students.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to
equity.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much. Now
we have Christopher Leon Johnson.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Hello, hello. My name
is Christopher Leon Johnson and I want to speak on
this right now. Alright, first of all, this hearing
I believe that this hearing with the Governmental
Operations was nothing but an attack on Andrew Cuomo
on behalf of the Speaker Adrienne Adams. I
understand that he took \$1 million donation from Door
Dash via the PACT but the City Council need to be
transparent and admit that a lot of these members,
especially the Chair of the Governmental Operations,
takes money from Door Dash too via Transal.

Transal takes money from Door Dash via their
nonprofits on the website. It's just the facts.
While a lot of elected officials love to stand next
to Transal, open claims. So, at the same time, I
understand that people to see that -they say that
Andrew Cuomo took to fix the city, took an unethical
donation from Door Dash because they are trying to

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get rid of the minimum wage. At the same time, the
minimum and charge restaurants more money, but at the
same time, the City Council, they need to be
transparent with themselves and especially our
Comptroller Brad Lander that they work with Door Dash
too.

So, it's kind of a hypocritical stance when we
have elected officials that was outside City Hall
just like Reynoso standing - crying about Andrew
Cuomo taking a \$1 million donation from Door Dash but
at the same time, he's one of the biggest champions,
the biggest [INAUDIBLE 04:23:06] to Door Dash via the
help, via Transal. They love Transal. Reynoso was
on camera praising Transal. So, if you love Transal,
you should love Door Dash too.

So, to say one more thing about the education
committees that look, they need to have a special
Committee within the City Council led by Inna
Vernikov on the City Council Taskforce to combat
antisemitism. Inna Vernikov need to leave that
Subcommittee into that City Council. I hope that
this Finance Chair and this Education Committee Chair
Mr. Eric Dinowitz make a Committee, a Subcommittee
within the Education Committee on to combat

antisemitism because there's a lot of antisemitism in
this city.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time is expired.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: They need to work on
it. So, like I said, thank you so much. Like I
said, they need to stop these attacks on Andrew
Cuomo. So, thank you so much and enjoy your day.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much for
that testimony.

Okay, with that, this hearing, what is this day
four? Day four hearings are adjourned. We'll see
you tomorrow. Thank you. [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 August 12, 2025