

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL & HUMAN
RIGHTS

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March 13, 2026
Start: 11:35 a.m.
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HELD AT: 250 Broadway-8th Fl.- Hearing Rm. 2

B E F O R E: Sandy Nurse
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Shaun Abreu
Oswald J. Feliz
Shahana K. Hanif
Lynn C. Schulman
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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Christine Clarke
Commissioner of NYC Commission on Human Rights

Katherine Carroll
Deputy Commissioner of Law Enforcement at
Commission on Human Rights

Mariela Salazar
Deputy Commissioner of Administrative Services at
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Jimmy Pan
EEPC Executive Director

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Afuta Atta-Mensah
Commissioner and Chief Equity Officer at Mayor's
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Delilah Tyson
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Executive Director of NYC Her Future

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Deputy Commissioner at MOERJ

Linda Tigani
Chief and Executive Director of NYC CORE

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

Maya Williams
CORE Senior Director for Research and Policy

Rachel Natelson
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Nicole Salk
Legal Services NYC

Rebecca Cook-Mack
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Yvette Chen
Fair Housing Justice Center

Reggie Chatman
Fortune Society

Jonathan Eber
Enterprise Community Solutions

Funmi Akinnawonu
Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies

Michelle Lyons

Cristobal Gutierrez
Make the Road New York

2 MIKE KANE: Good morning, this is a mic
3 check for the Committee on Civil and Human Rights.
4 Today's date is March 13th, 2026. We are in Hearing
5 Room two, and this is being recorded by Mike Kane
6 [sp?].

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning, welcome
8 to the New York City Council preliminary budget
9 hearing for the Committee on Civil and Human Rights.
10 At this time, please silence all cell phones and
11 electronic devices. Moving forward, no one is to
12 approach the dais. If you wish to participate in
13 today's hearing, please fill out an appearance card
14 with Sergeant at Arms. Without further ado, Chair,
15 we're ready to begin.

16 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [gavel] Thank you and
17 good morning, everyone. Happy Friday. Welcome to the
18 Fiscal 2027 Preliminary Budget hearing for the
19 Committee on Civil and Human Rights. I'm Council
20 Member Nurse, Chair of the committee. Today we will
21 begin with the testimony from the Commission on Civil
and Human Rights. Followed by the Equal Employment
Practices Commission at 12:30 p.m., the Mayor's
Office of Equity and Racial Justice at 1:30 p.m., and
the Commission on Racial Equity at 2:30 p.m. We will

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2 conclude the administration's testimony before moving
3 on to public testimony at 3:30 p.m. So for those of
4 you in the audience, lock in. New York City has some
5 of the most comprehensive protections in the nation.
6 We are a strong, proud city because of it. And at a
7 time when we are seeing unprecedented militarized,
8 egregious, increasing attacks on civil and human,
9 human rights at the federal level, it is especially
10 important that these agencies and commissions are
11 adequately funded and staffed so they can effectively
12 serve New Yorkers. I want to begin by congratulating
13 Commissioner Clarke on your new role, and thanks for
14 chatting the other day, and thank you and your team
15 for being here today to testify on the Commission's
16 budget. The Commission on Civil and Human Rights
17 enforces our human rights law by investigating and
18 bringing cases of discrimination while also educating
19 New Yorkers about their rights and responsibilities
20 under the law. But in order to really do this work,
21 they need money. CCHR's other than personnel services
budget in fiscal 2027 is \$410,000 less than the
fiscal 2026 adopted budget, due to a one-time partial
program to eliminate the gap restoration added at
fiscal 2026 adoption. The preliminary plan does not

1
2 include any new investments in CCHR's budget. In this
3 plan, CCHR's budget accounted for- headcount is 133
4 and shows a reduction of eight positions from the 141
5 budgeted headcount included in last year's budget.

6 More importantly, the Commission's actual headcount
7 as of January only accounts for 103 positions. Today,

8 I'm looking forward to understanding how CCHR

9 potentially operates with a vacancy rate of 27

10 percent. I can't imagine that's easy. I'm also eager

11 to hear what additional resources you, Commissioner

12 Clarke, have requested from OMB in terms of budget,

13 filling in these vacant positions, and potentially

14 adding headcount as needed for the commission to

15 effectively carry out its mandates. Among other

16 issues, we will also discuss topics such as the

17 Commission's testing and outreach methods and the

18 work they are doing to ensure New Yorkers feel safe

19 reporting discrimination with the current federal

20 administration. I want to thank our lovely Finance

21 staff, our committee staff, and my own staff for all

the preparations getting us prepared for the four

hearings we have today. I don't know if we have any

council members with us. Deputy Speaker Natasha

Williams and Council Member Feliz, you're recognized.

1
2 And I'm going to now turn it over to the Committee
3 Counsel to administrate the oath.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning. If you
5 could please raise your right hands? Do you swear to
6 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
7 truth before this committee?

8 UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

9 UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. You
11 may begin.

12 COMMISSIONER CLARKE: Good morning, Chair
13 Lee— Chair Lee. Chair Lee also, but also Chair Nurse,
14 members of the Committee on Finance and Civil and
15 Human Rights. They're in my remarks. My name is
16 Christine Clarke, and I serve as the Chair and
17 Commissioner of the New York City Commission on Human
18 Rights. Thank you for the opportunity to testify
19 today about the Commission's work and the role it
20 plays in ensuring that all New Yorkers can live,
21 work, and thrive free from discrimination. Joining me
today are Katherine Carroll, Deputy Commissioner of
Law Enforcement, and Mariela Salazar, Deputy
Commissioner of Administrative Services. The New York
City Commission on Human Rights first and foremost

1 enforces and educates the public about the New York
2 City Human Rights Law, one of the most comprehensive
3 civil rights laws in the nation. It protects New
4 Yorkers from discrimination across broad swaths of
5 life, including protections against discrimination in
6 housing, employment, and public accommodations, but
7 these rights are meaningless in a vacuum. Rights only
8 become reality when they are broadly recognized and
9 enforced. The rights protected by the New York City
10 Human Rights Law are fundamental to an equitable
11 society. The right to live, work, and participate in
12 society free from discrimination on the basis of
13 one's national origin, citizenship, religion, race,
14 sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy,
15 disability, criminal history, and more. These rights
16 are currently under attack, broadly in society,
17 fueled by a political atmosphere that encourages and
18 incites hate and isolation, as well as with it— with
19 the tacit and even occasionally overt approval of the
20 federal government. Moreover, as inequality has
21 increased over the past few decades across the
country, those with the least suffer the most.
Discrimination affects people in all walks of life,
but the toll is unquestionably the greatest for

1 individuals and families who have the least. And
2 those who have the least access to financial
3 resources, also often find that they have the least
4 access to justice. These are precisely the issues
5 that I intend to make the focus of the Commission on
6 Human Rights during my tenure as Chair and
7 Commissioner. I am privileged to work with a small,
8 but dedicated team at the Commission on Human Rights
9 who have been successful at moving mountains with
10 limited resources. Our team of eight intake staff
11 field over 15,000 inquiries per year. Our dedicated
12 team of civil rights enforcement attorneys then
13 investigate and/or conciliate, which means, we settle
14 cases with the city as a party, every case that falls
15 within our jurisdiction, and then prosecute cases at
16 the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings.
17 After trial and after receiving OATH's report and
18 recommendation, I, along with a small handful of
19 colleagues, work to review the report recommendation,
20 the record, and the case law to write a final
21 decision and order. Our small but dedicated team also
works hard to create updated and accessible
trainings, Know Your Rights materials, legal
guidance, FAQs, and communication strategies and

1 campaigns, as well as to engage in outreach with
2 communities across the city. From the moment I walked
3 through the door at this agency, the dedicated staff
4 at CCHR have made clear that they share my vision and
5 my priorities and are willing to embrace change to
6 make that vision a reality. Together, we are
7 dedicated to making the Commission a place that will
8 survive the Trump administration's retreat from
9 federal civil rights enforcement, to ensure that
10 whatever happens at the federal level, the City Human
11 Rights Law will continue to be enforced, and we will
12 continue to ensure that all New Yorkers have the
13 opportunity to thrive in our great city. Together, we
14 are dedicated to engaging all New York City
15 communities, including small business owners, to
16 ensure that every New Yorker understands their rights
17 and their obligations, and to ensure that small
18 businesses have what they need to comply with the law
19 before civil rights violations occur. Together, we're
20 dedicated to ensuring that our services are
21 accessible to people who can't afford lawyers and for
whom we are often their only shot at justice. That
means taking a hard look at what works and how to
best deploy our resources. This includes, for

1 example, our Pre-Complaint Intervention Program, also
2 known as our Early Intervention Program, where we are
3 often able to intervene in situations before the
4 damage has been done and before litigation is
5 required. This also includes our project Equal
6 Access, where we make on-site visits to ensure that
7 buildings are accessible to people with disabilities.
8 This also means making sure that we make as much
9 impact as we can and when we can. Every conciliation
10 or order includes provisions that will prevent future
11 human rights violations. For example, we require
12 virtually every respondent to agree that their staff
13 will be trained by CCHR staff on the New York City
14 human rights law and to create and implement
15 non-discrimination policies. I should say, we require
16 that when we conciliate and issue orders in cases. We
17 also frequently find creative solutions to ensure
18 impact in the future. For example, in housing voucher
19 discrimination cases, we often will agree with
20 landlords that they will set aside a certain number
21 of apartments for voucher holders in the future. We
also, of course, seek compensation for victims of
discrimination, both in conciliations and in
litigation, as well as civil penalties either of

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2 which can easily reach six figures. New York City has
3 long been a national leader in civil rights
4 protections. The Human Rights Law reflects our belief
5 that everyone has the right to live and work and
6 thrive in this great city. Now more than ever, the
7 Commission is proud to carry forward this legacy. In
8 closing, I want to thank the Commission for its
9 partnership— the Commission— in closing, I want to
10 thank the Council for its partnership in supporting
11 the work of the Commission and for its continued
12 commitment to protecting the rights of New Yorkers. I
13 look forward to working together to ensure that the
14 promise of the New York City Human Rights Law remains
15 real and meaningful for every single person who calls
16 the city home. Thank you for the opportunity to
17 testify today at the beginning of this budget cycle,
18 and I welcome your questions.

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20 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you,
21 Commissioner. You are a speed reader. You know, that
was amazing. Okay. So I want to ask some questions
about headcount and vacancies. Then we'll kind of
discuss the Law Enforcement Bureau, the info line,
PMMR, and then we'll go from there.

COMMISSIONER CLARKE: Sure.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So the— your average
3 vacancy rate between 2016 and 2025 fiscal years was
4 about 18 percent. As of this year in January, we have
5 about 38 vacancies or a vacancy rate of 28 percent.
6 So are you currently hiring? If yes, what positions
7 are you looking for? And if there are any that are
8 more difficult to fill than others, and if you've— if
9 your headcount includes five for the City of Yes
10 positions as well?

11 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: So, I'm going to
12 refer some of the answers to Deputy Commissioner
13 Salazar. I want to say that as an initial matter,
14 obviously we're hiring for— we're actively hiring at
15 all times for as many vacancies as we are permitted
16 to hire for, which is maybe not the full scope of
17 vacancies that you're discussing.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: Yep. So,
19 just want to correct some of the numbers. So, as of
20 this week, we have 109 active staff members, which
21 means that we have 32 vacancies at the moment. With
regards to hiring, as the Commissioner just said,
we're always hiring. There have been challenges in
the past to hire, and that includes— let me take a
step back. So we don't have as an agency an issue in

2 hiring, right? We— the things, at least in the part
3 of the areas that we're able to control. So we are
4 working on our job postings, we're able to do the
5 interviews, we're able to offer the job position,
6 right, to the candidate, but that's the things that
7 we are able to control. Once we have the candidate
8 and we submit to OMB, that process can take another
9 three to four months.

8 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Forever.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: Yes. And so
10 because of the previous administration's two-for-one
11 hiring freeze, that was part of the delay. And so
12 while we're waiting for someone to get the approval,
13 there have been times where a candidate has, you
14 know, been able to find other opportunities. So we've
15 lost great candidates. And then it's just been a
16 really lengthy process. In addition to that, that you
17 could just also say that there's the typical
18 workplace fluctuations where people are leaving for
19 other opportunities, you know, great— personal
20 advancement and growth. So we have this kind of
21 cycle, but we're always hiring, and we're doing
everything in our power to hire as quickly as
possible.

1 COMMITTEE ON CIVIL & HUMAN RIGHTS 15

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. So, sorry. So
3 you're now at 109.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: Active
5 employees, yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And that is since
7 when?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: As of this
9 week, I would like to say, since Monday.

10 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: As of this week? So
11 those folks came on, they were in the pipeline for a
12 while?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: And we
16 actually also have probably three that are pending
17 approval, so more to come.

18 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, and then for the
19 five City of Yes positions, are those roles filled?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: We have
21 three that are currently filled and two vacancies.

22 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And those are out in
23 the world-

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR:
25 [interposing] Yes.

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2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: being recruited for?

3 Okay. The Commission— and welcoming, Council Member
4 Hanif. The Commission has previously attributed the
5 high vacancy rate to the two-to-one hiring freeze, as
6 you just mentioned. With the release of the
7 preliminary budget The mayor has announced ending the
8 freeze. How do you anticipate the ending of that
9 hiring freeze to impact your staffing levels this
10 year?

11 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: That's a great
12 question. So if the two-for-one hiring freeze is
13 ended with no vacancy reductions, meaning that we're
14 able to hire up to the full number of lines that
15 we're budgeted for, that would have an extremely
16 positive impact on our ability to do the things that
17 we do. Can you imagine the difference between 109 and
18 our full headcount, which is like 141? That's a
19 significant number of people that we could hire
20 across all of the work that we do. That includes
21 assisting in investigating outcomes. It includes
intake paralegals to do intakes faster. It includes
more trial attorneys. It includes communication
staff. Our poor chief of staff is also our
Communications Director and our Social Media Manager.

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He could get a break. There's a lot we could do if we were-- if the hiring freeze were ended and we were able to hire fully up to our headcount.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Do you plan to submit for any additional staff lines?

CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: That's a good question. I will say we are in constant conversation with OMB around staffing and hiring. So that's genuinely a constant conversation.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: But you haven't submitted as of yet additional headlines? I'm sorry, additional staff lines.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: Not officially, but that's part of, like--

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] The conversation.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: You know, we're in the preliminary budget hearings and preliminary budget conversations. But that is something that we have discussed internally.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And you mentioned intake folks, trial attorneys, some social media, which to get the word out about what you all do. That's important. Do you have some top priorities

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2 beyond those, or are those kind of your top
3 priorities?

4 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: Yeah, I think in
5 terms of hiring, I mean, it's hard to say those are
6 our top priorities because those are our top
7 priorities across the board. It's like- but faster
8 investigations, more trial attorneys, more outreach,
9 like, more training, that's like, those are the
10 things that we do, but we could do more of each of
11 those things if we were able to.

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. So we just- we
13 mentioned briefly that OMB instructed city agencies
14 to cut 50 percent of the vacancies on the full-time
15 civilian positions that were unfilled as of January
16 2026. I know you, you mentioned that you would love
17 to have those, that full amount to staff up for. Did
18 you all receive instruction for this as well?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: And some of
22 this is also part of the Chief Savings Officer. Like,
23 everything is kind of tied together. So the plan is
24 due next week. But again, we continue to have
25 conversations about all that.

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CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah. And for that- and for your headcount, where do you- what kinds of work would be mostly impacted by that reduction?

CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: We haven't made a plan yet, so we're still- I mean, hope springs eternal. We continue to be in conversations and we haven't finalized our internal plans yet. But I think, I mean, you know, again, if we were able to hire up fully, we would hire up in virtually every corner of what we do.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And what- so, I understand you're still figuring those out, but of the vacant positions, what types of roles do you have the most vacancy in?

CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: We've had the most vacancies in attorney positions.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So a lot of advocates have told us that the high vacancy rate is also attributed to CCHR salaries being just really uncompetitive and uncompetitive even within other city agencies, which is kind of crazy. So what is the average salary for an attorney at CCHR?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: So the salaries for— sorry.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, I don't know what's happening.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: The salaries for all employees at the agency is based on your civil service title. All civil service titles have a minimum, an incumbent rate, and a maximum. The maximum obviously is depending on our agency's budget. We're not able to start someone below a certain amount, so that is consistent across the city. That's not unique to our agency. Off the top of my head, I could say we've been— we've been making efforts to hire agency attorneys at Level II. Um, the starting salary for that is about \$83,000.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Is what? I'm sorry.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: \$83.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: \$83?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: \$83,000, yep. If the candidate has two years of experience— I mean, two years of experience in the city, or they have four years of experience in the private sector, we're able to start them at the incumbent rate, which is about \$95,450.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And so that's on par,
3 you're saying, with other city agencies?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: Yes. At
5 least for that particular civil service title.

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Okay.

7 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: I'm going to step in
8 to say, for those civil service titles, there are
9 other civil service titles available to other
10 agencies for attorneys-

11 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing]
12 [inaudible] benefit from.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: Correct.

14 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Right.

15 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: That would have
16 higher salaries.

17 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Have you
18 identified any other city agencies that offer similar
19 salaries for similar positions and types of work?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: We have. I
21 mean, every time that we're creating a job posting,
we're also looking around to see how other agencies
are framing the position. If there's some
similarities, are we using the right civil service
title? Is there an opportunity to find another civil

1
2 service title that the agency can use? There are
3 titles that are unique to specific city agencies, and
4 we're not able to do that. But I think that for the
5 most part, we are trying to be as consistent and, you
6 know, following all proper civil service policies and
7 laws.

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9 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. So we can assume
10 that many candidates who would not accept the posted
11 salary ranges at CCHR would never apply in the first
12 place. Has the Commission ever conducted any analysis
13 of trends in the number of applications received for
14 job postings over the years? For example, comparing
15 the number of applicants received last time salaries
16 were significantly raised to applicant pools in
17 recent years.

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19 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: Well, so before
20 Deputy Commissioner Salazar answers that, which—
21 because she'll know the answer and I won't— I do want
to say that we are sort of in a unique timeframe for
hiring for civil rights enforcement because there are
people who are leaving federal civil rights
enforcement agencies and who are willing to work with
us. So not to say that it wouldn't be easier to hire
with more salaries, of course it would, but we are

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2 also— we really have an opportunity right now to hire
3 highly qualified civil rights attorneys and
4 investigators and other people like that. So I just
5 want to put that out there.

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Absolutely.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: And for the
8 most part, we don't have any issue with the number of
9 applicants. We post a job and we don't have an issue
10 that we have like five people that are applying for a
11 position. That's not the issue. We haven't done any
12 formal analysis, as you mentioned. However, we do
13 exit surveys, and so we have a general idea as to at
14 least why some people are leaving, and that varies.
15 They have been because they've moved out of town.
16 There's been, you know, remote work as something, you
17 know, more flexibility. Salaries has been something
18 that has been mentioned, but not as often as you
19 would think.

20 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, I think there's—
21 I think the folks coming from D.C. who no longer can
22 get jobs in our federal government because our
23 federal government is hell-bent on destroying civil
24 rights, certainly creating opportunities here. And we
25 should have those competitive salaries to capture

1 that talent. One of the things that, um, you
2 mentioned that people are leaving the city. I mean,
3 they're leaving the city because cost of living is
4 high, and so again, another reason to- hopefully the
5 administration can give some additional funding for
6 you all to boost up the salaries of folks that you do
7 have in an effort to retain them. One of the things
8 that I know the Deputy Speaker cares a lot about is
9 the language skills. Your Commission staff speak over
10 30 languages, and CCHR has previously testified that
11 staff language skills are vital to effective outreach
12 in many communities. At the- at last year's budget
13 hearing, the Commission testified that CCHR staff do
14 not get a language bonus. Do you think- do you think
15 staff should get a language bonus?

14 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: So I think- I think-
15 I agree that it's incredibly important that all our
16 staff, to the extent possible, that we have as many
17 languages as possible represented in our staff, both
18 in outreach, intake, and for attorney positions. We
19 do bake language preferences into our hiring and into
20 our job descriptions, so it is part of the job that
21 people are being hired for. That being said, of
course, again, you know, being competitive with many,

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many other agencies and nonprofits who are also trying to hire lots of people who speak a lot of languages, particularly attorney positions- I know that bilingual attorneys are in very, very high demand across the city.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: That's right. And I do think that we should recognize that through the gratitude of an increased paycheck, because it doesn't really seem like it's optional. If someone calls in and they don't speak English, it's not like you just hang up on this person, right? You have to find somebody who can speak. And so we should- while I understand and I recognize that it's explicit in the job posting that you are looking for these kind of preferences, it seems that we should be recognizing that through some kind of bonus, an incentive to kind of recruit and retain people to the city.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: I just want to clarify, if I can?

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: If I may clarify? We don't use our staff for, like, translation services. We outsource that. So we use

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2 vendors such as like L&M Language Services where If
3 an- if someone from the public comes in and they need
4 a translation for their intake, that's what we're-
5 that's what we use. We're not using our staff
6 necessarily to do that.

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8 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah. But it is fair
9 to say that if someone walks in the door and they
10 speak only Spanish and I speak Spanish, I don't need
11 to do that additional step, when I can just do it
12 right there. Right? And that saves everybody time and
13 it's an efficient way to get their inquiry addressed,
14 especially if it's a- you know, they're facing
15 discrimination. Keeping people from having to take
16 multiple steps is a good thing. So I understand that
17 technically that you might have those available, but
18 it does seem like it's a clear benefit, and it should
19 be recognized, but specifically since you're
20 recruiting for it in that way. I'm going to turn to
21 law enforcement and then I'll- do you have questions?
And then I'll give Council Member Hanif some- an
opportunity. In the preliminary plan, CCHR's Law
Enforcement Bureau is funded at \$6.4 million for 66
positions, which is a decrease of two positions

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compared to adoption last year. Does this decrease reflect an anticipated decrease in the caseload?

CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: We do not have an anticipated decrease in caseload.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Are the 66 budgeted positions currently staffed up?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: I just want to clarify for- you're just talking specifically for our Law Enforcement Bureau?

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Law enforcement bureau.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: Law Enforcement Bureau has 70 lines.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: And currently they have 49 people actively working at LEV.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Just give me what the financial people-

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR:
[interposing] But I just to put on the record that.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: who know better than me told me. Okay. So you're at- you have 70 lines and how many people are hired?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: 49.

3 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: 49, okay. That's a
4 pretty big gap. Okay.

5 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: Be clear, the sort
6 of— we're trying to get away a little bit from all of
7 the, like, silos in the agency, but Law Enforcement
8 Bureau includes also our intake staff. So it's not
9 only our attorneys, it's our intake staff, and it's
10 our admin who assist in getting filings done and
11 sending out notices, and that whole, like, life cycle
12 is within that title.

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. And according to
14 the PMMR, the average age of complaints in the first
15 four months of 2026 was about 629 days. How many
16 cases are currently opened right now at the
17 Commission, and what are the contributing factors in
18 making the age of complaints so high?

19 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: So I will refer most
20 of those answers to Deputy Commissioner Carroll about
21 numbers, but I will say in terms of the age of cases,
it could be hard to tell from the outside, like,
what's happening—

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] Yeah.

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2 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: -in a case between
3 when it's open and when it's closed. I will say
4 there's a lot happening on those cases between when
5 they're open and they're closed. We do a lot of
6 attempts at conciliation, which, as I testified
7 earlier, is when we settle cases with the city as a
8 party, meaning that we insert into those settlement
9 agreements, things that benefit the city, things that
10 prevent future violations, and all kinds of
11 injunctive relief. That can happen often repeatedly
12 throughout the case between when it comes to us and
13 when we close it. But of course we can only do as
14 much as we can do where we are.

15
16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: Thank you,
17 Chair Nurse. Can you hear me okay? Sorry-

18
19 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] Yes,
20 absolutely can hear you.

21
22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: So during
23 that time period, we were really focused on making
24 sure that we were getting New Yorkers through the
25 door as quickly as possible. And so our focus was
26 getting complainants in for intake and then
27 complaints drafted and filed rather than
28 historically, which has been our approach, which is

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2 to make sure that the backlog gets addressed as
3 quickly as possible. Both things are extremely
4 important. We made the strategic decision in light of
5 the federal government that we wanted people who are
6 reaching out to us to be heard as quickly as possible
7 and make sure that we could get them in, meet statute
8 of limitations, which is always a priority, and
9 really make sure that they weren't feeling the
10 drop-off from city government as well as federal
11 government. So that was a shift in approach that we
12 had taken to make sure that we were just being as
13 responsive and as quickly as possible. So our intake
14 wait time had gone down significantly during that
15 period, which is not a number that's reflected in the
16 PMMR, but it was the approach that we were taking at
17 the time.

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19 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: What would you say—
20 and I just, like, two more questions and I'll pass it
21 over. What would you say between— which I understand
you wanna prioritize, like, people saying what they
need, what's going on with them and get it into your
case management system. But between getting it into
the system and the next step, what do you— what's
like a good average wait time that you think would,

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2 like- what is your, maybe your average wait time now
3 if you know it and you know, what would be a good
4 standard if you had more resources?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: I think our
6 current wait time is a couple of months,
7 unfortunately. Our best wait time has been two weeks,
8 and that is outside of the context of our early
9 interventions that Commissioner Clarke mentioned
10 earlier, or intakes that we will fast-track if we
11 know that someone's in immediate harm or if they're
12 coming up against a statute of limitations.

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. I imagine
14 there's different ways that things are prioritized to
15 pace- based on the severity of the case. But if you-
16 if you could, how many additional How many staff
17 would you need to make this- to close this gap?

18 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: So I don't think I
19 have any precise answer, but I can say that, you
20 know, what Commissioner Carroll- Deputy Commissioner
21 Carroll is talking about in terms of if we have to
prioritize getting back to people sooner versus
closing cases faster, we're talking about sort of the
workflow between intake, case investigations, and
litigation. And I think- we currently have, I think,

1
2 24 attorneys who are basically doing— they're doing
3 the investigations, they're doing the settlement
4 conferences, they're trying to do the conciliations,
5 and they're doing the litigation. And so I think we
6 do incredible work with the team that we have. That's
7 the team that we have right now.

8 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, I mean, that's
9 the line. That's always the line for all committees,
10 like, in budget hearing. And we do recognize that and
11 appreciate that you all do a little with a lot. Is it
12 fair to say— you have 70 lines budgeted, you're at
13 49. Is it fair to say you can't afford the vacancy,
14 the potential cut of 50 percent of your vacancies?

15 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: I think the most— I
16 mean, I'm sure this is not the answer you're looking
17 for. The most important thing that I have to say,
18 because it's important to me, is to make sure that
19 every New Yorker knows that literally no matter what
20 happens, the City Commission on Human Rights is going
21 to be here for them, including if there are cuts. We
will continue to be here and fulfill our mission and
make sure that we're able to fill the vacuum left by
federal enforcement. I don't want anyone here to
leave with the impression that we are not able to do

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2 that for them, just because it's a time of, like,
3 incredible fear for people. I don't want people to
4 think that we are unable to fulfill our mission. That
5 being said, obviously with more staff, we could do a
6 lot more.

7 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. And, and just
8 finally- and I'll come back to some stuff. But how
9 many cases do you currently have at OATH?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: So we
11 currently have six cases at OATH. However, I just
12 want to make a kind of clarifying point on that. Some
13 of the cases that we have there are complex pattern
14 and practice cases. So it's a single case that
15 represents up to 10-

16 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] A bunch
17 of people.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: Yeah,
19 exactly, a bunch of people and the rectification of a
20 policy that has a much broader impact than the people
21 who've come to report cases to us. We've been
prioritizing those cases in the last two years. There
are some of the oldest cases we've had because
they're the more complex cases that require
significant amount of staff time. And so again, it's

1 kind of, you know, moving the chairs around to make
2 sure we focus on things at different periods of time.
3 In addition to that, you know, we've had significant
4 settlement conferences. The OATH judges are working
5 really hard to push things to settlement rather than
6 trials. So we've had a significant uptick in
7 appearances we've had to make before trial even gets
8 set on the calendar, which is a significant change
9 from prior years where we've been able to go to OATH
10 and say, we've attempted settlement, settlement's not
11 happening, we need a trial date today. So that's been
12 an adjustment for us in terms of resources because
13 the appearances take time for us to prepare and to
14 show up to.

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And, and when you have
14 cases that represent a bigger trend and multi- and
15 many people and you go for a settlement, does that
16 result in a wider systemic structural change for the
17 city?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: Absolutely.
18 We would never let those cases settle without a
19 change in policy, usually some several-year
20 monitoring going forward to make sure that the
21 policy, the new policy, is not also having a

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discriminatory impact and really making sure that we don't see the same issue in front of the Commission ever again.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Great. Okay, I'm going to turn it over to Councilmember Hanif for questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you, Chair Nurse, and hi everyone. It's great to see you, and I just want to start off by thanking the CCHR. You all do incredible work. And some of the government campaigns that I remember, and will always remember, have come from CCHR, particularly through COVID on anti-Asian violence. So I want to see more funding and more capacity, so that more New Yorkers, recognize that this is— this is— that CCHR is the body that enforces our protections. Just building off of Councilmember Nurse's questions. How do New Yorkers learn about CCHR, and what's the funding that goes toward advertising and outreach?

CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: Okay, so that's a great question. I'm going to have Deputy Commissioner Salazar answer the money portion of it because she is good with money. In terms of how people learn about us, there's all kinds of different ways. Obviously, I think there's a degree to which, like, in today's

1 society, it's a lot more through public advertising
2 and social media than it may have been in the past.
3 Right now, I think, in terms of our agency, people
4 learn about us through our campaigns and social
5 media, through outreach, personal outreach that we
6 do, community outreach, tabling events, things like
7 that, as well as, through- we offer a ton of
8 trainings on our website, and we have, I think, like,
9 over a million people a year take one of our
10 trainings on our website, and so that's another way
11 that we- people encounter us through taking maybe a
12 mandatory training at their workplace, or mandated by
13 us as part of one of our settlements, and they learn
14 about the rest of the Human Rights Law and sort of
15 our mission through those trainings. But in terms of
16 our campaign's budget, I'll turn it to Deputy
17 Commissioner Salazar.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: Yep. Well, I
19 don't have an exact breakdown for each unit. I can
20 tell you that our OTPS budget is relatively small and
21 that the majority of those funds go to keeping the
lights on. So it's our leases, our utilities,
licenses for, you know, sites and things that our
staff need to do. I mean, that our staff needs in

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2 order to do their work. So the comms budget is
3 relatively small. I mean, again, I don't have the
4 figure with me, but I know that, again, we don't have
5 that much money to do big campaigns, but we do what
6 we can with what we have.

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8 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Yeah, I thank you
9 for that. I certainly understand, one, just the scale
10 of the Commission's, like, possibility- just the
11 possibilities with this commission. And I think even
12 with more concerted ads or campaigns to make sure
13 that New Yorkers know what CCHR does is incredibly
14 important, particularly because, you know, the
15 council's passing law after law to make sure there's
16 no income discrimination, there's- you know, pregnant
17 people aren't being discriminated against in their
18 workplace. And if the- if the people impacted don't
19 know to file a complaint or are, you know, 629 days
20 into a wait time, that feels distressful. It feels-
21 it feels- I mean, as a New Yorker, I would feel
really discouraged to want to report, and I'd like to
see that change so that more New Yorkers know and
feel empowered and that we're not empowering these-
some of these bad landlords. Okay. My question is
specifically on accessibility and disability-related

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2 complaints. The Commission reported an increase in
3 accessibility modifications secured for people with
4 disabilities. How would the proposed budget
5 reductions affect the Commission's ability to
6 investigate disability discrimination complaints and
7 secure accessibility improvements for New Yorkers
8 with disabilities?

9 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: I'll turn most of
10 that answer over to Deputy Commissioner Carroll, but
11 as an initial matter, I want to say we are very proud
12 of all the disability discrimination complaints that
13 we've been able to address and modifications that we
14 make, and that's in large part due to our- I'm going
15 to screw it up- Project Equal Access. It is Project
16 Equal Access. Project Equal Access, which is our
17 dedicated project sort of that focuses on
18 modifications, building modifications, accessibility.
19 People go on site, they measure for ramps, they do
20 the whole sort of spate of things that need to be
21 done. Obviously, that's a very small team. I believe
it's thee people. And so with more people, we could
do more. But I'll turn over the remainder of the
question- unless I answered it- to Deputy
Commissioner Carroll.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: Yeah, so the
3 team is two people, actually. We have an intern, and
4 they're great, but, you know, they're not permanent.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Is the intern the
6 second person or the third?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: No, no,
8 there's a third person. And I think, you know, those
9 cases in particular, when we can attack them head-on
10 before we file the complaint, before we have to do
11 litigation, that's a huge win and a huge value add
12 for both the individual who's come to us, but also
13 for the agency, because those cases can be extremely
14 expensive to litigate because we have to hire an
15 expert who's going to go to the site, spend all this
16 time putting together a report. And we are in a
17 position where the federal government is emboldening
18 respondents.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Right.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: So,--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: [interposing] So
22 does it-- I mean, based on just the increase of
23 complaints and of course the settlements that you all
24 have secured are fantastic, and I was looking through
25 just some of your work, and it's really wonderful to

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2 see the way in which people with disabilities are
3 being supported through CCHR, and not enough people
4 know that, and I think, you know, two people for a
5 big job of this scale really brings to question just
6 who is left out, that there's marginalization. And as
7 the Disabilities Committee Chair, I'm very interested
8 in making sure that all of our city agencies are
9 doing their part, but especially CCHR. And based off
10 of what you all have secured, thousands, millions in
11 restitution and accountability, incredibly important
12 for New Yorkers to understand that New York City is
13 not just talking about accessible cities. We are an
14 accessible city and that we will fight for your civil
15 rights as a disabled person. To expand this work,
16 what would you say you would need? I mean, it's good
17 to know that it seems like— am I right to say that
18 the, the Project Equal Access is specifically around
19 disability/accessibility-related complaints? Are
20 there other teams that are doing issue-based or
21 community-based outreach or targeted— targeted
responses?

CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: So great question.

But then of course I'm gonna do the thing. Before I
answer it, I want to build on what you were saying

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2 before because I think it's really important to note
3 that when we get accessibility modifications, those
4 are there for life.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Right.

6 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: So these are like-
7 every time we do one of these, it has this sort of
8 ongoing effect of making the city accessible or for
9 everybody on an ongoing basis. And the same is true.
10 I think we were talking earlier about source of
11 income discrimination. When we achieve as part of a
12 settlement that the landlord will set aside a certain
13 number of apartments for voucher holders, that's
14 expanding the stock of affordable housing in the city
15 for the length of that lease. So every time we do one
16 of these things, it really does-

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: [interposing]

18 What's the funding? Is- where's the funding coming
19 from for all of the capital projects? Is it- it's on
20 incumbent on the landlord? Okay.

21 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: That- I mean,
that's a huge win.

2 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: I agree. Sorry, now
3 I'm going to have to ask you to say your question
4 again, sorry.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Now I've forgotten
6 my question.

7 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: [inaudible] I'm
8 sorry.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: I'm like, I was
10 just looking at each other.

11 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: I didn't do that on
12 purpose. I promise.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Where are we
14 headed?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: I just
16 wanted to clarify one thing-

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: [interposing] Yeah,
18 go ahead.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: on the
20 staffing as it relates to accessibility work. So our
21 two project-

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: [interposing] Oh, I
just remembered. If there are other teams-

CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: [interposing] Oh,
other teams.

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2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: that are specifically
3 focusing on, let's say, the rise in antisemitism and
4 addressing and understanding how to combat or how to
5 talk about it in the city.

6 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: So we do have, we
7 have- we have many overlapping, like, titles and
8 departments and units. We're trying to sort of get a
9 little bit away from that so that people aren't
10 siloed as much as I think that they may have been in
11 the past between outreach and enforcement and things
12 that, that sort of need to be better connected. We do
13 have a community lead for the Jewish community in New
14 York City who works on that issue specifically in
15 terms of outreach and making connections and making
16 sure that everything we do is centered in the
17 community. And then, Project Equal Access is kind of-
18 it's like a unique project because it involves, like,
19 specific competences and also going out, but then
20 going out to sites and things that are- sort of have
21 to be specific to their job description. I think. And
then we do also have a, our pre-complaint
intervention team, which like the early intervention
team where people- if people call us in crisis or
they call us at a moment where quickly intervening

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2 before litigation can solve the problem. So for
3 example, you mentioned pregnancy discrimination,
4 someone who's pregnant and needs to go to the doctor
5 and they're their boss says, if you go to the doctor,
6 I'm going to fire you, we can pick up the phone very
7 quickly and say, did you know that you're not allowed
8 to do that under the New York City law? So we do have
9 a small team that does that. Again, we're trying to
10 sort of make sure that we're- we have a little bit
11 more bleed between the teams so that we're able to
12 sort of fit people in where we make- where it may
13 make sense and make sure that everyone's involved in
14 all different aspects of what we do.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: For the people in-
13 for the people leading Project Equal Access, are
14 they- do they have their hands in other parts of the-

15 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: No, they're largely
16 dedicated to that project.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And I'd love to
17 know just how many disability-related complaints have
18 come in, in this fiscal year, and how many have been,
19 how many settlements have been made?

20 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: We can probably-

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And how many are
3 still pending. And also if there are cases from the
4 past that have been— that are solved right now. I
5 mean, earlier today we learned about a case that has
6 been going on for six years. And I think that's,
7 that's shocking to hear, and would certainly
8 discourage anyone I know to report anything. And,
9 especially because right now, as more people are even
10 more scared to report to 911, and distrustful of the
11 NYPD, CCHR really serves as an anchor and as the
12 community for working people. So I'd love those data
13 sets to just better understand that specific program.
14 And I'm really grateful to know that it exists.

15 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: We may have to get
16 back to you with some of these answers.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay. Yeah, no
18 worries. Yeah, yeah.

19 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: So I think in fiscal
20 year '25, we received a total of— okay, Deputy
21 Commissioner Carroll is going to tell me if I'm
reading this incorrectly. I believe a total of 662
disability-related inquiries, which resulted in 131,
like, formal complaints being filed by people. And
then I have another number, but I'm not sure how to

1 read that. So I'm gonna hand the answer over to
2 Deputy Commissioner Carroll. Is that complaints, or-

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: No, that's,
4 PCRs [sic] that were-

5 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: Oh, great. Okay, so
6 then good for us. Okay, so we also- and I'm going to
7 say fiscal year- in the first four months of fiscal
8 year '26, we successfully resolved 50 cases
9 concerning modifications for accessibility for people
10 with disabilities. Those are cases resolved prior to
11 a formal complaint being filed. So are those the
12 numbers you're looking for?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Yes. And how long
14 that- the 50 cases took to complete or close?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: So our- we
16 calculate the average for across all of our early
17 interventions, so I don't have the number for
18 disabilities specifically, but on average our early
19 interventions take 25 days, start to finish to
20 complete. So we really do try when we can get
21 involved early on and be successful to do that,
because it does make a significant difference, as
opposed to cases that go through full litigation,

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2 which can, you know, take years, whether you're in
3 front of the commission or in court.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it. Thank you.
5 Pass it back.

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you,
7 Councilmember Hanif. And recognizing, our Finance
8 Chair, Linda Lee, is here as well. I wanted to talk a
9 little bit about the PMMR indicators. We've touched
10 on it briefly. The increase received decreased by 26
11 percent in the first four months of the fiscal 2026
12 period when compared to the same time in fiscal 2025
13 due to federal rhetoric causing less people to
14 report. What federal rhetoric is CCR- CCHR seeing or
15 hearing about it and what is the Commission doing to
16 combat it?

17 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: Fantastic question. I
18 think there's really two effects of the federal
19 rhetoric. It goes both ways. It discourages people
20 from reporting because they're under the impression
21 that their rights may not be as fulsome as they were
before. That's obviously not true under the New York
City Human Rights Law. Nothing's happened to our law.
People are under the impression that either- that
their rights have changed, which we are actively

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2 combating. But there's also the issue of people being
3 afraid to interact with the government, which is an
4 issue that we're desperately working to address as
5 much as we can. Certainly people, I think, are afraid
6 to get to sort of present themselves to the
7 government in any circumstances, which I understand
8 completely. And again, we try to make ourselves as
9 accessible as possible to ensure that people do feel
10 safe and that they are safe coming to us. I think the
11 other effect obviously is also on the other side. You
12 know, we're talking about case wait times and stuff
13 like that. Certainly the federal rhetoric is
14 encouraging respondents, people who complaints are
15 made against, to dig in and encouraging their counsel
16 to dig in, making them less interested in settlement
17 or conciliation or sort of more emboldened. We
18 obviously are going to double down and go after them
19 as hard as we ever would. We're not afraid, but it's
20 definitely- it's having an effect, that federal
21 rhetoric. It's-

18 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah. You- so I know
19 you mentioned you're working to combat the idea that
20 people are fearful of interacting with the
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2 government, what are some of the strategies we're
3 engaged with?

4 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: So there's some,
5 like, obvious examples, and then there's a broader
6 messaging issue. In terms of the broader messaging
7 issue, we're just making sure that we show up and
8 talk to people all the time about, among other
9 things, that the New York City Human Rights Law
10 includes, a protection for citizenship and
11 immigration status discrimination, particularly for
12 tenants whose landlords are maybe threatening them
13 them or calling ICE on them and things like that.
14 There's also other things we're trying to do. Our
15 offices are like right next to 26 Fed. People— I
16 mean, you can like see the ICE building out the back
17 of our offices. That scares some people off. We try
18 to make sure that we're available remotely to people,
19 and we're also— we started doing some remote intake
20 clinics and different kinds of things to make sure
21 that people are safe coming to us and that just they
feel, you know, it's a location that's traumatizing
to a lot of people, and so we're trying to make sure
that able to reach those people. We make ourselves
accessible to them in a number of ways.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Great. Yeah, I think,
3 um, I want to ask about mobile clinics, but I
4 definitely think- and we talked a little bit about
5 this, you know, when I open up like an AM New York, I
6 see a graphic or like an advertisement, but it
7 actually goes to this- it's for the state. And I
8 think more visibility, more money for that digital
9 outreach, the advertising to let people know that we
10 actually have a entity here is key, just, you know,
11 echoing what Council Member Hanif said, because I
12 don't- I think as much outreach as possible is going
13 to be important, and I don't think you all can afford
14 any vacancies or cuts to your vacancies to be able to
15 carry out that work. For the mobile intake clinics,
16 tell me, you know, how many people does it take to
17 run a mobile intake unit for a day? You know, what,
18 what does your deployment look like? You know, how
19 frequently are you out there? Are you targeting
20 specific neighborhoods?

17 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: I mean- so I'm going
18 to let let Deputy Commissioner Carroll answer that
19 question because she already sort of did it, but I
20 think we are taking like a good look at that and
21 trying to make sure that we're doing the thing that

1 works the most. I think having come from the civil
2 legal services world, Mobile Intake is very, very
3 hard because there are— in any given group of issues,
4 there's only going to be so many issues that are
5 within your jurisdiction. I think that working with
6 the Mayor's Office of Mass Engagement is going to be
7 really a game changer for some of this stuff, because
8 it's going to be a single point of contact for people
9 with the entire city and all of our city services. So
10 we're really looking forward to working with that
11 office to make sure that whatever we do is, like,
12 —because it does take a lot of resources— is as
13 effective as possible.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: So we, uh,
13 ran two in the last few months that were pilot
14 programs for us trying to test out different ways in
15 terms of outreach and in terms of staffing to
16 maximize our ability to have impact. So the two
17 clinics we ran were in partnership with local
18 community-based organizations and in parts of the
19 city that are harder to get to from our office in
20 downtown Manhattan. So one was in Bay Ridge in
21 partnership with the Muslim and Arab community that
is primarily down there. And then in Jackson Heights,

1
2 we worked with Voices Latinas to focus on the
3 population that they serve in Jackson Heights. We
4 largely relied on the community-based organizations
5 to do the outreach and to really let members of their
6 community know that we were going to be there. And I
7 think that was largely successful in getting folks
8 through the door. It- to echo Commissioner Clarke's,
9 point about the Office of Mass Engagement, what we
10 found was that it really would have benefited from
11 having multiple agencies or multiple legal service
12 providers present for those because a lot of people
13 showed up knowing they were gonna talk to a lawyer.
14 And then we're, you know, potentially disappointed if
15 we had to say we don't have jurisdiction over this.
16 So I think being able to really work with other
17 agencies and make sure we're offering a plethora of
18 services is a great way for us to take it. And that
19 was the biggest learning point, I think, for us on
20 those clinics.

17 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, that- we'd love
18 to see any kind of like debrief or report or like,
19 you know, some kind of evaluation to see where you
20 all- where those lessons have been captured and how
21 we can be supportive and helpful as council members

1
2 in our districts to help get the— get that word out.
3 I'm going to turn it over to our Finance Chair,
4 Council Member Linda Lee.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hi, good afternoon.
6 Afternoon, yes. I'm sorry I'm late, but thank you so
7 much for being here and for all the work you're
8 doing, especially everything that is happening right
9 now in our city. We really appreciate you. And of
10 course, Chair Nurse, can't think of a better role
11 because, you know, I know that you're passionate
12 about a lot of these issues. So, excited to support
13 you both. And I have to say, I want to just comment,
14 small but mighty team, right? So, you have eight
15 intake staff, field over 15,000 inquiries per year.
16 That's a lot. So, just wanna commend you on that.
17 And just had a couple questions around one of the
18 boring budget stuff, but important nonetheless. But
19 around headcount and vacancies— so fiscal 2016 to
20 '25, there was a vacancy rate of 18.8 percent, and as
21 of January of this year, there are 38 vacancies
within— with a vacancy rate of 27 percent. So how has
that been going since, you know, obviously the mayor
got rid of the two-for-one, which is hopefully
helping agencies to hire at a faster rate? If you do

1
2 have any vacancies, and especially given the
3 important work you guys are doing. So just wondering,
4 you know, where that stands as of today in terms of
5 the vacant positions, and if you could break it down
6 by department?

7
8 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: So I'm gonna start
9 this off and say that we're in ongoing conversations
10 with OMB about the two-for-one policy, and if we are
11 able to hire without it, we will.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: That's good.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: And then
14 just to provide more updated numbers- so we currently
15 have 32 vacancies.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: 32, Okay.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: And we
18 currently have 109 active employees at the agency.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: 109.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: Yes.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: And then you
wanted, you said the breakdown by-

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Department.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: Departments
Or units. So for our LEB unit, they have a total of

1
2 70 lines that are allocated to them and currently
3 there's 49 active staff members.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: For our
6 Community Relations Bureau, we have 30 lines that are
7 allocated to that unit, and currently we have 25
8 active employees.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, perfect.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: Our Office
11 of the Chair, we have five lines that are allocated
12 to them, and we have four active employees. Our IT
13 Department is fully staffed. They're at six. Our
14 General Counsel has one vacancy. They're a total of
15 of- but they have five total lines in that
16 department. Our operations, which includes our fleet
17 and facility and our finance team, they're a team of
18 six, but we currently have four active employees in
19 that team. Our comms is a total of seven, but we
20 currently have five active employees. Our policy team
21 is fully staffed there. They have eight lines and
they're eight active employees there. Our HR team is
also fully staffed. They are 14- four employees in
that team, no vacancies.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: And just out of
3 curiosity, based on what's been happening more
4 recently, are there areas where— I don't know if you
5 went into new needs, but I'm just curious to know,
6 especially on the General Counsel side, because that
7 seems low. But I mean, for me, just given all the
8 different cases you— I'm sure you handle. So just
9 curious to hear your thoughts on that as well.

10 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: Sorry, the question
11 is has anything happened recently that has increased
12 our need for general counsels or just generally
13 across the board?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right, generally, I
15 mean, across the board, but especially General
16 Counsel because I would imagine that their caseloads
17 are— if you could clarify that. Yeah.

18 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: So, Deputy
19 Commissioner Salazar mentioned the LEB, that's our
20 Law Enforcement Bureau, which we are trying to
21 rebrand so as not to scare people as our Civil Rights
Enforcement Bureau. Because people don't— I don't
want to confuse people about what we do and who we
report to. So those are the lines for our intake

1
2 staff, our case handlers, attorneys, and then our
3 General Counsel is sort of-

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: [interposing] Over
5 internal?

6 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: a bunch of things.
7 It's like the General Counsel for the agency, but
8 it's also like our mediation department.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right.

10 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: It's- there's like
11 some terms of art in there and how we define our
12 departments.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, thank you for
14 the clarification. And just in terms of going to back
15 to the PMMR. The Commission published an updated
16 legal enforcement guideline on- guidance on national
17 origin and immigration status. And so what was
18 updated in the new guidance?

19 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: I may not have that
20 off the top of my head. We might have to get back to
21 you on that.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, perfect. And
what challenges have you all faced in reaching
immigrant New Yorkers due to federal government,
obviously how everything is happening on the

1
2 commission addressing those challenges? And I have to
3 say, I was a former provider on the immigrant
4 community side. That's a lot of the challenges we saw
5 back in 2016 and now are 10 times, I'd say, more
6 challenging.

7 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: Oh, absolutely. I
8 mean, I think this- so we testified to this a little
9 bit before about people being afraid to come to the
10 government, but people are also obviously afraid to
11 fight back against their employers and their
12 landlords if they're undocumented. And people
13 unquestionably are using the threat of calling ICE to
14 threaten people and to coerce people into silence,
15 employees and tenants alike. So I think we're having-
16 you know, the difficulty is getting the word out that
17 just because your landlord says if you do this, I'll
18 call ICE, doesn't mean that he's allowed to do that.
19 Same with employers. You still have all the rights
20 that you have. I think also citizenship status
21 discrimination is confusing for people because they
think that it means only the difference between being
documented and being undocumented, and it doesn't
mean that. So employers who don't want to hire people
on a green card is a violation of the law too. So

1
2 there's a- it's complicated and it's very hard to
3 talk to people about, and I understand why, because I
4 think their needs- there's a lot of areas where
5 people's immediate needs are so immediate and their
6 emotions are so heightened because they're so afraid
7 that we don't even get to those more complicated
8 conversations. And I think we're definitely working
9 on figuring out how to get- how to make sure that
10 people at least know whether they want to exercise
11 their rights or not. Obviously it's up to them, but
12 so at least they know they have the option and that
13 they know that we're here for them.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Thank you. And I
15 know that you're probably-

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: [inaudible]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Oh, go ahead. Go
18 ahead, sorry.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: Just one
20 thing, you know, this is a space where we are really
21 leveraging partnerships with community-based
organizations and where people already are going for
trusted services and resources and community, where
we can build trust with those organizations and build
on the trust we already have with some of them to

1
2 really make sure that even if individuals don't want
3 to come forward, their stories are being captured and
4 we're able to take action on it.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right. No, that's
6 super important to emphasize. And I know that
7 actually we had with our Immigration Chair recently,
8 a roundtable conversation, and it was great because a
9 lot of the advocates did have a lot of things that
10 they sort of have just done on their own around the
11 Know Your Rights piece and everything. So it was
12 encouraging to see that. And has there been any sort
13 of plan, or is there, just out of curiosity, any plan
14 in terms of moving forward with either partnering
15 more, or is there- in the budget, I guess, I mean, is
16 for materials or anything, campaigns related to more
17 Know Your Rights? I know it's a bit tricky because
18 obviously with this population we want to be
19 sensitive about it as well. So, just wanted to ask
20 that as well.

21 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: Okay. So if the
question is, is there currently more in the
preliminary budget for campaigns and Know Your
Rights, the answer is no. But it is preliminary.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: And just one last
3 quick question. In the preliminary plan, the
4 Community Relations Bureau is funded at \$2.4 million.
5 In FY '27 for 31 positions, which is only a reduction
6 of one position. So just wondering what that one
7 position was that was reduced.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: I would have
9 to get back to you on that one.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, perfect. Thank
11 you. Thank you, Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, recognizing
13 we've been welcomed by Council Members Abreu and
14 Stevens, and I'm going to turn it to Council Member
15 Abreu.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Thank you, Chair
17 Nurse. Outreach for Youth for Equity and Solidarity
18 Council, I have questions on that. CCHR runs the
19 Youth for Equity and Solidarity, or YES Council. The
20 YES Council consists of young leaders between the
21 ages of 14 to 18 who advised CCHR on how to expand
engagement with young people, help guide youth
programming, and provide insight into the human
rights issues that young people are facing. CCHR
recently launched the 6th cohort of YES. How many

1
2 participants are in the cohort, and has the number of
3 participants changed between cohorts?

4 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: That is a great
5 question that I don't believe I have the answer to
6 right here. I can tell you how many people
7 participated in fiscal year '25.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Please, you can
9 give me that.

10 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: Okay, great. Okay, in
11 fiscal year '25, in our fifth YES Council cohort 371
12 youth-focused events reaching more than 19,000 young
13 people across all five boroughs. That is the sum
14 total of information I have for you right now, but
15 I'd be more than happy to get back to you with more
16 specific information.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Yeah, that would be
18 great to have the—

19 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: 6th cohort?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Yeah, the cohort
21 differences. And how are participants selected and
what methods does CCHR use to ensure all eligible
students are aware of the program?

1
2 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: This is one of those
3 things where I've only been in the job for six weeks,
4 and I will definitely get back to you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: No, no problem. I-

6 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: [interposing] Sorry
7 about that.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: I understand.

9 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: I'm like, I'm aware
10 of the program and I've heard about it a lot, and I
11 think it's fantastic, but I don't have the full-

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: I have questions on
13 gender-based harassment, the CCHR decision order is
14 my last set of questions. The PPMR states that within
15 the first four months of fiscal 2026, CCHR released a
16 decision and order requiring a prominent food chain
17 to take affirmative steps after the employer failed
18 to take action when managers engage in gender-based
19 harassment. What is the process for CCHR to release a
20 decision and order?

21 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: Great question. Okay,
22 so, the way that things work at CCHR is maybe a
23 little bit different than people are expecting, but
24 people come to us with complaints, we investigate the
25 complaint. If we find probable cause, we litigate it

1
2 in front of OATH. It goes to trial after however many
3 settlement conferences, etc. After trial, the OATH
4 judge issues a report recommendation that comes to
5 our office, that comes to my desk. Then both of the
6 parties have an opportunity to comment on the report
7 and recommendation, then it comes back to me. I look
8 at all of that with my staff, and we write, really
9 like a legal decision. We look at the full record,
10 all of the briefing, all of the underlying, like,
11 transcripts, the whole everything, and then issue a
12 final legal decision and order. We are- we have
13 recently hired up more staff to help us do that, to
14 make sure that those decisions and orders can come
15 out more swiftly than they have in the past.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: How many decision
14 orders are normally released per year?

15 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: It varies
16 historically. I can guess for you, like, six or
17 seven. I don't- but I don't- I don't know.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: All right. It would
18 be-

19 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: [interposing] I think
20 seven, it was- last year it was seven, I believe.
21

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: It would be great
3 to get the exact number.

4 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: Sure.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: What is the average
6 time it takes to release a decision and order?

7 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: I don't know off the
8 top of my head.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: All right, it would
10 be good to have that information as well.

11 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: I hear that it's all
12 on our website. But also what I can say is- and so in
13 recent- within the past two years, we've added two
14 dedicated staff to helping get decisions and orders
15 out the door. I'm obviously a career civil rights
16 attorney, and so I also have some value added there.
17 So we are expecting to dramatically reduce the amount
18 of time it takes to get decisions and orders out the
19 door.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Yeah, it would be
21 great to have the average time it takes and figuring
out what the goal is in terms of reducing that time
by a specific number. Thank you very much, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you so much,
Council Member Abreu. And you've also done some great

1
2 legislation. Did we pass your bill on tattoo-
3 anti-tattoo discrimination? Oh, okay.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: It was- it was
5 height and weight. It was height and weight.

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Height and weight,
7 okay.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Height and weight
9 discrimination.

10 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Oh, I thought there
11 was one on tattoos, okay.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: There was a bit on
13 that, Chair.

14 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: All right, I don't
15 know. I can't remember anything these days. I don't-
16 my brain's not operating at high function. I have
17 just a couple more questions, because I know we've
18 got to get to some of the other commissions that are
19 here. So, just on tests attempted and completed, we
20 know why you do tests, right? And just for the
21 record, so you don't have to say it. You call and you
test to see if people are doing discrimination-
discriminatory practices. So we know why you do it.
Can you speak, you know, how many testers do you

1
2 employ right now, and are there— are they still
3 working part-time?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: We currently
5 employ one full-time testing coordinator who sets up
6 the scenarios and coordinates all of our staff that
7 do testing. We have three part-time staffers, and
8 we're actively hiring for a fourth.

9 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. And how often
10 are you updating your training material?

11 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: Constantly.

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Constantly, as you're
13 responding to new ways of people acting up, I
14 imagine.

15 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: 100 percent.

16 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. The committee
17 received a report that the salary for all three time—
18 three part-time testers is only \$54,000 for three
19 part-time. Is that accurate?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: I would have
21 to do the math, but it should be \$20.82 per hour.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Per hour? Hopefully
we'll get higher than that. And how many hours per
week are they working at that rate?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SALAZAR: That varies,
3 but I'll defer to Deputy Commissioner Carroll.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL:
5 Approximately 20.

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And that's really
7 bad. I don't know how anyone's living off that. Okay.
8 According to the PMMR, there were 523 tests attempted
9 and 454 tests completed in the first four months of
10 fiscal year 2026, which was a 22 percent and 29
11 percent increase respectively when compared to the
12 same period previously. How many of the tests
13 completed found that, you know, positively folks were
14 engaging in discrimination?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL:
16 Unfortunately, I don't have that number in front of
17 me, but I'll have to get back to you with it.

18 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, we'll look
19 forward to the follow-up. A lot of these are like
20 details, we'll send them, but has there been a time
21 when you lacked sufficient attorney staffing to move
forward with a case of discrimination that was
uncovered by testers?

CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: I don't really know
how to answer that question. I think there's like a

1
2 lot of things that we do with the testing. In terms
3 of our, like, Commission-initiated complaints, which
4 I think is what you're asking for, we were able to do
5 those with or without a Commission-initiated team. We
6 do now have a team of attorneys who focus on
7 Commission-initiated complaints, but before, that
8 didn't prevent us from bringing those complaints. We
9 did bring those complaints.

10
11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: And I would
12 just add to that that the tests result in a variety
13 of forms of enforcement actions. So either it can be
14 a formal complaint, but it could also be a cease and
15 desist letter depending on the severity of the
16 discrimination or potential discrimination that we
17 uncover. So it takes a variety of forms, and
18 sometimes it's attorney staff, sometimes it's our
19 case handlers and, and other advocates on staff.

20
21 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And can I just ask off
the cuff, why do you have three part-time and not
like one and a half- one full-time and a half
part-time? I mean, wouldn't it make sense to make
someone's, you know- they're already doing that and
just add on and give them a complete job?

1
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: I mean, we
3 would absolutely love to have more testers, and more
4 testers working more, but really in working with
5 civil rights testing, having a larger number is
6 really of more value than having more hours per
7 person, because a lot of the testing we do- a lot of
8 testing that's historically been done in civil rights
9 is what's called matched pair testing. So you have
10 two people that are exactly the same except for one
11 protected characteristic. So you wanna have as
12 diverse a pool of people as possible to be able to
13 test the very- the variety of protected areas that
14 our statute covers.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Just two more,
16 topic areas and really dialed in. I mean, I think, I
17 wanna talk about the source of income discrimination.
18 I know the court ruling was really disappointing. I
19 don't know if the Attorney General is appealing yet
20 or not. I didn't see. I think it was still under
21 review. I can't remember if that came out publicly or
not. But, you know, we're obviously very concerned,
and I'm sure you all are too. This would completely
undermine our- you know, the fact that we- people
need vouchers to get housing. So wanting to- wanting

1
2 to hear how you all are responding to this with your
3 testing, with your vacancy rate. You know, if this
4 ruling stands, how are we going to— how are you all
preparing for this?

5 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: So I think there's a
6 couple things to keep in mind about the ruling. It
7 is, I agree, disappointing. It does not specifically
8 refer to the New York City Human Rights Law, and it
9 is cabbed only to Section 8. And I think there are
10 material differences between Section 8 and other
11 forms of housing vouchers. So I really don't think it
12 has any effect. CityFHEPs, FHEPs, HASA, et cetera.
13 LINC— does LINC still exist? It does— it doesn't
14 affect other forms of housing vouchers. I think it's
15 very specific to Section 8. So that's, I think, the
16 most important thing to think about. But of course
17 we're like looking very closely at what we can do and
18 making sure that we're fairly enforcing the law going
19 forward.

20 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Right. But people
21 might not understand that it's, you know—

CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: [interposing] Yes.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: this voucher is not
the same as that voucher. And so—

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CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: [interposing] We immediately got calls.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: It's still the same, right?

CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: We immediately got calls from people that we've been working with, complainants to ask us whether they still have the rights they had yesterday.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I wanted to ask about the info line. As you know, we have a very hot package of bills coming down the pipeline, five-point plan to fight antisemitism. We talked a little bit about it at the actual hearing for it. I mentioned about the hotline. One of the things about the current hotline you have is it just takes a long time to get to someone. And so can you talk about how adding an additional line in your commission is— how you will be able to meet that and meet the demand for that?

CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: You mean it with—

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] The proposed legislation?

CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: Yeah. So currently the way that our staff— I mean, I'll refer to Deputy

1 Commissioner Carroll, because she supervises the
2 team, but the way that the staff handle calls is they
3 get 15,000 calls a year. There's eight of them. They
4 do their best to answer calls as quickly as they can
5 and to make sure that they're referring all calls
6 that are not about violations of the New York City
7 Human Rights Laws to other agencies. That is, I
8 think, for anyone who's run a hotline for, like,
9 direct services organizations, a huge part of the
10 work is making sure that people are being sent to the
11 right places and making sure that we're not sending
12 people on a sort of merry-go-round of referrals,
13 which I think people experience regularly when
14 they're in crisis. So we try to make sure that our
15 referrals are hot and they're sending people to the
16 right place, but that is a lot of what the work is.
17 It's filtering out cases to determine whether they do
18 involve our jurisdiction, which is a violation of the
19 New York City Human Rights Law, and if they don't,
20 where that person should go instead.

18 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And so it's— you're—
19 you have eight people, you said, responding to that.
20 How long does it take for someone to receive a
21 follow-up call after leaving a voicemail?

1
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARROLL: I'm not sure
3 that we track that specifically because there's a lot
4 of different ways that folks reach out to us. So we
5 have a live line where people can reach someone
6 immediately that operates from Monday through Friday,
7 9:30 to 4:30. So in that, we're talking about a
8 matter of minutes. Similarly, if we're responding to
9 a voicemail frequently, it takes us a couple of calls
10 to actually get someone on the phone, because people
11 aren't telling us when the best time to reach back
12 out to them would be. So we also, if we have an email
13 address for someone, we'll try different methods of
14 communication and we'll try multiple times to try and
15 get a hold of the person who's reached out to us. But
16 I don't have the exact number or average for
17 voicemail to call back.

18 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: I'll say that intake
19 team also handles walk-ins, which we have.

20 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Right. So we
21 understand there's walk-ins, there's emails, there's
the contact form through the website. So it would be
helpful to kind of know between these different
points of engaging with you all, what is the wait
time to get just even get an initial intake for their

1
2 inquiries so that we can understand where to best be
3 advocating for staff lines for you all. I still think
4 I'm unclear about how adding an additional line here
is-

5 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: [interposing] You
6 mean a job line or call line?

7 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: With the proposed
8 legislation. I've- you know, and I expressed this in
9 the hearing, like, we're adding another line that you
10 don't have the resources to manage. Even if we got to
11 the \$21 million that the mayor campaigned on, it
12 doesn't seem like that would be the best use of the
council's time to pass legislation to give you
another line that you can't actually manage.

13 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: And I think it's-
14 it's sort of like we were talking about previously
15 about sort of using the Mayor's Office of Mass
16 Engagement to make sure that there's a single point
17 of contact for everybody in the city. I think it-
18 like, there's- we sort of can't be the single point
19 of contact for everyone in the city for a full scope
20 of things, but there are things that are like 311 and
21 other services that make sure that they refer people
to the correct agency. So if we're getting calls

1
2 about hate crimes and we're getting calls about
3 things that are not within our jurisdiction in terms
4 of, like, criminal matters and things like that, we
5 want to make sure that we're not sending people to a
6 place where we can't provide the services they're
7 looking for.

8 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. I won't force
9 you all to talk more about that. But I do know that
10 our Deputy Speaker wants to make a statement, so I'm
11 going to turn it over to her if she's still there.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I don't need to
13 make a statement. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Oh, okay, great. Okay,
15 I think I've asked all the major things. If there's
16 anything outstanding, we'll follow up with you. But
17 just again want to emphasize how much we really- I
18 think the council is largely unified behind making
19 sure you all have the resources you need. You know,
20 we're asked- I'm personally saying I think you all
21 need \$25 million just to even get to what your stated
mission is and do it well. And certainly want to see
we move from the proposed plan, which has nothing
added, to at least \$10 million more for you all. And

1 appreciate your partnership, and thank you for being
2 here today.

3 CHAIRPERSON CLARKE: Thank you so much,
4 Chair Nurse.

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So next up, we are
6 going to transition to the EEPCC, and we're just going
7 to take a few minutes before that.

[break]

8 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Sergeants, are we—
9 we're good?

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yeah.

11 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yes, thank you.
12 Appreciate you. All good? Okay. All right, we're
13 going to pick back up. We are now in the afternoon.
14 Good afternoon everyone. We're now going to hear from
15 the Equal Employment Practices Commission, known
16 EEPCC. Thank you to Executive Director Jimmy Pan for
17 coming to testify at this budget hearing, and
18 congratulations on your new role. We're looking
19 forward to hearing how the council can further
20 support you all in your ability to fulfill your
21 charter-mandated duties, and ultimately strengthen
the city's commitment to fair employment practices,
workforce stability, and economic mobility for public

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2 servants and their families. EEPC is tasked with
3 auditing, reviewing, and monitoring the equal
4 employment practices and procedures of over 145 city
5 agencies. In fiscal year 2027's Preliminary Budget,
6 the Commission has a budget of nearly \$1.6 million,
7 which includes \$1.5 million to support 15 positions.
8 Your budget also includes about \$87,000, which is
9 very tiny, for other than personnel services. EEPC's
10 overall budget has not changed since fiscal year '26
11 adopted budget. We will examine your budget, your
12 headcount, and your needs going forward in this
13 budget cycle. We look forward to hearing from you all
14 about the auditing work that EEPC has done over the
15 four-year cycle, which was focused on
16 underutilization and concluded in 2025. In addition,
17 we would like to hear about the new auditing
18 standards and plans that have been set in 2026. And
19 again, I'm here with all the— I think all the same
20 folks, council members who are here. So I'll now pass
21 it over to the Committee Counsel to administer the
oath.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good afternoon. If you
could please raise your right hands. Do you swear to

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tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this committee?

UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may begin.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Hello. Good afternoon. I'm not as fast of a speaker as Chair Clarke, so I have a shortened version, but I'll try to get through it quickly. So good afternoon, Chair Nurse and members of the Council's Committee on Civil Human Rights. My name is Jimmy Pan. I'm the Executive Director. Joining me today are Commissioner Ngozi Okaro, Menelik Allsop, Director of Audits, our Director of Research Russell Ferri. So thank you for the opportunity to represent the EEPC here. I want to express gratitude to the former Chair of this committee, Deputy Speaker Williams, who's always been a strong supporter of the EEPC. I also want to acknowledge and thank our previous ED, Jean Victor, who stepped down in June. And of course, I want to thank the staff of the EEPC who have been carrying out their responsibilities and our mandate for the eight months without an ED. Thank you, of course, to

1 the commissioners who stepped in, in the absence of a
2 head. Just quickly, New York City voters created the
3 EEPC. We provide independent oversight of the city's
4 employment practices. And the 1989 Charter changes
5 that created us also required all city agencies to
6 establish a fair and effective affirmative employment
7 plan. And they also created the EEPC to review and
8 monitor the effectiveness of the city's practices, to
9 assist agencies to make policy and budget
10 recommendations, and to issue an annual statement on
11 the state of affirmative and equal employment in the
12 city. And so in short, the Charter created us to use
13 all available tools to hold the city accountable for
14 equal and affirmative employment. It recognized that
15 even in a place like New York City, the government
16 won't change on its own. We know that recently New
17 York City voters have swept many office, including
18 the mayor, into elected title. They recognized that
19 the policies and practices of the city had really not
20 provided for their economic security or their
21 stability and for a dignified life. And the city's
reaction to inequality reminds us of the
circumstances that led to the EEPC. Those who drafted
our mandate said that a charter that failed to

1 address race relations would leave behind a ticking
2 time bomb for the city. Unfortunately today we might
3 be in an even worse economic situation than we were
4 back then. Back in 1989, the top 1,000th of Americans
5 controlled a whole 8.5 percent of the nation's
6 wealth, and today in 2025, that has doubled. So the
7 top 1,000. The whole bottom half of Americans, 50
8 percent of our populace, only controlled 3.5 percent
9 back in 1989. That's gone all the way down to 2.5
10 percent. So we have worse wealth inequality than any
11 similar democracies, and it's getting worse here in
12 America than elsewhere. In the past five decades,
13 America has squeezed nearly everyone out of an
14 affordable life, even those who were middle class.
15 And our country's policy choices have put housing,
16 health, and education in the hands of just a few, who
17 then can then charge higher prices to the rest. And
18 for employers as well, same dynamic. They can charge-
19 pay lower salaries for those who have been squeezed.
20 And so today, our city reckons not just with an
21 impoverishment of people of color, of women, or other
historically oppressed groups, but really, indeed, we
face an epidemic of impoverishment of the people And
so facing those vast dangers, the EEPC has a small

1 but important role for hundreds of thousands of
2 municipal employees and their families access to
3 equitable hiring, promotion, retention policies
4 shapes, of course, their economic security and their
5 intergenerational opportunity. We want to do more at
6 the EEPC than just put marginalized people into city
7 positions. We think government must become a place
8 where people of all backgrounds should be able to
9 serve the community and earn a dignified living, and
10 that government must become a workplace that
11 counteracts economic compression that is squeezing
12 families. So we humbly ask for your help in meeting
13 our mandate. It is so that we can help our fellow
14 workers. At the EEPC, we audit all agencies every
15 four years. The Charter also requires us to see how
16 the agencies that we audit are fulfilling the core
17 values of the city as set forth in the preamble to
18 the Charter. And in fact, all auditing agencies have
19 to do the same. Under any part of our oversight,
20 including the audits, when we determine that an
21 agency's programs or policy do not provide equal
employment opportunity, then we can issue appropriate
corrective action and monitor the city's
implementation. But of course, our mandate goes

1 beyond audits. We have to evaluate if the city has
2 actually succeeded in promoting equal employment. We
3 have an amazing research team that goes deep into the
4 mountain of city employment data. We can do research
5 that we can't really do anywhere else. Because we're
6 independent, we can give our research a credibility
7 that's hard elsewhere. And even further, we have to
8 recommend reforms, propose laws, as I mentioned, and
9 work closely with our city partners. And the charter
10 puts us, and the City Council of course, in a
11 position to fight for workers in the court of public
12 opinion, and we can use our voice in the ways that
13 others can't always. So we believe that accomplishing
14 all of our mandates, not just one or two, contributes
15 to a better New York to working. So the budget must
16 and should for the first time fund our entire
17 statutory charge. So just want to say a few words
18 about our recent findings. Local Law 13 of 2019
19 requires us to analyze the city's underutilization
20 every year. So what that means, we compare the city's
21 actual workforce to what we would expect in the labor
market availability. Unsurprisingly, agencies still
underutilize marginalized workers, and those workers
still separate from the workforce at disproportionate

1 rates. We also know that underutilization is just one
2 tall- small part of a much larger issue. In this
3 city, we have concentrated women and people of color
4 into lower-paying and less prestigious jobs. This
5 occupational segregation leads, of course, to wage
6 segregation. And if we only look at underutilization,
7 then we leave out all of those upstream root causes
8 that divert people away from the labor market for
9 higher-paying jobs. And so we definitely want to
10 increase our research there. Our latest four-year
11 cycle focused on employment practices, as the Chair
12 mentioned. Agencies underperformed in four main ways:
13 One, accessing and taking mandatory training,
14 analyzing their composition of their workforce,
15 collecting data on their applicants, and fulfilling
16 the mandated roles required through EEO. Our next
17 audits will focus on EEO complaint processes, as well
18 as whether agencies are doing the right thing in
19 reviewing and processing reasonable accommodation
20 requests. We definitely want to streamline our
21 audits, both for ourselves and for our agency
partners, but as you can recognize, improving
processes takes time and capacity we don't always
have. So the city has under-resourced EEPC from the

1 very start, and by comptroller standards, we've only
2 recently managed to audit all required entities
3 within the statutory time period, and that's just one
4 of our mandates. We're budgeted for a modest 15
5 full-time employees, and I started just in February.
6 Every year we have to haggle with the budget office
7 for resources and to avoid cuts, and we're so small
8 that any cuts threaten our ability to oversee city
9 practices. We have no redundancy, and we have the
10 opposite, actually. Our operational staff are
11 overloaded, and if anyone leaves, we have no backup
12 option. We would lose significant institutional
13 knowledge and have to put our charter mandates on
14 hold, of course. This year again, OMB has directed us
15 to participate in blanket citywide cuts to vacancies
16 and budget. We're a non-mayoral agency, so therefore
17 Executive Order 12 should not apply to us.
18 Nevertheless, OMB is requesting that we cut, and each
19 year, of course, these exercises do divert us from
20 our mandated work, especially since we have so few
21 staff already. Even if we don't lose staff, it just
gets hard to plan our future work. OMB's proposed cut
this year would bring us back to the same headcount
we had in 2018. Just remember that in 2018, we were

1 not able to meet our charter mandates, and we didn't
2 have some of these new obligations such as the local
3 law requirement to report on underutilization. So, of
4 course, we don't assume ill intent on OMB's part, but
5 we do respectfully point out that these sorts of
6 broad-based cuts have the biggest effect on small
7 oversight agencies like ours. So we have five major
8 staffing shortfalls I hope the council can help us
9 with. First, if we want to improve the lives of
10 actual New Yorkers, we have to have communications
11 and be able to talk about our research and our audits
12 with clarity. We have to translate these findings
13 into actionable items for policymakers, but more
14 importantly, we need to reach city workers. So our
15 oversight powers only really matter if we can make
16 our findings widespread and digestible. And second,
17 we need legal and policy capacity. We have one
18 part-time attorney who's amazing. But for us to
19 monitor local and federal developments, if we want to
20 make sure our audits track the law as it stands
21 today, and if we want to really look at the city's
employment structure and make good policy
recommendations, we need additional capacity. Third,
we need someone to help us really build out our

1
2 intergovernmental relationships. We're a creature of
3 both branches of government, so we need partnerships
4 with both the Mayor's Office and City Council. The
5 Charter requires us to work very closely with DCAS,
6 and of course, if we want to make real change in the
7 city, we need to work very closely with OMB, Law
8 Department, unions, and others. Right now, we have no
9 intergovernmental capacity. Fourth, we have so few
10 staff that losing anyone is a systemic risk. As the
11 committee can appreciate, sometimes it is really more
12 costly to be poor, especially when misfortune
13 strikes. And so if we want to be prudent in the long
14 term, then we should have backup staff to help us
15 with our HR, finance, and software needs. Those could
16 be part-time, or we could find other creative ways to
17 make it work. Fifth, our salaries are so low it truly
18 jeopardizes our mandates. It hurts our retention, our
19 hiring, and our institutional knowledge. It's frankly
20 inefficient. We have the lowest salary per person of
21 every comparable oversight or small agency, and we
have the lowest PS budget. And that's despite the
fact that oversight agencies in general probably have
a lower budget than most agencies. When we compare to
eight similar situated agencies, we see that they on

1 average earn \$15K a year more than what we earn at
2 the EEPC. So, you know, much thanks to the staff for
3 for being here really to help city workers at a rate
4 that's not comparable elsewhere. It shouldn't
5 surprise you all that for these comparator agencies,
6 the more that their mandate touches on racial justice
7 or equity, the lower the average salary is. Common
8 sense would say the smaller the agency, actually the
9 higher the average salary should be since every
10 individual staff is shouldering more burdens. And we
11 need to retain them even more. So it defies common
12 sense that we're both the smallest agency and the
13 lowest-paid oversight agency. So we estimate that
14 bringing it up to par would cost about \$230,000. We
15 had a little bump for headroom. And again, just as
16 council constantly recognizes that the poorest
17 families have the least power to advocate for their
18 own resources, we hope that council can step in to
19 assist the EPC. Finally, at \$86K, as the Chair
20 recognized, smallest OTPS of any freestanding agency.
21 The next smallest is almost double that. And so we
humbly request \$100K. That even feels like a big ask
for us, but it puts us just past the second lowest
OTPS and puts us next to the Office of Administrative

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2 Tax Appeals. So our budget has been so low for so
3 long that our request looks like a sizable portion of
4 our budget, but the amount that we request actually
5 pales in comparison to what it costs the city to not
6 properly fund our oversight work. We think government
7 works best when it attracts the best talent possible.
8 And we're not just talking about agency, we're
9 talking about the city as a whole. As the Chair of
10 the 1989 Charter Revision said, an efficient
11 government that is unjust is worth little. And here
12 we also believe that building a government that is
13 just is also the quickest way to build an efficient
14 one. So thank you for the opportunity to represent
15 us, and Commissioner Okaro will be happy to answer
16 any questions.

14 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you. Really
15 bleak situation over there I'm seeing, and I don't
16 mean to make light of it because it's not funny, but
17 it's just the honesty is- I haven't had that
18 experience because different types of agencies. So,
19 I'm just going to get right into it. I just want to
20 double check for your five commissioners, do you have
21 any vacancies, and is anyone up for reappointment?

2 COMMISSIONER OKARO: We do not have any
3 vacancies, and I think there will be- someone is up
4 for reappointment now.

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. The
6 organizational chart also shows that the legal and
7 administration units have director-level positions
8 with no assisting staff below. We know that EEP
9 needs an entry-level position for HR and computer
10 services. How many additional staff members under the
11 legal and administrative units would also be needed
12 to reach EEOC's ideal staffing level?

13 COMMISSIONER OKARO: I would say at this
14 point at least three.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. And in terms of
16 the annual report that outlines the auditing process,
17 which begins with the audit initiation letters as
18 well as audit information sessions for agency heads
19 and principal EEO professionals, how often are those
20 sessions held- the info sessions held, and are they
21 virtual or in person?

COMMISSIONER OKARO: I'll defer to
Menelik, Director.

DIRECTOR ALLSOP: Good afternoon. So in
terms of the information sessions, we hold four, so

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2 two for principal EO professionals and two for agency
3 heads.

4 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. I'm going to
5 move back to budget and headcount. I was looking on
6 the wrong page. All right, so in fiscal year 2026, in
7 the, the preliminary plan, the council urged for the
8 allocation of an additional \$265,000 for three
9 additional staff positions at EPC and an additional
10 \$87,000 for OTPS. You did mention that you— your
11 current needs are— you, you're at \$86,000, the lowest
12 for OTPS. But what are your current budget needs for
13 your personnel services?

14 COMMISSIONER OKARO: So let me defer to
15 the Executive Director.

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: So we appreciate
17 the Council's recommendation in the past cycle. This
18 year, if we add in all of the requested headcount,
19 requested salary parity for staff and part-time
20 positions and OTPS, it comes out to about 900 total.

21 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. And I mean,
maybe you could talk a little bit about how your
conversations with OMB have— has been. I mean, you
have one vacant position, I'm— as I'm understanding.
Are you able to hire for that position right now?

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2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: So, OMB is
3 attempting to cut that position-

4 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] To cut
5 that one position that you have.

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PA: Put in for an
7 exemption for obvious reasons. You know, that
8 position fulfills our mandate, so.

9 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And what is the- what
10 is- yeah, exactly. So, what's the conversation been
11 like? If you can share.

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: OMB believes that
13 all agencies should contribute to the fiscal crisis
14 and that for their purposes, we're- well, I don't
15 want to speak on their behalf, but they include us in
16 the exercises.

17 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. And so, are you
18 able to actively hire for that position? Even though
19 they're saying that they want to cut it?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: So, currently
21 we're looking to fulfill the- so we have a vacancy.
We're looking to hire internally, and so we'll have
another position that's vacant that we will work
through, especially once we hear back from OMB.

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2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. At the— at last
3 year's March hearing, EEPC testified that one area of
4 concern in staffing was having entry-level positions
5 to ensure that more senior roles have someone who can
6 grow into them when someone leaves. This also speaks
7 to the institutional knowledge and redundant-
8 resiliency that you were speaking of. Is that still a
9 concern?

10 COMMISSIONER OKARO: Yes, it is. And we're
11 at the Council every year or every other year
12 testifying, asking for more money. It's constantly a
13 game of Jenga. Like, oh, they said now we can hire
14 someone, so let's get somebody in before that window
15 closes. But as with any organization, you have to
16 have entry-level positions so people can come— can
17 grow with the organization. They can learn it.
18 Furthermore, since our salaries are already lower,
19 it's harder to get people to come in laterally who
20 have experience and knowledge when they can stay
21 where they are for the same salary. So we do need to
be able to train people.

19 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Right, right. So, and
20 the— some of the roles that, like if you have a
21 lawyer, a position in your commission versus in a

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city agency, that one's lower. You can't even recruit from people who have knowledge of how the city agencies work.

COMMISSIONER OKARO: Exactly.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: What are you- what are you all able to buy with \$87,000? Yes. I'm like- like, how- like, do you have printers and-

COMMISSIONER OKARO: [interposing] What are we not able to buy? Right, right, right.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: What do you got over there for \$87,000?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: We have a printer.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: We have Westlaw [sic].

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Do you all have like work phones? You got Wi-Fi? What do you guys got?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: We have computers.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Printer paper.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I mean, it just seems
3 so low. I've never had to do oversight of anything
4 that had only \$87,000 OTPS.

5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Our households,
6 yeah.

7 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Right. Okay. What
8 would be ideal for you?

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: So we've put in a
10 request for \$100K.

11 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: That's—

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] Sorry.

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: that's— so when I
15 think of training, when I think of, for example,
16 interns to help with research, when I think of
17 symposia, when I think of just a small ad buy to let
18 people know we exist as an agency right now. I know
19 you asked about CCR's comms budget, right? We have
20 zero funding on the PS and zero funding on the OTPS.
21 So, probably anyone who's not in this room has never
heard of us. We're asking for a modicum, a diminimus
amount to do some media.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah.

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2 COMMISSIONER OKARO: So I might say
3 \$100,000 more than the \$87,000.

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Exactly.

5 COMMISSIONER OKARO: So \$187,000.

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Exactly. Sorry.
7 Thank you for clarifying.

8 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yes. Okay. I was like,
9 wait a minute. What is 20- what is 20- less than
10 \$20,000.

11 COMMISSIONER OKARO: [inaudible] here.

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: \$27,000 by you. Okay,
13 great. Okay. So \$187,000. Yeah, I think it will be
14 great. Right, right. Let's just bump it up. I mean, I
15 don't understand. It's true. I don't know if people
16 outside this room know who you are and within the
17 city agencies, and it's unclear to me how- and we can
18 talk about this more- but how you do these audits,
19 you do these reports, they're produced, and then how
20 does that move from a document that lives somewhere
21 into a change in how the city does their employment
practices, especially if you're not able to
communicate anything out? What could be helpful there
in terms of operationalizing some of your findings?

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2 COMMISSIONER OKARO: We have talked pretty
3 extensively internally about how to lift up the work
4 that we're doing because in fact some of other reason
5 that we have agencies delaying installing on
6 responding to audits is because they don't feel like
7 there's necessarily a consequence. So, then if
8 there's not a stick, we give them a carrot. And so we
9 started making some really nice certificates that
10 people can use. We would love to have like some PSAs,
11 where we can tout the agencies that are doing well.
12 So part would be marketing and public relations. And
13 let me turn to Executive Director.

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Yes, for sure
15 that. And I think we are also trying to figure out
16 how our research can uplift the positive, let's say,
17 mechanisms and practices of the city. Because
18 sometimes as an oversight agency, when you focus on
19 the negative, one, it demoralizes agencies, but two,
20 it doesn't really tell us what we can do better. And
21 of course, we don't want to be part of flooding the
zone with so much negativity that people tune out the
work of our oversight. But beyond that, I think we've
never, as an agency, if I may say, communicated with
workers directly. We- I think we communicate with

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2 policymakers. We hope they read our reports. But
3 that's different than letting the people of New York
4 who serve their city know they have an independent
5 champion who is trying to do research on their
6 behalf, speak on their behalf, audit the agencies on
7 their behalf. Right now, the only connection that we
8 might have is someone finding me on the Green Book
9 and giving me a call like they did yesterday, and we
10 just talk a little bit about city practices. But it
11 would be great if people knew at least there— that we
12 had a Charter mandate and we've had one since 1989
13 for the very reasons that I mentioned in my
14 testimony, that we knew that the city needed much
15 more than what it currently existed. So I think that
16 does help get our name out there, but also helps the
17 workers who already don't get paid enough know they
18 have someone in their pocket alongside the City
19 Council and, you know, hopefully those in the mayoral
20 seat as well.

17 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And can you— maybe you
18 could let us know, like, who's doing the best right
19 now? Which agency is first in class?

20 COMMISSIONER OKARO: Well, we're not
21 contributing to the negativity.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: But, you know, who's,
3 you know, who's bringing their A+ game?

4 COMMISSIONER OKARO: I would say everybody
5 who responds to their- our request timely. I'll ask
6 the director, maybe you have a top three?

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: So there's a few
8 ways we might look at it, right? Who does our audits,
9 but also just as importantly, I mentioned
10 underutilization, right? So it's a little tricky. I
11 want to pass the ball to our Director of Research,
12 but also, caveat that underutilization by nature
13 focus on the under, right? And so it's hard to say if
14 an agency- if a lot of agencies are doing right at
15 the mark, they may be doing well. It doesn't mean
16 that the workforce is actually as inclusive as the
17 city as a whole. It just means that according to our
18 estimates of, like, who's taking civil service exams,
19 who already has the education to be in that position,
20 that at least the agency has hired at that level.
21 There's no excuse, right, to not hire at the level
where you already have people trained, taking the
exam, right, present in the city. So in a way, we
could say no city agency should have
underutilization, but I think Director Ferri can-

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Some do, and some have
3 less than others.

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: A lot, yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Who are the— who are
6 the highest that have the less, the least?

7 DIRECTOR FERRI: So some of the agencies
8 where their workforce reflects the diversity of the
9 city would include ACS, the Department of Social
10 Services, the Department of Correction. Those are a
11 few examples. There are others. Those where the
12 workforce might not reflect the diversity of the
13 positions would include, for example, the Independent
14 Budget Office, the Department of Environmental
15 Protection, the New York DA's office, and there are
16 others.

17 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Interesting.

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: And if I may add,
19 you know, the council has done amazing reports on pay
20 equity recently. I think what they would flag is
21 that, yes, some of those agencies that Director Ferri
just mentioned as being the most diverse are also the
least paying.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: It's funny because
some of those agencies kind of— it just conforms to

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2 some other broader, I think, issues and areas where
3 people of color are gravitating towards, like,
4 addressing types of challenges that they're
5 experiencing based on other things. Okay, I have one-
6 I have one question I want to I- before I dive into
7 your reports, I will open up the floor. Your 2027
8 preliminary budget has a \$10,000 contract for a
9 training program. Can you talk about what the
10 training covers for \$10,000?

11 COMMISSIONER OKARO: Absolutely. So that
12 is training that the staff does through Cornell. And,
13 you know, all city agencies have basic EEO training.
14 We feel like it's important for our staff to have
15 more than that, given the nature of their work. And
16 so it is a series, I think, of six-hour trainings.
17 But I can turn to Director Allsop who actually
18 attends them.

19 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: Yeah. So I have
20 completed the training in the past. It does a deep
21 dive on various EO-related laws. It covers
investigations and it just looks at EEO overall with-
in a way that it just is more comprehensive than some
of what is typically available. So it definitely
helps our staff.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: And-

DIRECTOR ALLSOP: And Director

Ferri, also.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: These are multi-day, multi-hour, multi-topic. So it's a real certification. It's very intense, and it is a way that we provide a value add to the least paid staff of the agency.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, I'm going to- I know Council Member Stevens had a question. Going to open it up to her.

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Sorry, I had a lot of commentary over here. I think it's just because it's kind of unfortunate to just like hear that, especially when we live in an age where people are always requesting data and how are we having our decisions being formed, that an agency that's trying to provide that support isn't getting that support. I mean, as I'm sitting here, I'm like, I feel like you guys actually should be getting a piece of all the other agencies' budget. Like, you should- oh yeah, I said it, and I'm saying it on the record. Because you're getting information from them that actually would help them guide their support. And so they

1 should be getting like one, two, three percent of
2 their budget or having a person designated in each of
3 the agencies. I don't know. These are things that we
4 should be thinking about because this is the work
5 that actually pushes and makes sure that we have
6 diverse workforces. And so it's like, how do we be
7 creative on that? And then, and put that in all of
8 the agencies, because it is actually needed. And also
9 then thinking about how do we then turnkey this
10 information to DOE where we're helping guide the
11 workforce that we're setting and creating. And so
12 that's just an idea I have. But my question is, and I
13 guess, what does— and I mean, because you're such a
14 small agency and have such a small budget, what does
15 your advocacy look like? How do you— how are you able
16 to do any advocacy other than going to OMB, which I
17 feel like sometimes they're just like, we looking at
18 the numbers, nothing else. So do you guys like have
19 an advocacy plan that you do every year to kind of
20 like beat the drum? And if not, how do we work
21 together to create that with you?

COMMISSIONER OKARO: So that's a great
question. Thank you. And before I answer that, I just
wanna go to your original point in that a percentage

1
2 of an agency's budget would make sense, but also not
3 that it just helps to prepare— this organization
4 helps to prepare and guide agencies. There's also the
5 savings and liability, right? So we want to be able
6 to help shape organizations and guide them before
7 people go to the EEOC, and then end up suing the
8 city.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yep. But it
10 would save money.

11 COMMISSIONER OKARO: Yes.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So are we
13 presenting it to OMB that way, that we would save
14 money if we were in every agency?

15 COMMISSIONER OKARO: 100 percent. Yes,
16 Yes.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Oh, okay. Well,
18 let's work together.

19 COMMISSIONER OKARO: Yes. We don't even
20 have to worry about fairness and equity. Let's just
21 talk about saving money.

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER OKARO: Yeah. Okay, great.
Thank you. And so then to the question of what are we
doing to get in front of OMB every year? Really it

1
2 largely relies on the relationships of the
3 Commissioners and of the Executive Director to
4 advocate for the agency. We would love to have a set
5 percentage tied to the city's budget or something
6 else so we would not be in this position of fighting
7 to keep or even ask for more money. This feels very
8 revolutionary, us being able to ask for money because
9 we're so often on our heels on the defensive trying
10 to keep what we have. And so part of the reason for
11 the intergovernmental role is so that we can have in
12 place advocacy around our budget in a more uniform
13 way.

14
15 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah. Because I
16 mean, we say this all the time, a budget is a list of
17 your priorities. And if we're not prioritizing making
18 sure that fairness is happening in our own agencies,
19 what is that- what is the message that we're sending?
20 And I think that that's something that we should make
21 sure that we are screaming from the rooftops,
22 especially when we know some of the agencies who
23 haven't diversified and haven't done these things.
24 And I think the last question I just had- it just
25 flew out my brain. I'm sorry, I forgot. Sorry. I had
26 another question, but I forgot.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, let me know when
3 you got it. We'll bring you- come back.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Okay, thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I'm gonna, uh, open it
6 up to Council Member Hanif.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you and
8 welcome. It's really, I would say, profound to learn
9 about you guys. I really appreciated just all the new
10 information that I have now and just the incredible
11 importance of your office, which I also hope to
12 partner with. My question is around how are you
13 monitoring promotions and advancement patterns across
14 city agencies? Like, what does the current funding
15 cover? And I know it's underutilization, but are we
16 monitoring promotions? I've talked to at least a
17 dozen city workers who've been, you know,
18 long-timers, 20 years, 30 years, not- never received
19 a promotion or have gone through interview, rigorous
20 interviews, only to be rejected and have someone new
21 fill the position. I think it's- you know, I know
anecdotally that that's happening. So what are we
doing to prevent that? And of course the data is
important. So I'm very curious. If that doesn't
exist, we definitely gotta make it happen.

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DIRECTOR FERRI: Thank you for the question. So the answer is right now is we're only basically doing the bare minimum where we look at what we call placements, which would be new hires and promotions. However, because of the additions with staff that we got from the City Council last year that have all been brought on board within the last 12 months.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Can you repeat that one more time? The what?

COMMISSIONER OKARO: Additions to staff.

DIRECTOR FERRI: Yes. So, yes. So we had, additional staff that was brought on board thanks to the City Council last year, but all who have been on for less than 12 months.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it.

DIRECTOR FERRI: We will be doing more work on this in the future, both in terms of looking at the large universe and quantitative data, and also we would love to talk with the City Council about opportunities to do more deeper dives into agencies and those kinds of patterns at a more personal level. Absolutely.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Yeah, absolutely. I
3 would really- I mean, I- it's urgent, and knowing
4 that so New Yorkers have put in years only to not
5 climb or achieve some of their goals is- it's- it
6 raises a lot of questions to me. The contract budget
7 includes a training program for city employees on
8 equal employment practices. How many employees are
9 currently trained annually, and how do you measure
10 whether these trainings actually reduce
11 discriminatory employment practices? And what's the
12 funding that goes toward training? Was that the
13 \$10,000- not \$10, \$10,000?

14 COMMISSIONER OKARO: The \$10,000 was for
15 the staff, and so I'm gonna turn to Executive
16 Director Pan.

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Yeah, so the
18 \$10,000 is internal, but to your general question
19 about who, you know, who in the city is taking
20 trainings, it is something that we do try to gather
21 through audits. The harder question is, is it
effective in actually increasing equal employment in
the city? You know, one thing we're trying to do here
at the EPC is marry our audits work to our research
work a little more closely so we can really see what

1 works and what doesn't. Because at the end of the
2 day, what matters is not whether people are taking a
3 training or complying, but what does it actually do
4 for opportunity in the city? But of course, all these
5 things, as you might imagine, take time, take
6 thoughtfulness, takes staff who stick around to
7 develop these things long-term. It takes a close
8 partnership with DCAS and other agencies that provide
9 this sort of data, and then we have to have someone
10 actually translate our findings back to the
11 policymakers such as yourselves.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And how many
12 auditors are in the office?

12 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: So um, well-

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: [interposing] And
14 are those contracted out?

15 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: So currently the audit
16 unit consists of six lines including myself. So we
17 have we have the director, manager, and four program
18 analysts. And the program analysts, we try to get
19 them to take the training usually within the first
20 two years or so of their employment. So currently we
21 have three newer analysts that- and none of the

1 current analysts have completed the training. All are
2 scheduled to start some of the training in April.

3 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: And Director
4 Allsop is referring to the Cornell training, which
5 is-

6 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: [interposing] Yes,
7 sorry, the Cornell training.

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: external
9 training.

10 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: External training.

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Yeah, so they're
12 very trained in our processes, but also I would add
13 that most people when they think of the EPC imagine
14 that we're a lot of lawyers sitting in a room
15 reviewing-

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: [interposing]
17 Right.

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: reams of
19 document, and that's not the case.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So what's the
21 funding line for the auditors?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: They're community
coordinators, so they start at \$60-something.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And how many- how
3 much money is allocated right now for-

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: [interposing] For
5 the audit?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: the auditing
7 process? I mean, it's something that I'd love to-

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: [interposing] I
9 did a little mental math.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: I mean, it seems
11 like auditing is a big part of the job.

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Right. I would
13 say probably around \$500,000.

14 COMMISSIONER OKARO: \$500,000.

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: \$500,000.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: \$500-

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: [interposing]
18 Thousand.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: \$500,000.

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Just- I'm just
21 doing mental math.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay. Okay. Got it.
All right, that's helpful to know. I'll pass it back.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you. So I want
to get into the annual report. You mentioned you have

1
2 six auditors. You are responsible for auditing 145
3 city agencies at least every four years. So how many
4 audits were completed in 2025 calendar year, and how
5 many audits are scheduled before the end of this
6 calendar year?

6 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: Yeah, so in 2025, we
7 completed 35 audits overall, so nine
8 mayoral/non-mayoral entities and 26 Community Boards.

8 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I'm sorry, in '26 for
9 this year?

10 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: No, the 26 included
11 just the Community Boards-

11 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Of 35, okay.

12 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: Yeah, the 35 for 2025.

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And how many are
14 scheduled to be done before the end of this year?

15 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: Yeah, so we have
16 currently 34 scheduled for this current calendar
17 year.

17 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: 34. So you're going to
18 be doing basically 34 this year with the six
19 auditors?

20 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: So what, what this- the
21 audit team, yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

3 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Well, we have a
4 vacancy. So, TBD, right?

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And the one vacant
6 seat.

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: And then we're
8 adding more agencies to our next year.

9 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: Yes.

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Because we have
11 new entities in the city government, which you'll be
12 talking to in a few minutes.

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And so, and I know
14 we're getting close on time for MOERJ, but so an
15 auditor is at \$60,000. What kind of experience do
16 these folks need? What is like a typical profile of
17 your auditor?

18 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: So one, we try to make
19 sure they have all the general basic EEO training
20 that the city provides, so they're familiar with the
21 content of that training. We also go through a review
with the analysts on our standards for the current
audit cycle so that they have an understanding on
what to look for, what documentation will be
responsive, etc., how to fill. And then our overall

1 process also has a monitoring period. So we also try
2 to make sure the analysts have information on
3 providing best practices and guidance to agencies
4 during that period on fulfilling or remedying-
5 remedying any corrective actions.

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Yeah, so they
7 need both the ability to sit in an office and review
8 thousands of pages of documents for months on end and
9 the service skills to work with an agency that is
10 under review that may be feeling defensive to help
bring them to compliance. So they need both.

11 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And at \$60,000, I
12 mean, what kind of turnover have you had?

13 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: We've had considerable-

14 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] Because
15 I mean, like, reading thousands of documents, you
16 know, for \$60,000 doesn't seem like you'd retain that
many folks that long.

17 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: At the end of the-
18 during the 2023 calendar year, we ended with only one
19 analyst. So we only had one at the start of the 2024,
20 which we had to actively recruit to be able to
21 fulfill the 2024 audit plan. So, and some of- we
lose analysts for various reasons. Sometimes it's

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just more lucrative opportunities in the private sector. It could be someone got pulled off a civil service list for a more, you know, a better opportunity. So it's been tough.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Right. Okay, so it sounds like— and it sounds like you are asking for, at least a little bit over \$200,000 to give everyone a little bit extra so that maybe we can retain them a little bit longer, because you said you finished out the year with one person.

DIRECTOR ALLSOP: Not the current year, but in a previous year, we—

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] in the previous year, right. Okay. So, according to the report, you send a preliminary— in your— when you're doing your auditing or you're doing this report, you send a Preliminary Interview Questionnaire or a PIQ. They— these agencies got to fill it out. There's a bunch of documentation that's required. They get it, they send it back. There's a period of time to review. What is the overall timeline for this process?

DIRECTOR ALLSOP: Yeah. So, on average we say an analyst may have around nine audits if we're

1
2 at capacity to complete. So we try to allocate around
3 four and a half to five months or so- between four
4 and five months for the audit part, and then up to
5 six months for the compliance monitoring piece.

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. And then the-
7 sorry. The compliant- for the- following the final
8 determination, you all begin the compliance
9 monitoring.

10 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: Yes. That is correct.

11 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And how long is that
12 period again?

13 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: It is usually up to six
14 months.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And according to the
16 annual report, EEP audited the City Council during
17 the 2025 auditing cycle and found four corrective
18 actions. What were those corrective actions and was
19 the council- were we compliant?

20 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: Ultimately-

21 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] You will
with us.

DIRECTOR ALLSOP: Ultimately, the council
was compliant. In terms of the very specific, uh,

2 corrective actions, I would have to get back to you
3 on the exact ones. Yeah, I don't- yeah.

4 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Well, is it- do you-
5 are there topics or themes?

6 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: It was related to some-
7 one or two was related to information in the policy
8 and-

9 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing]
10 Information in policy? I'm not understanding.

11 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: Information surrounding,
12 let's say-

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] A
14 policy, okay.

15 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: [inaudible] process or
16 reasonable-

17 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] Lack of
18 clarity?

19 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: Yeah.

20 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

21 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: It was one or two
instances of-

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] And the
other two? I mean, this is an oversight hearing. You
all are an independent agency.

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DIRECTOR ALLSOP: Yeah, yeah, I know.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I thought you're supposed to be able to be independently able to tell us what we're doing correct or incorrect.

DIRECTOR ALLSOP: Absolutely, absolutely.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: And, you know, we'll definitely send it over. And yes, we review every city entity.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Not every city entity agrees to our jurisdiction without a fight.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: You know, but this is like an example of like where things might be an issue in an institution for us or an agency for others. And we don't know about it. The people who are invested every day in the institution and are showing up to ideally try to make the city better. We don't know about it.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: That's exactly right.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So you need money to communicate out without harming anybody's personal information.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Exactly right.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: But you should be able
3 to come here and say, no, two was like, you guys need
4 to clear up how your policies are written so people
5 know what's what. And then these other two things, a
6 little more sensitive, but here's how you need to do
better. That's something that we need to know.

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: That's exactly
8 right.

9 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And we should-

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: [interposing] and
11 if an agency's performing well, their workers should
12 know that too.

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Right, exactly. You
14 know, because that's- like, we need good people who
15 wanna work for the city, right? Like the last four
16 years was terrible. We had high vacancy rates. Nobody
17 wanted to work for the city and we want talented
18 people, you know? And so they need to know when we're
19 doing things right, but we also internally need to
20 know when we're doing things wrong. For- so I look
21 forward to hearing more about that. Just to request
it formally in the follow-up. So you reset your
auditing standards every four years. 2025 was the
last year of an auditing cycle. Were you able to

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finish all of your auditing, audits required, and what are the standards for the next cycle, if there were any lessons learned that you're going to change for this, this cycle moving forward?

DIRECTOR ALLSOP: So we were able to complete all of our scheduled audits. In terms of for next year, there's some carryover with a few core standards that we may also be able to- like, a little tweaks to some of our core standards based on information we found. We're also, as our Executive Director mentioned earlier, doing a new issue kind of specific audit surrounding complaints of reasonable accommodation. So there'll also be, you know, other areas that will be-

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: [interposing] And if I could reinforce a point in the testimony, this, I believe, is the first time we've actually completed all audits in the statutory timeframe per comptroller standards.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE:

On time.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: So because- just because a resource issue.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And I'm getting to my
3 last question, and then I know Council Member Stevens
4 remembered hers. But you said, okay, you might do
5 some tweaks. What are some of the things that you
6 might be tweaking?

7 DIRECTOR ALLSOP: So, there are some ways
8 in which agencies typically disseminate information
9 to staff and then the documentation that we receive
10 related to that. So we want to incorporate a little
11 more of that into— we mentioned earlier we want to
12 streamline a few things. So, one change is we're
13 trying to streamline how the information that we get
14 to make it less onerous on the—

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Right, exactly.

16 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: On the agencies.

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: So agencies
18 already have to submit to a lot of places, including
19 us. And so just to do our due diligence as a city
20 partner, we don't want agencies to wonder why we're
21 asking for certain things again if we can get it
elsewhere. So we're trying to be a good city partner.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, that's great.
And you feel like you're on track to complete what

1
2 you can do- what you're required to do this year
3 audit-wise?

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: We're- well,
5 audit-wise, yes. Streamlining, we're doing that, you
6 know, like in the evenings after our budget work.

7 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. And then, in
8 accordance with Local Law 13, you published your
9 annual report on underutilization of women and people
10 of color in the city's municipal workforce in fiscal
11 year 2025. You did talk about some of the highlights
12 in your testimony, but if you want to just state
13 again for the record, or if you could just state for
14 the record, some of the findings and compared to the
15 previous year?

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Sure. I'm happy
17 to take a first cut. So our- again, I want to caution
18 that our findings year to year are hard to compare.
19 And the main reason for that is while we have updated
20 data on the city's workforce, we have outdated data
21 on what is in the labor market. And that's because
the data that we do get, thankfully, from DCAS, you
know, we are gracious for that, but it has been out
of update for, I believe, 12 years. So, when we are
saying underutilization improves or gets worse,

1
2 again, we're comparing to data that has- the
3 denominator has stayed the same for 12 years. So we
4 wouldn't expect to see changes. So any changes I want
5 to talk about now, take it with a grain of salt.

Russell, you want to-

6 DIRECTOR FERRI: So broadly speaking, the
7 disparities in terms of the personnel you would
8 expect compared to what is actually there has tended
9 to be largest for Black individuals and for women.
10 Continuously, many of the job titles and at the
11 agencies where there is those disparities, the new
12 hires also don't match what the labor market is. And
13 so it's just perpetuating it further and further. And
14 also, in terms of separations, women personnel have
15 been leaving at a much higher rate than what their
16 presence is, as well. And there are more findings,
17 but those I would say are the main highlights.

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Yeah. So if we
19 were to select the top few areas, right, for example,
20 if we're thinking about the highest shortfall, then
21 Black police officers has a shortfall about 3,500,
which means compared to the, the labor market
estimates, which are out of date, you would expect
3,500 more Black police officers if PD were hiring at

1
2 that labor market availability. Again, same for craft
3 workers who are Black, same for health professionals
4 who are Black, not quite at that level. Police is the
5 biggest agency, and so we have the biggest absolute
6 number there. But these are some of the areas where
7 we need most attention. And one thing that really
8 surprised me was that when you look at every agency
9 and see what's the biggest shortfall, if you go to
10 the top 20, it's basically Black all the way down
11 from one to 16. And then you have a couple and then
12 Black again. So even if an agency is doing well in
13 diversifying, it's for those workers who they're
14 doing the poorest.

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So we're not- we're
13 not hiring- in sum, if I could regurgitate it to you,
14 we're not hiring Black workers in city agencies
15 compared to what is available and would be in-

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: They're already
17 ready. They're here.

18 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Ready, able, willing
19 to work.

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: They're trained.
21 They probably took the civil service exam.]

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CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Have educational experience.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Exactly.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Are ready to go, but we're not, as a city and hiring these folks.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: At least compared to the old data, yes.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And just my last question, but I'm going to turn over to Stevens and then the Finance Chair. Have you— I mean, what's up with DCAS? Like, they're not going to put out more data? Have you spoken to them about this, the need for new data?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Well, I want to be careful about what DCAS is or isn't going to do, but maybe you can—

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] They're right next door, too.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: I know, I know.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: We can tell on them.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: I know.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: You can tell us. It's okay. No one can hear us in this room.

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2 DIRECTOR FERRI: So, I cannot speak on
3 their behalf either, but we have had conversations
4 with them, and it sounds like it has been a resource
5 personnel and infrastructure issue. They have
6 indicated that there have been plans for the past
7 several years to update the numbers, but they've
8 never provided a specific timeline.

9 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, okay. I'm going
10 to turn it over to Council Member Stevens. Oh, she-
11 sorry, she totally left. Finance Chair, did you have
12 any questions? Okay, all right. I guess that'll be it
13 for you. I mean, obviously we're going to, you know-
14 I think everyone here that's come to this committee
15 wants to see you all keep that one vacant position
16 and certainly want to get you \$100,000 more for your
17 OTPS so you can have more lights or printers or
18 whatever you need to get your job done. And just
19 really appreciate the work you're doing. We want to
20 see good people working for the city, and it's not
21 surprising to see that we are not hiring Black
workers. I mean, that's kind of the on-par for every
other issue going on. So we want to partner with you
on that, and let us know how we can be a resource to

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you as individual council members to help get the word out in lieu of your tiny budget.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Thank you very much to all of you.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you so much. Thank you.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAN: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, we're going to take a quick break and then we will hear from MOERJ.

[break]

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: All right, everyone, we're going to pick this back up. Sorry for the delays. We were also over in our in our time. So it worked out perfectly for a little break. Good afternoon. Again, I'm Council Member Sandy Nurse, Chair of this Committee. I now welcome Afua Atta-Mensah, Commissioner and Chief Equity Officer at the Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice, or MOERJ, for their testimony at this hearing. MOERJ is responsible for advancing racial equity in the city, which includes releasing the racial equity plans- which we know that you are going to release them by the deadline- as well as the true cost of living. MOERJ also consists of various other mayoral offices,

1 including, NYC Her Future, the New York City
2 Commission on Gender Equity, New York City Unity
3 Project, New York City Young Men's Initiative, New
4 York City Pay Equity Cabinet, and New York City Task
5 Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity. This is the
6 first time MOERJ will testify at our budget hearing.
7 So thank you for coming in. MOERJ's fiscal year 2027
8 budget as of the preliminary plan is close to \$5.6
9 million, which includes \$4.6 million in personnel
10 services for 38 positions and \$1 million in other
11 than personal services. MOERJ's fiscal '26 budget
12 includes two other adjustment reductions for a total
13 of \$1 million, which reflects a transfer of funding
14 to other city agencies that partner with MOERJ on
15 their programming. We definitely were- are going to
16 ask about that, and we'd like to hear how you all are
17 partnering with other city agencies, as well as
18 learning about how its budget and headcount are
19 supporting its mandates in this upcoming cycle. So,
20 thank you all for being here. I just want to
21 recognize we've been joined by Council Member Lynn
Schulman, and I'm gonna turn it over to Committee
Counsel to administer the oath.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good afternoon. If you
3 could please raise your right hands. Do you swear to
4 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
truth before this committee?

5 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: Yes.

6 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

7 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. You
may begin.

9 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: Well, good
10 afternoon, Chair Nurse, members of the Committee on
11 Civil and Human Rights, distinguished members of the
12 council, and of course the public. Thank you for
13 convening this hearing today. As was stated, I am
14 Afua Atta-Mensah. I serve as the city's Chief Equity
15 Officer as well as the Commissioner for the Mayor's
16 Office for Equity and Racial Justice. I am
17 exceedingly joyed to be joined today by members of my
18 team: Delilah Tyson, the Chief Administrative
19 Officer. This is her first time testifying, so
20 everybody talk to her nice today. We also have
21 Latifah Ford, the Executive Director for NYC Her
Future, and I believe we will momentarily be joined
by Deputy Commissioner Debash Nagash, and we are

1 excited to speak with you about MOERJ's continued
2 work to advance pay equity in our city. Chairwoman,
3 great minds think alike, so you took so many of my
4 initial talking points in your opening, but I'll just
5 give a little bit of the greatest hits before going
6 into details. As I shared in my earlier testimony a
7 few— when I was before this distinguished panel a few
8 weeks ago, we are the centralized city office that
9 takes the intersectional approach to advance equity
10 across our city. Our mandate is simple. We are rooted
11 in the powerful belief that every New Yorker deserves
12 the opportunity to live, work, and thrive with
13 dignity. In order to realize that vision, we bring
14 together several key initiatives and offices that
15 work across government to tackle inequities
16 experienced by communities in our city. Using various
17 strategies from policy and research to advocacy and
18 programs. As you detailed earlier, that includes the
19 Commission on Gender Equity, which works to ensure
20 the city leads in development and implementation of
21 our best practices in gender equity policies and
programs with a focus on economic mobility, health,
and safety. The NYC Young Men's Initiative and NYC
Her Future sibling offices focus on addressing

1 inequities amongst young men of color and young women
2 women of color respectively in education, employment,
3 health, and justice. NYC Unity Project works to
4 address inequities amongst LGBTQ+ New Yorkers,
5 particularly youth and people of color. At MOREJ, we
6 take a three-pronged approach to our work with a
7 focus on structural change, which is dismantling the
8 structural inequalities across city government. This
9 includes the implementation of our Racial Justice
10 Charter Mandatees, culture change and engagement,
11 which is breaking silos and shifting culture to
12 increase collaboration and inclusion. This includes
13 bringing stakeholders together in various ways to
14 contribute to shared strategies to advance equity and
15 support community-based coalitions to advance these
16 local initiatives. And also in creating equitable
17 outcomes for New Yorkers, utilizing a
18 whole-of-government approach to address disparities
19 concentrated by race, gender, and other identities.
20 Building the infrastructure for equity in government,
21 as you know, the Charter calls for the city to create
the Office of Racial Equity. Following the
announcement of this office in the previous fiscal
year, months of planning to identify and secure

1 fiscal resources. This was— excuse me, I should take
2 a step back. This was during fiscal year 2025. And so
3 they were creating preliminary staffing structures,
4 and began establishing personnel and other admin
5 systems necessary to onboard staff and ensure
6 sustainable operations to advance the work. During
7 fiscal year '25, MOERJ also spent significant time
8 implementing its racial equity planning process aimed
9 at moving government towards equity and justice
10 together. In preparation for agency to build their
11 first racial equity plan, MOERJ engaged them in
12 advance of development, which included building
13 racial equity planning teams within each agency,
14 reviewing their priorities relative to the
15 foundational values of the Charter, assessing
16 disparity data, and Commission on Racial Equity,
17 community equity priorities. Also leading full-day
18 workshops in developing and providing planning tools
19 to guide the process. During that time, MOERJ also
20 continued our work with over 40 city agencies and
21 200+ staff as they began to refine the individual
racial equity plan goals, strategies, and indicators
with the guidance of the MOERJ team throughout the
process. MOERJ has also spent this time now

1 finalizing plans with agencies and rolling them into
2 a single citywide preliminary racial equity plan,
3 which will be the first for the city. As part of this
4 process, we hired equity planning managers to support
5 racial equity planning, as well as work with agencies
6 on the implementation of the plan. We look forward to
7 publishing this plan within the first 100 days and
8 sharing it with the sector, public, receiving
9 community feedback, and continuing to work together
10 with city agencies and all stakeholders to finalize
11 it for implementation. We've also been diligently
12 working on the true cost of living measure. It has
13 been an important priority for our office. Again, per
14 City Charter, the New York City true cost of living
15 measure established what it costs to meet basic needs
16 in our city and live with dignity without
17 consideration of public, private, or informal
18 assistance. Recognizing the limitations of the
19 federal poverty measure, the true cost of living
20 measure will move beyond basic poverty calculations
21 to capture what it costs to meet basic needs, get
through emergencies, and have the financial stability
necessary to plan for one's future. This should not
be a luxury, and yet it often feels that way to New

1
2 Yorkers across this city. This measure will analyze
3 costs across various household sizes, age groups, and
4 essential areas of need to create a comprehensive
5 understanding of what it truly takes to thrive in our
6 city. As one of the first cities to create a measure
7 of this type, the true cost of living measure can
8 help inform us on the local level as well as inform
9 local, state, and national policy priorities to help
10 us further advocate for the needs of working people
11 in this city. To meet the spirit of the Charter,
12 MOERJ has worked in partnership with the Mayor's
13 Office for Economic Opportunity and the Urban
14 Institute to leverage local and national research to
15 best determine costs for New York City across various
16 household sizes, types, age groups, and essential
17 areas of need, incorporate categories critical to
18 economic safety and one's ability to thrive,
19 including debt and savings, and look at costs across
20 various age groups, including individuals with
21 disabilities, as well as other areas of cost such as
caregiving. And we look forward to publishing the
full report developed by MOERJ and Urban Initiative
and others to share the measure in the upcoming
weeks. We also remain committed to advancing gender

1 equity, not only externally for the city's residents,
2 but also internally for the city's workforce. We are
3 proud that the Commission on Gender Equity and the
4 Department of Citywide Administrative Services
5 co-chair the Pay Equity Cabinet, which serves as an
6 oversight body to provide accountability for pay
7 equity goals across the city government workforce. In
8 2025, the cabinet selected and began working with a
9 vendor to execute a pay equity job title evaluation.
10 The first pay equity analysis report will be
11 published in 2027 and identifies occupational
12 segregation and gender and race pay disparities
13 within civil service titles. This June, the job title
14 evaluation will enter the second year of its
15 four-year project to identify occupational
16 segregation and gender and race pay disparities
17 within the city government workforce. In regards to
18 our programmatic investments, we make these
19 programmatic investments to serve communities that
20 have experienced this disparities and disinvestment
21 to improve outcomes for New Yorkers. And I'll just
share a few examples. NYC Her Future, as I previously
mentioned, a unit within MOERJ, is created to address
the disparities that young women of color in

1 particular face across New York City in areas of
2 education, employment, justice, and health, as well
3 as to provide them with the tools to be successful by
4 their own definition. Following the launch of NYC Her
5 Future in the previous fiscal year, the unit got
6 right to work to develop and champion programs and
7 partnerships that support the success of young women
8 throughout the city. FY25 programs and partnerships
9 included, but were not limited to, a partnership with
10 CUNY through Health Career Center, which provides
11 vouchers and guidance for participants to pursue
12 health-related certificate programs, helping them to
13 select courses, confirm eligibility, and apply
14 coursework toward academic credit or future degrees.
15 This citywide program served 356 students in FY25 and
16 achieved a 91 percent completion rate. Partnering
17 with the Administration of Children's Services on
18 Future Force, which empowers young women and teens
19 through mentoring, career exploration, vocational
20 training, financial support, and professional
21 development, including coaching workshops and access
to mentors. The initiative has provided 57 young
people involved in the child welfare system with
individualized career coaching, vocational training,

1 training and full financial support for
2 certifications and materials, as well as a \$3,300
3 completion stipend. Future Force helps address low
4 post-secondary enrollment, limited professional
5 networks, and high unemployment among youth
6 experiencing the foster care system. NYC Her Future
7 is an innovate- is truly an innovation and investment
8 hub within city government and serves as a thought
9 partner and funding catalyst to agencies across New
10 York City, and we look forward to the work it will
11 continue to do to design, pilot, and evaluate
12 initiatives that serve as proof of concept for
13 sustained baseline investment in scalable models that
14 advance gender equity citywide. MOERJ has also
15 continued to invest in the Task Force on Racial
16 Inclusion and Equity, the TRIE Neighborhood
17 Initiative, in collaboration with the Civic
18 Engagement Commission. The TRIE Neighborhood
19 Initiative is a four-year partnership which invests
20 in community-based organizations to strengthen civic
21 engagement and local decision-making. The program was
born out of the COVID-19 pandemic through TRIE to
address the disparate impacts of COVID-19 on
communities of color and support the development of

1 community networks that could connect residents to
2 one another as well as city government. This
3 initiative is implemented by CEC in partnership with
4 MOERJ and the Young Men's Initiative. In fiscal year
5 '25, 30 community-based organizations were awarded
6 funds to serve as TRIE Neighborhood Ambassadors
7 across 31 TRIE Neighborhoods. And during the program,
8 organizations are tasked with empowering residents to
9 help shape city priorities and resources through
10 civic education and participation in the People's
11 Money. Over the course of each year, each
12 neighborhood convened at least quarterly to discuss
13 the community needs, strategies to engage community
14 members in the People's Money, and opportunities to
15 collaborate and share resources to support one
16 another in the work. TNA conducted 124 meetings
17 throughout the year, and TRIE coalition membership
18 increased to 255 partners from different fields,
19 including nonprofits, local businesses, as well as
20 faith institutions. Civic engagement workshops were
21 also organized to promote civic education and
community partnership within TRIE Neighborhoods, and
in fiscal year '25, 36 workshops were organized with
730 participants. TNAs were also involved in the

1
2 People's Money process, serving as trusted conveners
3 in their communities and in providing an equity lens
4 lens in each phase of the process, including idea
5 generation, facilitating over 160 workshops across
6 communities and generating 1,300 ideas for projects
7 to strengthen their communities, facilitating
8 conversations with coalition members to build
9 consensus and identify the top priorities for their
10 neighborhoods, and engaging over 77,000 residents in
11 the voting process by conducting voting activities in
12 schools, libraries, and older adult centers,
13 mobilizing volunteers to knock on doors and table at
14 events, and present to community boards. Moving to
15 fiscal year 2026, we've continued to build on
16 infrastructure for equity in government. In fiscal
17 year 2026, MOERJ continued operationally to build
18 itself out. We outgrew an existing space and were
19 able to secure larger office space in partnership
20 with DCAS. We also spent significant time preparing
21 to move in, to move in those oper- to move our
operation to that new space and engaging with
partnership with the Office of Technology Innovation
to physically move in and what have you. We've
continued programmatic investments, including in

1 service of LGBT communities as well as with young men
2 of color. This fiscal year, 20 community-based
3 organizations across New York City were selected
4 through a competitive process to receive funding
5 through the city's Transgender, Gender Nonconforming,
6 and Nonbinary Empowerment Fund. This is a \$2 million
7 investment designed to strengthen community
8 infrastructure and ensure that TGNCNB New Yorkers
9 across all five boroughs can access essential
10 services. These organizations provide critical
11 support in areas including health and wellness,
12 justice, legal advocacy, youth and family support,
13 violence prevention, and career crisis response, to
14 name a few. Each organization receives up to \$92,000
15 to sustain and expand culturally-competent affirming
16 services that respond to urgent community needs. This
17 funding is administered by the Department of Health
18 and Mental Hygiene in partnership with the NYC Unity
19 Project and the Citizens Committee for New city. The
20 Empowerment Fund addresses persistent barriers that
21 transgender and gender non-conforming and non-binary
New Yorkers face when accessing healthcare, legal
protections, and community-based support. Through
this investment, the city is strengthening a network

1 of community-based providers that many gender
2 non-conforming New Yorkers rely on for care, safety,
3 and stability. This year, we are proud to share that
4 New York City Men Teach, a program of the Young Men's
5 Initiatives, also celebrated its 10th year
6 anniversary. NYC Men Teach is a partnership between
7 YMI, the public schools, and the City University for
8 New York, which aims to improve the diversity of the
9 teaching workforce. Mens Teach is open to all
10 academically qualified students interested in
11 teaching within the New York City public school
12 system, but through recruitment efforts specifically
13 targeted- we specifically target Black, Latino, and
14 Asian men. The program focuses on recruiting students
15 into teacher education programs and assisting them
16 through graduation, certification, and the hiring
17 process. Supports include intensive advisement,
18 certification exam support, academic support, and
19 financial assistance. Uh, Men's Teach is truly, uh,
20 changing the landscape of education in the city.
21 Through this program the public schools have
successfully recruited over 5,000 educators who
identify as men of color since 2016, strengthening
classrooms while reinforcing public schools as a

1 destination for purpose-driven educators committed to
2 our students and communities. Just last month, the
3 YMI, in partnership with public schools and CUNY,
4 hosted the 10-year anniversary event in Brooklyn at
5 BRIC, and recognized and celebrated the
6 accomplishments of this amazing program, as well as
7 looked to the future of diverse recruitment. In
8 regard to our training, we have spent, as I
9 previously mentioned, time working to implement Local
10 Law 13 of 2024, requiring the creation and
11 administration of anti-racism training for all human
12 services contractors in New York City who provide
13 direct services to the public. In this fiscal year,
14 we have worked in partnership with the CUNY School of
15 Professional Students Office of Innovative Learning
16 Solutions on course design, development,
17 infrastructure, and hosting, uh, and more in
18 preparation for its launch. We aim to finalize and
19 launch this training by the end of this fiscal year.
20 As of today, MOERJ Central has a current headcount of
21 38 with 26 active staff. Our office is small but
mighty and committed to racial and gender equity and
to continuing to tackle disparities in our
communities. Many of us come from, live in, and have

1 experiences within the communities we are focused on
2 serving through our work and come from areas as
3 diverse as nonprofit, government, academia, and the
4 private sector. As was mentioned by Chair Nurse,
5 fiscal year '25, the budget provided was \$8 million-
6 a little over \$8 million. In fiscal year '26, the
7 preliminary budget currently provides \$5,627,000. As
8 discussions continue with OMB ahead of the executive
9 budget, we aim to secure program funds included in
10 our own pre- included in our previous fiscal year
11 budget. As we look forward and I continue to settle
12 into my role, as the Commissioner for MOERJ, I
13 recognize the unique nature of this position in
14 office, and more specifically, the opportunity to
15 build on this strong foundation to ensure equity
16 reaches every corner of government and informs
17 discussions about how city prior- about city
18 priorities and how they are implemented. I'm excited
19 to continue advancing equity in government. We look
20 forward to releasing this preliminary citywide racial
21 equity plan, implementing its work, and measuring as
well as reporting on our progress, releasing our
first-ever New York City-specific true cost of living
measure, and equally important, activating it as a

1
2 tool to inform policy and deliver services and
3 influence budget decisions, beginning our anti-racism
4 training to support thousands of human service
5 provider employees who serve and interact with
6 residents every day, and continuing to invest in
7 young people, particularly young people of color and
8 LGBT+ communities to tackle disparities experienced
9 by their communities and ensure that all New Yorkers
10 have the conditions of thriving. In closing, I thank
11 you all for the opportunity to speak with you about
12 the work of the Office of Equity and Racial Justice.
13 We look forward to working every day as part of this
14 administration to ensure that New Yorkers can
15 continue to live, work, play, and thrive. Appreciate
16 the support of this committee and many council
17 members in ensuring that the issues of equity
18 continue to remain on the forefront of the mind of
19 many New Yorkers, and I thank you and welcome your
20 questions.

17 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you so much,
18 Commissioner. I'm going to jump right into it. We're
19 going to start with looking at just overall budget.
20 We'll go into headcount. We'll touch a little bit on
21 the equity plan and true cost of living, and then

1 we'll talk a little bit about programming. So, um, as
2 you mentioned in your testimony, we have seen
3 reductions in your budget, and a lot of this is
4 labeled as program funding adjustments where
5 according to OMB, is a transfer of funds to other
6 city agencies that are partnering with you all for
7 MOERJ programming. So related to that, what programs
8 were targeted by these transfers? What is the total
9 funding level, and what agencies are you all
10 partnering with where this funding is being
11 reallocated towards or allocated towards?

11 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: Chair Nurse,
12 thank you so much for the question. And as you
13 mentioned, I would just also add it's part and parcel
14 of business. Oftentimes in partnership with other
15 agencies, money is transferred and directly allocated
16 to those programs. And I'll take you through a list
17 of some. I'm happy to go through more, and there's
18 some as an addendum to the testimony as well. Let me
19 just— so in total it was \$551,184 that was
20 transferred. Some examples include— let's start with
21 the true cost of living measure. I spoke to what that
is, the Racial Justice Charter Mandate to develop the
city's first actual cost for what it— measuring of

1 the cost to not only meet needs, but live with
2 dignity in the city. This is a collaboration with New
3 York City Opportunity, DSS, HRA, and the Urban
4 Institute. The funding that was transferred to cover
5 costs was \$200,000. This funding went to support
6 things like methodology development, data collection
7 and analysis, calculating costs for various groups,
8 et cetera. Another example of that transfer was from
9 the NYC Unity Project. The transfer amount was
10 \$150,000, and this was money for a partnership with,
11 MOCJ, the Office for- MOCJ, excuse me, Office for the
12 Prevention of Hate Crimes, the- as part of the Unity
13 Project launching these Unity Grants that invested in
14 LGBTQ communities. If I may, two more examples, or is
15 that- all right. From NYC Her Future, the Young
16 Women's Empowerment Program, this program seeks to
17 expand current services by launching a comprehensive
18 mental health and wellness initiative designed to
19 support girls in middle and high school. The
20 expansion of this program creates self-safe and
21 culturally responsive trauma-informed spaces where
students can build resilience and strengthen
emotional well-being. This programming also includes
a workshop and a culminating event. The program

1 expansion is projected to serve 300 students, and
2 \$40,000 of funding was transferred to help that
3 expansion. The expand- this- and this is a
4 partnership through DOE. So the expanded scope of
5 programming since the allocation was established, um,
6 has ex- was- is due to- excuse me- an increased
7 demand of cross-agency engagement with DOE partners.
8 So the additional funding will further support
9 partnership with both Public Schools Office of Safety
10 and Youth Development and continue to adequately
11 support the scale, reach, and operational
12 requirements of activities aligned with NYC HERS core
13 priorities.

14 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And then for- did you
15 mention, sorry if you- if I missed it, the young men-
16 young men's initiative transfer to the admin? I think
17 it says the funds went to DSS. Did you mention that
18 in that list just now?

19 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: Oh, I'm coming
20 to it, but I can hop to it right now.

21 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: Just so I'm
clear, Chair, which allocation- is this the \$325,000?

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: \$325,000, yeah.

2 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: Okay. Perfect.

3 I'm going to start, and then I have here with me, as
4 I said, the Executive Director of NYC Her Future. So
5 this transfer represented, in fact, was a transfer to
6 NYC Her Future for programming. And after— excuse me—
7 after conversation, it was determined that NYC Her
8 Future did not require that full use of funding, and
9 so some of those funds were transferred back. Young
10 Men's Initiative plans to use that funding for, uh,
11 men's health— sorry, there's a lot of pages here— and
12 that is a program that is geared towards supporting a
13 pipeline of mental health providers amongst men of
14 color.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, great. And then
16 for the, the four offices, the NYC Her Future,
17 Commission of Gender Equity, New York City Unity
18 Project, and Young Men's Initiative, what's the
19 headcount on, on these four offices?

20 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: Okay, thank you
21 for the question. I stated that MOERJ has a budgeted
head— sorry, Near NYC Her Future has six with, uh,
one current vacancy. Unity Project currently has two,
two lines, both of which are full. And then, Chair,

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please excuse me, there's a few different papers here-

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] Take your time.

COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: And I want to- I would want to make sure that I'm accurate to the- before the council. Let me start again. Young Men's Initiative has 17 lines that spans across several different agencies, right, with four current vacancies. The Commission on Gender Equity has 13 for a total headcount, with two current- with two of them currently being vacant. NYC Her Future, as I said before, has six of a budgeted headcount, with one vacant. And I was correct in my previous assertion of the Unity Project having two.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And those are full?

COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: And those are full. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Understood. And so my understanding is as of January 2026, your vacancy rate went up to 31 percent. You have a budgeted headcount of 38 with a little more than 11 vacancies if my math is right.

COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: 12 vacancies.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: 12 vacancies, thank
3 you. Are there any roles that are more difficult to
4 hire than others?

5 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: I- thank you
6 for the question, Councilmember. I haven't thought of
7 that in that framing, so that's why I'm taking a
8 moment to pause. I will say this, currently we have
9 four posted, right? We are hiring for a policy
10 director of program and two other are in media. You
11 know, we are lucky that people are excited about
12 working with and for this administration and this
13 agency specifically. We have these positions posted
14 on our website online and have received a lot of
15 interest. So, and we're going to go through that
16 process of the engagement and interviewing process.
17 So currently we have not had, during my tenure, a
18 hard time hiring for them. It's just the time of what
19 it takes to engage folks and bring them on board.

20 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And then, you were-
21 were you all subject to the two-for-one hiring freeze
in the former admin?

COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: I can't speak
to the- I'm sorry.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Were you subject to
3 the hiring- the two-for-one hiring freeze under the
4 former administration?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NEGASH: We were not.

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: You were not. Okay, so
7 for the- you have four posted, but you have 12
8 vacancies. How do you see, since you weren't subject
9 to the hiring freeze, how are you seeing your ability
10 to fill these vacancies here?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NEGASH: Yeah, I-
12 Commissioner go ahead.

13 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: So I'll start
14 with we're moving forward with these forward and
15 ongoing conversations with OMB.

16 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, right. And so
17 have you all been instructed to find a 50 percent
18 reduction in your vacancies?

19 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: So I would say
20 that we have the Chief Savings Officer as we're
21 mandated, which is Delilah here. We are still in
22 conversation with OMB, and to my understanding- feel
23 free.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NEGASH: Yeah, I'm
25 more than happy to chime in. So we are mandated- we

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are required, right, to go through the process, but we are in discussion with OMB. I would just add, you know, we're a new agency, so we're trying to work with our partners at the Office of Management and Budget to just get creative and really ensure we can, you know- as we are continuing to build, we don't run into major issues in just delivering on our mandates and doing the work that we need to do. So there's still ongoing discussion on what that, you know, may or may not look like.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Understand every- we know that everyone's in ongoing- oh sorry, we need to swear you in. I apologize.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hello. Thank you. Would you mind raising your right hand, please? And do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and that also what you said was that?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NEGASH: I, I do, and yes, it was.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. Apologize.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you. Okay, so you've been asked to go through this exercise. Should

1
2 you need to complete the exercise and be subject to
3 it, where do you see the overall impact being, both
4 in terms of program or specific functions or job
5 titles?

6 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: Sure. Thank you
7 for the question. Just to help frame that, I think
8 it's helpful to step back to something I said earlier
9 in my testimony of how we go about the work, right?
10 There is the structural shifts that we see through
11 the implement- execution and implementation of things
12 like the true cost of living and the preliminary
13 racial equity plan. There's our programs, which I was
14 able to highlight a bit of, and then also our culture
15 shifts that we see through training. So thus far,
16 with the staff that we have, we've been able to move
17 forward and don't foresee any hurdles to ensuring
18 that we move forward with our charter mandates.
19 Similarly, each of our units, as well as MOERJ
20 Central, has been able to move forward in
21 partnerships and collaboration with other city
agencies to ensure that the important programs go
forward. And we are on the cusp of finishing the
trainings that will go for each of the human
services- the, excuse me, the agencies that engage

1
2 with externally. So we're confident that we can make
3 this happen under the framing that we have, and that
4 will hit— make sure that we meet all of our
5 obligations under charter mandates.

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, no, we know,
7 you know, all agencies are doing the best they can
8 with the little that they got. They could always have
9 more, right? And always do more work. And so if there
10 are particular areas that would be vulnerable, given
11 all of the, the programmatic work you all have and
12 charter-mandated requirements, it would be helpful
13 for the council to know, because we want to advocate
14 for you. We're not trying to get you. We're trying to
15 support you, because this is work that New Yorkers
16 voted for and that we support. Okay, for racial— I'm
17 just going to ask about racial equity programming and
18 then I'll open it up. So if members have questions,
19 let me know. We did talk about racial equity. We're
20 not going to drill down into it. We know you are
21 saying that you're planning to publish those within
the first 100 days. Are we still on track for that
first 100 days?

1
2 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: Thank you for
3 the question, Chair. We are still on track for the
4 first 100 days.

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And how many staff
6 currently in MOERJ are explicitly assigned to work on
7 the REPs?

8 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: At this current
9 time— so I, I'm going to fully answer your question,
10 but I think it's helpful to provide context. This is
11 a priority for this office. So we have nine, um,
12 Equity Planning Managers. You've heard me use the
13 abbreviation EPMS, who the vast majority, if not all
14 of their time, is focused on this plan. And because,
15 again, this plan is a priority for the office, it is
16 some of the Deputy Commissioner's time. It is some of
17 my time. It is some of other senior advisors' time as
18 well. So I want to add that to give further shape and
19 frame to the amount of folks who are also working on
20 this.

21 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: That is helpful to
22 know. And do you have any vacancies? Are any of your
23 vacancies related to the racial equity plan work?

24 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: Thank you for
25 the question. So we started— I guess they started the

1
2 calendar year with 10 EPMs and then, prior to my
3 coming on board, one- we are now at nine.

4 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, so we- so that
5 one we shouldn't lose in the vacancy potential cut.
6 Okay, and the- you said the true cost of living is
7 in the coming weeks. We're on track for the March
8 31st deadline.

9 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: Thank you for
10 the question. It is- so it's my understanding that it
11 will be coming out by the end of this month.

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Great. And how many
13 people are assigned to this particular piece of work?

14 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: Similar to with
15 the racial equity plan, there are several people
16 tasked in the office specifically for this. We have
17 about two people who specifically work on this as the
18 majority of their work, and it is part and parcel of
19 time of the Deputy Commissioner, part of my time, and
20 we're part of this as a partnership through the Urban
21 Institute, and other agencies in putting this
together.

22 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And I know for both
23 the prelim- the draft racial equity plan and the true
24 cost of living, I know that there's been so much

1
2 interest and wanting to get that over the finish line
3 and disappointment with the last administration. So I
4 imagine you want to kind of come out- come out the
5 gate telling everyone what you got. What are some of
6 the plans you have and do you have budget for kind of
7 getting the word out about what you have published
8 and getting feedback?

9
10 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: Yeah. Thank
11 you for that. So I'd say we have a multifaceted
12 approach to how we're going to do engagement. First
13 and foremost, CORE, we will partner with CORE, but
14 CORE will be taking the lead in community engagement
15 in regards to the racial equity plan. Our plan and
16 engagement also will be to directly speak to
17 stakeholders to do presentations and engagements
18 across city agencies, and of course, we will provide
19 ongoing technical assistance. Similar with the true
20 cost of living, the goal- this tool is only as good
21 as its use. So our goal is to, one, first and
22 foremost, ensure that there's full digestion across
23 city agencies so they have an understanding of the
24 possibilities with this tool. And as well to work
25 with Urban Institute and other academic partners, as
26 well as the Federation for Protestant Welfare

1
2 Agencies. FPWA has been a leader on this to ensure
3 that across the city folks have an understanding of
4 the possibilities for this tool.

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I'm gonna open it up
6 to some of my council colleagues, but I- and then
7 I'll come back to talk about some program, but I do
8 want to just appreciate and acknowledge the addendum
9 you put in here, or the appendix, I don't know what
10 it's called, for the- some of the investments. I know
11 we had talked about- there was a lot of questions
12 about the Bronx investments, so I really appreciate
13 the detailed information. We really appreciate that.
14 I have Council Member Stevens.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Hello, good
16 afternoon. I guess the first question I have, I just
17 wanted to start with, like, Men Teach, which is one
18 of these programs that I really like, and want to
19 just ask the question around, like, even in this time
20 where we're having issues with- like, when we're
21 talking about class size mandate, we're not talking
about how this is like stretching the workforce
really thin. And just specifically in the Bronx, we
always have had issues with retaining teachers, and
especially in the Bronx, I just always have felt like

1 we need more men teachers and men of color,
2 obviously. And just thinking about how— and how this
3 partnership is looking, and when you are recruiting
4 these young men of color to be in this program, are
5 we prioritizing boroughs like the Bronx to help with
6 placements? And what does that partnership look like
7 with DOE?

8 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSHA: Good afternoon,
9 Council Member Stevens. I don't know if you came in
10 when I was initially speaking, but I'm joined here
11 with the Director Natifa Forde for NYC Her Future. We
12 previously served as the head of YLI. And so because
13 we learned the lesson the first time, I wanted to
14 make sure that we were able to speak with
15 specificity. So I brought backup today. And so I want
16 to turn it over to my esteemed colleague to be able
17 to speak in depth on this issue.

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FORDE: Good afternoon,
19 everyone. So just wanted to drill down just on the
20 Young Men's Initiative, which is now— the— the
21 Executive Director is now Dr. Chambers, who's here in
the back somewhere. But I would— after— I would like
to just mention, as we speak about the Men Teach
program and prop— it sits within your council

1 district and Sandy Nurse's, Council Member Nurse,
2 Council Member Hanif. I think for us across the
3 board, we have to understand YMI has the five
4 priority neighborhoods, which is the South Bronx is
5 one, East New York, South Jamaica, Queens, North
6 Shore, Staten Island, and geez Louise, Brownsville.
7 So, within those communities, it's with
8 intentionality that those teachers are going to those
9 schools and making sure that they're not going alone.
10 They're going in twos and threes so that they can
11 build community while they're there to support
12 teacher retention, and then also having the way for
13 them to build into the larger community. So a part of
14 Men Teach is not just placement, it's about retention
15 in the space and making sure that the teachers are
16 actually fulfilling the need of the communities that
17 they're serving. And then also, there's been a lot of
18 targeted media campaigns in specific communities to
19 recruit teachers from the community to become
20 teachers in those communities as well.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, I actually
19 know a number of people who've gone through this
20 program and actually haven't heard about it. I was
21 like, wait, we still do this? So, I would definitely

1 want to continue to partner with folks on this. And
2 also, like, I know those are the priority areas,
3 because I knew from before. Like I said, I didn't
4 know this was still here, but just being able to
5 think about, like, in this moment, I know that has
6 been the big conversation in the Bronx around how the
7 issue around capacity for the expansion with the-
8 with having the space- they- we have the space, but
9 we don't have the teachers, and we always see
10 rotating door of teachers. So I would love to
11 continue to partner with folks on this because, you
12 know, I do believe we need to have as many male
13 people of color in these programs. And so I'm really
14 happy to see that. And I guess the other question I
15 had was around TRIE. And I know this came out of like
16 COVID, so it's not- it's a newer program and really
17 want to know do you guys have a list? Cause I didn't
18 see an addendum of programs that are in TRIE, because
19 I would love to like see how to partnership with you
20 guys on that, because I know that has been a big
21 thing that I've been looking at. What organizations
are doing civic engagement? What does that look like?
How do we continue capacity building in the
communities? I mean, so often that has fallen on

1
2 either the elected or it's fallen on like political
3 clubs and really not having those mechanisms in some
4 of these areas that have lower voter turnout rates.
5 And I know, I would just love to have more
6 information on that too as well.

7
8 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: I think that's
9 something that we'll add and follow up with because
10 we don't have the full list of all of the orgs, but I
11 do think it's important for you guys to, to know
12 those things. And then I'll pass it to Deputy
13 Commissioner Nagash.

14
15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NEGASH: Yeah, hi,
16 Council Member Stevens. So, the True Neighborhood
17 Initiative is definitely one, and that's been a
18 consistent investment for us for the last last almost
19 six years on building coalitions with community, and
20 we've invested about a little over \$2 million in that
21 for the last six years and we plan to continue to do
that, and that's across all 33 neighborhoods. In
addition to that, we have the investments in the
Bronx. That's really just a start for us. I think as
we, you know, continue to look at the data and see
how we, you know, as the Commissioner mentioned, look
at affordability and racial and gender equity as, you

1
2 know, things that are linked and start to form
3 strategies that we want to implement in the next and
4 future fiscal years. We'll ideally implement more
5 strategies throughout the TRIE neighborhoods.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: That's all. Thank
7 you. Oh, and I'm just very happy to hear that the
8 racial equity plan will be out at the end of the
9 month and we could stop harassing you guys with that.
10 Thank you.

11 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: First 100 days.
12 First 100 days. [inaudible]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I'm very happy
14 to hear that.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: April's on its way.
16 Yeah. So I'm going to pass it over, but I want to say
17 in case these folks leave, you know, just because you
18 have equity- racial, you know, racial equity in your
19 work, we just listened to a panel from the Equal
20 Employment Practice Commission that has almost
21 nothing, and it's- and one of the findings was that
Black workers are completely underutilized across
city agencies, which should be no surprise to you
all, obviously. But, you know, I'm just looking at
the money transfers and things like that. I don't

1 know how it works. I'm not trying to put nobody on
2 the spot, but I'm just saying I feel like they need
3 some resources to take care of the racial equity,
4 maybe issues, that are internal to city agencies. So,
5 just putting it out there. They're even smaller and
6 got even less. I don't even know if they have Wi-Fi
7 over there. So like, they really need something. And
8 I just want to mention it while everyone's in the
9 room together. Maybe there's a way that this office
10 can advocate for them to have the resources they need
11 to make things right with within our own city
12 workforce. So now I'm going to turn it over to
13 Council Member Hanif, and then- do you have- okay,
14 okay. So go ahead, Council Member Hanif.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: All right, thank
14 you, and thanks for being here. I'm going to ask
15 about the Food Business Pathways program. Love to
16 just learn about what it is and how this program is
17 running right now, who it's intended for. Really
18 wonderful to know that 15,000 meals to 18 NYCHA
19 developments were distributed. So if you could share
20 just a little bit more background information and
21 then the funding associated with this program for '26
and '27.

1
2 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: Sure, thank you
3 for the question. So to provide you some background
4 and context, it started in 2020, and it's a
5 partnership with NYCHA and NYCHA's Resident Economic
6 Empowerment and Sustainability, and as well as with
7 Grow NYC, as you mentioned, Councilmember, as a meal
8 delivery service to residents who were at the time
9 impacted by gas outages as a pilot. These— the
10 businesses were contracted for meal delivery and
11 sourced their produce at affordable rates through
12 Grow NYC's wholesale food supply. In 2020— in '23,
13 the Mayor's Office on Racial Justice, through our
14 Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity, we
15 expanded the funding to Grow NYC, which allowed it to
16 move from an initial pilot to an additional 13,000
17 meals to provide approximately nine months of
18 emergency food program. This pilot and the initial
19 increase across all the different Bronx—
20 NYCHA-developments provided 30,000 meals and served
21 400+ impacted families during that point of the gas
outage. This program was expanded through— like, the—
I talked a little bit about the Bronx expansion. This
is across—

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: [interposing]
3 What's the cost of the initiative?

4 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: In fiscal year
5 '25, it was \$400,533.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: That was our
7 investment, or total?

8 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: That's between
9 two fiscal years, so in fiscal year '26, it's a
10 little over \$300,000.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And then what are
12 the- does that cover the cost of the meals or is that
13 a separate- okay. And then which NYCHA developments
14 are involved and selected?

15 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: I'll start and
16 allow the Deputy Commissioner, but I believe in the
17 addendum there's a list of those developments.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF:: Yeah. And it
19 serves-

20 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: [interposing]
21 much appreciated.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Yeah. And then for
23 2025 and '26, have there been NYCHA developments that
24 were interested but were unable to do so because of
25 insufficient funding?

2 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: I defer to the
3 Deputy Count- Deputy Commissioner for the answer on
4 this one.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NEGASH: Yeah, so
6 we've worked very closely with NYCHA REISS. There
7 haven't been any issues that have been raised to us.
8 I think, you know, obviously we have worked to
9 continue to serve people through the program because
10 there's dual benefits. We, you know, ensure that
11 healthy and culturally appropriate meals are getting
12 to people in need, but at the time working with
13 individuals who live in the same neighborhood to
14 build up their businesses. So we haven't experienced
15 any, or heard of any issues at the moment.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So do NYCHA
17 developments reach out? How are you interacting with
18 developments? How is that process?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NEGASH: So our work
20 is directly with a division within NYCHA and the
21 agency itself. They coordinate directly with the
22 developments. So we work with the staff at night, at
23 like Central NYCHA offices.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it. And then
25 what's your role in it?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NEGASH: So we invest
3 in the program, we partner with them when there are
4 hurdles, we work with them to overcome challenges,
5 whatever that they may be. We'll engage with them on
6 finding partners. So it kind of runs the gamut. We'll
7 work with them on developing like, key performance
8 indicators, look at areas that we could be measuring,
9 maybe that we're not.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And is this a
11 program that is going to be expanded or one that you
12 all hope to scale up?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF:: So, I'd say our
14 role is to continue providing funding so that we're
15 meeting the scale where it currently is and to be
16 encouraged of increased funding through possible,
17 other partnerships. But at this time, we see this
18 funding being static. Got it. And then how are you
19 measuring the success rate? Is this going to be a
20 service that will continue for as long as the funding
21 is available, or is there's an effort to address the
food insecurity issues in our communities?

COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: I'll start and
then I'll, allow my colleagues to continue. So, just
as a reminder, part of what I see in this first month

1
2 is I'm trying to get a deeper understanding of all
3 the programs and which are priorities. And also to go
4 through the data and the community feedback to
5 ensure, one, that we're meeting the need, two, that
6 we're doing so in the best way possible. So, right
7 now we are committed to this partnership. Uh, it is
8 not something that we are currently looking to end,
9 but I do wanna say I will say, Council Member, that I
10 am taking a little bit of time to get a deep
11 understanding of all of our programs so that we can
12 make assessments to ensure that we are doing this
13 work, smart, just like we're doing it hard, and to
14 ensure that we're in deepest partnership possible.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Absolutely. And I
13 appreciate you saying that, because working with
14 NYCHA is incredibly important, and I believe that our
15 city should be doing more especially because we can't
16 cover cover so much of the capital project costs, and
17 food insecurity is only growing in our city. And, um,
18 the partnership with Grow NYC, I believe, is very
19 important. I'm, of course, very curious about where
20 food is being procured from and hope that it's
21 supporting- the produce are coming from local
businesses or local farms that we're, you know,

1
2 partnering with, that this program is more holistic,
3 but I just want to give my plus one to— for this
4 program to expand and would love to get support. And
5 then, I'd like to know about the New York City Unity
6 Project. What's the total budget for that program?

6 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: Sure. Again,
7 I'll start and allow any of my esteemed colleagues to
8 jump in to supplement or correct. So, the Unity
9 Project's budget is housed as part of MOERJ Central,
10 and I want to just give a little bit of context to
11 this as well. So, while their budget in the last
12 fiscal year, or excuse me, this fiscal year was a
13 little over \$400,000, they're often part and parcel
14 of other initiatives that allow them to help with the
15 disbursement of other funds. So, an example would be
16 that \$2 million grant program that I talked about
17 specifically for, like, gender non-conforming. Well,
18 they were able to provide, yes, some funding, but
19 also to— they mostly provide technical support to
20 help identify organizations and do outreach to ensure
21 that there was robust applications. So that is their
budget, but they also have partnered to be able to
expand resources and to help deliver in the direct—

2 excuse me, not deliver— direct where resources go for
3 the impacted communities.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And I know that
5 this initiative is a partner with DYCD for SYEP,
6 which is excellent. I'd like to know the age range
7 that this program is servicing, and then how many
8 young people have been reached through the program?

9 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: Thank you for
10 the question. So I think you're referring to SYEP
11 Pride.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay, so that's
13 different.

14 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: That's
15 different.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Or is it a— is it a
17 part of—

18 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: [interposing]
19 That is— sorry, let me let you finish the question.
20 Go ahead, Council Member.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Is it a part of the
Unity Project or is it a separate—

COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: So it is a
program that the Unity Project partners on.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay.

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COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: So SYEP continues to run through DYCD, and so these are youth who identify as members of the LGBTQIA+ community. And once they identify, what the Unity Project does is then work to ensure that there is programming that's directly targeted to those youths, people who can speak directly to what it is to be LGBTQIA or gender nonconforming in the workplace. So, for example, there'll be special workshops, mentors who want to lend expertise and advice about what that pathway. So that's what I was referring to when I mean about help to under- to- with the delivery and to ensure that it's culturally competent.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Understood. And so do you all keep a record of how many young people are being reached and any goals for each year or five years, whatever?

COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: Go ahead, Debash.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NEGASH: Yeah, and so to answer your other question, 14 to 24 is the age range. I think you asked that as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Yes.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NEGASH: There were a
3 little over 3,000 young people that participated, and
4 we expect this to continue. I think the things we
5 want to understand is, you know, not only the number
6 of people that are participating— ideally, hopefully
7 more people participating in the program, because we
8 don't know unless folks share that information with
9 us and choose to engage.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: What's the current
11 capacity for participation?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NEGASH: There isn't
13 a— there isn't specific capacity for this program.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NEGASH: So it's just
16 everyone applies and then you can identify if you'd
17 like and volunteer that information and then share
18 that you want to be part of this particular cohort,
19 and then participate in the programming that the
20 Commissioner mentioned.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And then for this
program, are there ad campaigns? How are young
people— I mean, that's a broad age range. How are
people finding out about this opportunity?

1
2 DIRECTOR FORDE: So one thing to note, as
3 the commissioner mentioned and the Deputy
4 Commissioner, is it kind of is a part of the larger
5 DYCD work. So it fits the encompass of the Summer
6 Youth Employment Program citywide. However, there's
7 targeted outreach through CBO partners because, you
8 know, certain CBOs work with certain populations, and
9 that's where you kind of get a lot of young people in
10 from. So the program usually starts a little bit
11 earlier just to kind of start through the workshops,
12 for the young adults, and they get littles that are a
13 part of the program, but then also at the same time,
14 it is the training that the employers need on their
15 side to be prepared to let young people into the
16 space in all of their fullness. So this program is
17 leaning on the expertise of the Unity Project, kind
18 of, you know, saying this is what it is, here's where
19 we see certain trends and then working in partnership
20 in collaboration with DYCD to develop what the
21 curriculum is. But DYCD rolls the program out as a
part of their larger Summer Youth Employment
Programming.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it. That's
helpful to know. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you, Council
3 Member. Chair, Finance Chair Linda Lee?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Oh, no questions, but
5 I just want to say thank you for all the work you're
6 doing in this space because it's definitely very
7 important and look forward to- I just wanted to echo
8 your sentiments, Chair Nurse, just about making sure
9 that we're looking at other city agencies as well and
10 making sure that we're actually meeting and hitting
11 those goals for making the- for the staff to be
12 diverse and inclusive. And the Pay Equity Cabinet, I
13 think I'd be particularly interested. I know it says
14 it's not gonna be published it until 2027, but
15 definitely look forward to looking at that. And I'll
16 just end by saying that I definitely agree. We were
17 talking earlier about how a lot of the smaller agency
18 budgets, especially the ones like you all that are
19 doing such important work- and I know that this is an
20 area that's super important to our Deputy Speaker,
21 and former Chair as well- that when we're looking at
equity in the budget, it's not- you know, that we're
looking at it from all facets in terms of also larger
agencies versus smaller agencies and where is there
equity there and how are we making sure that in order

1
2 to understand the equity piece that we're also
3 funding the work that needs to get done on that. So I
4 just want to thank you all for that. So, thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you, Council
6 Member. Okay. Just a few more questions because we
7 are behind on time and we got a whole other panel. Oh
8 Lord. All right. So just wanna talk a little bit
9 about New York City Kids Rise. MOERJ played a little
10 bit of a role to help expand the Save for College
11 program from a pilot to a citywide initiative. Can
12 you talk about your role? What outreach do you all
13 do? What's your budget for it? And any- and if you
14 can talk about the sources of funding for the program
15 as well.

16 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: Thank you,
17 Chair Nurse. I'll start and let others jump in, as
18 usual. So I just want to say that it's my
19 understanding that on NYC RISE, our collaboration has
20 been primarily monetary. I am- what I would love to
21 do is to just have some more internal conversations
so I can get 100 percent clear that that is
confirmed. That's my initial understanding, and then
I'll allow the Deputy Commissioner to speak to the
funding portion.

1
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NEGASH: So the
3 expansion was launched through the Task Force on
4 Racial Inclusion and Equity, which sits within our
5 office, and that started in- that was, uh, announced
6 in 2021, but wasn't implemented until 2022. MOERJ
7 serves as the program administrator. So NYC Kids Rise
8 does the actual implementation of the program. We
9 work and coordinate with NYC Opportunity, so Mayor's
10 Office of Economic Opportunity. DCWP, which has the
11 funding and works- contracts directly with NYC Kids
12 Rise, as well as the Department of Education. So we
13 play a role in coordinating internally with all of
14 the agencies and Kids Rise on different issues,
15 program-related work, you know, if we're updating
16 city rules related to the program, anything that
17 pretty much involves internal city coordination is
18 with us.

16 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, a couple more
17 questions. Related to the Unity Project, you all had
18 a partnership with DOHMH for a \$2 million emergency
19 fund to support organizations for transgender, gender
20 non-conforming, and non-binary New Yorkers. How much
21 of it is that \$2 million is in MOREJ's budget?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NEGASH: None of it is
3 in our budget. We worked and coordinated with our
4 director of the Unity Project worked- and staff
5 worked and coordinated with DOHMH on that.

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. And what's the
7 maximum and minimum amount of funding that an
8 organization can be allocated through this grant?

9 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: The maximum is-
10 it's up to \$92,000.

11 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: \$92,000, yeah, and you
12 mentioned that in your testimony.

13 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: And at this
14 point, at this time, I don't know the minimum, but if
15 you give me- I will get that information to you.]

16 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, okay. We kind of
17 just touched on this, but we- this was a little bit
18 of follow-up from the last hearing. There would be
19 some outreach to solidify feedback from the racial
20 equity plan. Did you tell us a current budget for
21 outreach once the plan is released?

COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: Oh, sorry, I'm
just thinking if I did. Thank you for the question.
No, I don't believe I gave a specific budget for
outreach.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NEGASH: Yeah, we
4 don't have a specific budget set for outreach. We're
5 definitely planning on leveraging our staff, our nine
6 equity planning managers, folks across the team to
7 really get out there and ensure that we're sharing
8 and our— the racial equity plan with New Yorkers and
9 getting feedback. And we've been working on a plan in
10 preparation for that while also ensuring that we
11 connect with the Commission on Racial Equity so we're
12 not kind of overlapping, but complementing each
13 other's efforts.

14 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Great. More
15 collaborative [sic].

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NEGASH: Yeah.

17 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And do you all run
18 like social media campaigns, advertising campaigns at
19 all?

20 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: So we have a
21 comms team and we'll be doing robust social social
media engagement to make sure folks hear it. And I
think I referenced earlier, you know, as the Deputy
Commissioner mentioned, to make sure that our work is
not duplicative. We see ourselves as focusing

1
2 internally on agencies and also doing targeted
3 stakeholder engagement while we see CORE's [sic] role
4 and we'll partner with them as more so the community
5 at large.

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Right. So what I'm
7 understanding is you're not really doing the kind of
8 external letting the world know about it, but
9 essentially doing more internal coordination with
10 different agencies.

11 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: No, we're
12 definitely going to be doing some external outside of
13 agencies, but let me give a clear example. So, like,
14 stakeholders, Chambers of Commerce, right, kind of
15 trade organizations where CORE would be more so of- I
16 don't want to character- like mass engagement or
17 large town hall that we would hope to partner on but
18 would not be taking leadership on.

19 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

20 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: But we'll
21 definitely be doing external engagement.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. We'd love to
have some- in the follow-up, some of what that might
cost you all to be doing that work. And I mean, I
guess in addition to what you were saying about the

1 equity managers and leveraging your staff. I asked
2 also in February if you needed additional funding to
3 implement the racial equity plan, and they- you said
4 you would continue to learn who needs assistance.

5 This is a living document. Have you learned about who
6 needs assistance since that hearing? Sorry if that's
7 a little confusing, but I'll read it. I'll read it
8 out how it's written. At the same oversight hearing,
9 I asked which agencies will need additional funding
10 to implement their racial equity plan, and you
11 testified that you were learning which agencies
12 needed that assistance. Have you all identified some
13 folks?

14 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: Thank you for
15 the question, and thank you for providing the
16 additional context. So we are still in communication
17 both with OMB, but also through our equity planning
18 managers with the agencies and the agency heads as
19 new commissioners and new leaders are coming on board
20 for them to be able to digest their plans and get a
21 sense of if there's any- been any shifts in their
capacity. So once we receive that information, I'm
happy to share it, but at this time we have received
that information.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay And those
3 agencies would have what they need to implement that
4 plan once it's solidified or out in the world, that
5 would be reflected in their budgets?

6 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: Thank you for
7 the question. So, again, just to take a step back and
8 provide some context for the plans. For this fiscal
9 year, each agency, as part of the planning was we
10 started with budget, right? As part of— because the
11 point of the plans from each agency is supposed to be
12 about how they do their day-to-day work, not that
13 equity is like a subset, but how they're doing their
14 day-to-day work with an equity framing. And so part
15 and parcel of their plans should already, in theory,
16 should already be a part of the budgeting they have
17 for the upcoming fiscal year.

18 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Okay. So we'll
19 look forward to that as you are in conversation.

20 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Those are my only
22 questions, and I think we've tired every other
23 council member out. So thank you so much for your,
24 being here, and thank you so much for the additional
25 information that follows up on our last hearing. And

1
2 we're looking forward to continuing to partner and
3 support you all. So, thank you so much.

4 COMMISSIONER ATTA-MENSAH: Thank you,
5 Chair, for your ongoing support and- around this
6 issue. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Absolutely. All right,
8 We're going to transit- oh, sorry. Oh, Deputy- is she
9 on? Okay, Deputy Speaker wanted to make a statement.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yes, I'm here.
11 Hi, I know there's no quorum, so I can't ask
12 questions. I just want to say that I look forward to
13 working with the Commissioner/Chief Equity Officer
14 specifically around how her office can be empowered
15 during the budget process. Just came from a convening
16 this weekend with the folks in Chicago, and it was
17 very empowering, and I felt very motivated by the
18 work that they're currently doing. They're a little
19 ahead of us, and so I just look forward to continuing
20 to work with the Commissioner to advance budget
21 equity and racial equity in New York City.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you, Deputy
Speaker. And thank you all. And we're now going to
transition to hear from CORE. So we'll take a few
minutes.

[break]

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: All right, we're going to get started. Thank you for being here, CORE. Really appreciate it. We're going hear from the Commission on Racial Equity, or CORE. We welcome Linda Tigani, Chair and Executive Director at CORE, and other folks who will introduce themselves. CORE is an independent commission dedicated to holding government accountable, to advancing racial equity in government operations, and increasing community voice in government decision-making. CORE's fiscal 2027 preliminary budget totals about \$4.6 million, which includes nearly \$1.8 million in personnel services to support 16 positions and \$2.9 million for other than staffing. Similar to CCHR and EEPCC, CORE's budget also remains unchanged, unfortunately, in the preliminary plan. In 2024, the council expanded CORE's mandates by passing Local Laws 91 and 92, which require CORE to establish a truth, healing, and reconciliation process, and study the impacts of slavery in New York City, and recommended potential reparation measures. The committee looks forward to hearing the updates on the local laws and to discussing the budgetary and headcount needs that

1
2 will allow CORE to effectively carry out these local
3 laws in addition to their other mandates. I'm going
4 to pass it over to the Committee Counsel to
5 administer the oath.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good afternoon. Would
7 you please raise your right hands? Do you swear to
8 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
9 truth before this committee?

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: I do.

11 UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. You
13 may begin.

14 DIRECTOR TIGANI: Thank you. Good
15 afternoon, Chair Sandy Nurse and members of the Civil
16 and Human Rights Committee. As you stated, my name is
17 Linda Tigani, and I have the honor of serving as the
18 Chair and Executive Director for the Commission on
19 Racial Equity. I lead NYC CORE in partnership with
20 the team of commissioners and staff. Today I'm joined
21 by Maya Williams, our Senior Director for Research
and Policy, and Rachel Natelson, our General Counsel.
I'm excited to share an overview of our
accomplishments from NYC CORE's past year and a
snapshot of fiscal year 2027. NYC CORE is a product

1 of a 2022 ballot measure introduced to address
2 longstanding racial disparities and power access and
3 opportunity enabled and perpetuated, whether by
4 design or implementation or impact, through city
5 laws, regulations, policies, and practices. To
6 accomplish this goal, New Yorkers called for a body
7 to be established for the purpose of holding
8 government accountable for advancing racial equity
9 and empowering community members to influence city
10 decision-making through the development and
11 implementation of priorities for racial equity
12 planning in government operations and the citywide
13 budget. Today's testimony is delivered at a time in
14 our nation and city when communities harmed by racism
15 and social injustice are immigrant, LGBTQIA+, elders,
16 youth, individuals impacted by policing and
17 incarceration, and Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and
18 Asian New Yorkers experience increasing costs of
19 living, low-wages, and physical and psychological
20 harm through continued cuts in service delivery and
21 resources. In our city, Black residents experience
the lowest life expectancy, followed by the Latinx
community. According to our own data, Black residents
make up a majority of adult families and single

1 adults in shelters, while Latinx residents are a
2 majority of families with children in shelters. Black
3 residents, when compared to white residents, are less
4 likely to own their own home and experience deed
5 theft at a higher rate than either Latinx or white
6 homeowners. Child welfare data reveals that almost 45
7 percent of Black and Latinx children experience an
8 investigation by age 18, and that Black and Latinx
9 families account for 90 percent of system-involved
10 families despite constituting receiving only 60
11 percent of the city's child population. Due to
12 changes in the federal policy— federal health policy,
13 Black families across major cities in the U.S.,
14 including New York City, are expected to pay as much
15 as a 24 percent increase in medical care while
16 continuing to face deed theft, segregated schooling,
17 and high rates of unemployment. These outcomes are
18 not inevitable, but are a product of government
19 policies and practices that continue to yield a
20 widening racial gap in New York City, which
21 underscores the truth of our city. Race remains the
single and most important factor in determining the
outcomes of New Yorkers. New York City CORE was
established to expressly redress the inequities

1 created by the racial wealth gap. As in FY25, we
2 wrestled with and took great pains to overcome
3 challenges to our ability to meet this mandate over
4 the past fiscal year. Operating for much of the last
5 year at less than full capacity, existing staff
6 invested inordinate time and energy into initiating
7 the second racial equity planning cycle, advancing
8 intergovernmental projects, and producing the
9 deliverables outlined in the racial equity provisions
10 of the city's administrative code. Our team worked
11 with 70 organizations and increased participation in
12 community community engagement cycles by 116 percent,
13 which included a 27 percent increase in respondents
14 under the age of 25 and respondents who lived in the
15 33 high-needs TRIE neighborhoods, and increases in
16 responses from residents who lived in Staten Island,
17 Manhattan, and the Bronx. In surveying these New
18 Yorkers on the relative urgency of our original 18
19 community equity priorities, NYC CORE learned that
20 the issues most vital to them: lowering the cost of
21 living, preserving safe and stable housing, and
holding city officials accountable for abuse of
authority closely parallels the new administration's
focus on affordability and restoration of the rule of

1 law. It is our hope that this correlation will induce
2 the mayor to release the long-delayed racial equity
3 plan and true cost of living measure. Over the past
4 year, NYC CORE and community organizations have
5 continued to host additional convenings to address
6 the intersection of racial equity and the cost of
7 living. Along with Misteca, Africana, La Colmena, and
8 several other organizations, NYC CORE co-hosted an
9 immigration justice conference, a full-day convening
10 of attorneys and organizations to advance immigrant
11 rights and access to legal support. We work closely
12 with government community partners to operationalize
13 a New York City Council on Family Investigation,
14 Separations, and Wellbeing, which is a
15 community-created policy solution to address
16 longstanding systemic racism in children and family
17 welfare system. Fiscal year 2026 also saw the launch
18 of Reparations, Truth, Healing, and Reconciliation,
19 historic work not only for our city but also for our
20 nation. Following extensive engagement—excuse me—
21 with both local community members and Reparations,
Truth, Healing, Reconciliation scholars and
practitioners around the country, New York City CORE
released its first progress report on the study of

1 reparations. These outreach activities were coupled
2 with the development of a testimony guidebook for
3 truth and reconciliation process that New York City
4 CORE is charged with planning in tandem with the New
5 York City Study on Reparations. NYC CORE's progress
6 with this initiative was likewise documented in a
7 written update submitted to Council at the start of
8 the year. With this foundation in place, we are
9 currently in the process of soliciting organizations
10 to join the Reparations, Truth, Healing, and
11 Reconciliation Network designed to inform NYC CORE's
12 work on these projects and are preparing to issue a
13 solicitation for reparations research proposals. In
14 view of the derailment of reparations projects in
15 other major metropolitan areas, it is imperative that
16 New York City CORE receive the necessary resources to
17 conduct this historic work with the dignity and
18 respect required at a time of growing local and
19 national racial discord. To meet our historic and
20 legal mandates, we need increases in our operation
21 and personnel resources. In the remaining months of
FY 2026, we need to repurpose \$500,000 from our
personnel budget to operations. Funds will be used to
continue public engagement and respond to the

1
2 forthcoming racial equity plan. In fiscal year 2027,
3 NYC CORE needs \$6 million to complete racial equity
4 and reparations community engagement. Our work will
5 include but not be limited to launching public
6 education campaigns, expanding community
7 partnerships, conducting racial equity and
8 community-centered research and policy analysis, and
9 instituting accountability mechanisms to close the
10 racial wealth gap and its corresponding negative
11 impacts in health, housing, family welfare— family
12 well-being, and more. This funding is critical to New
13 York City CORE meeting its legal mandate as an
14 oversight agency for racial equity planning process,
15 respond to requests requests from the Speaker and
16 other public officials to steer intergovernmental
17 projects, addressing complaints from the public about
18 proposed or existing policy that may have the effect
19 of exacerbating racial inequities, and implementing
20 the city's Reparations Study and Truth, Healing,
21 Reconciliation process. Performing these functions in
a manner consistent with the standards to which the
city and the members of the public hold us will
require real financial investment in NYC CORE. Our
size and capacity remains far outstripped by the

1 scale of its responsibilities to plan and implement
2 ambitious multi-year projects and the initiatives
3 with which we've been entrusted, partnering with
4 parent advocates and Child Welfare Accountability
5 Council, supporting council members in the
6 development of budget equity scoring tools and
7 uniting a fractured public behind the city's call for
8 reparations and racial healing, to name but a few,
9 require personnel and operation support. These
10 programming duties, moreover, are accompanied by
11 legal obligations to maintain and report on data
12 privacy and security safeguards, record management
13 practices, equal opportunity trends, equal employment
14 opportunity trends, and public accessibility
15 planning. NYC CORE faces the same expectations with
16 regard to procurement, labor relations, fiscal
17 oversight, ethics, and transparency standards as
18 entities hundreds of times our size. And shoring up
19 our budding [sic] infrastructure is absolutely
20 essential to the prudent stewardship and risk
21 mitigation that the city demands. On behalf of the
commission, as well as the thousands of voters who
affirm that our city has a duty to eliminate the
racial inequities in the city where vigilance is

1
2 required to prevent the recurrence of past or
3 worsening of continued harms, we must act
4 intentionally to remedy these past and continuing
5 harms and to reconstruct, revise, and reimagine our
6 foundation structures and institutions and laws to
7 promote justice and equity for all New Yorkers. Just
8 want to note that last section actually directly
9 comes from our preamble. Thank you so much, and I
10 will open up for questions.

11
12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you so much, um,
13 for that and, and for noting that. Want to jump right
14 in. I have kind of three topic areas: the budget,
15 headcount, and vacancies, and then work on the Truth,
16 Healing, Reconciliation, and Reparations work. So, as
17 it relates to Local Laws 91 and 92, which is the
18 Truth, Healing, and Reconciliation process, it looks
19 like the preliminary plan doesn't include any changes
20 in CORE's budget. You all have been very proactive in
21 communicating your needs in previous cycles. What
needs have you expressed to OMB that have not been
added in the preliminary budget, and I do acknowledge
you just listed out a bunch of them, but just state
for the record.

1 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Sure, so there
2 are several staffing lines that we have requested
3 that have been denied, um, and we are sub- we were
4 when the two-for-one hiring freeze was in place, we
5 were subject to the two-to-one hiring freeze, and
6 that did cause delay in our hiring in FY26. We also
7 are- we've also asked repeatedly for additional
8 operational funds. One of the notes in my testimony
9 is that we currently have \$500,000 in underspend in
10 personnel from FY26, and we have asked OMB to be able
11 to move that in FY26 over to our operations so that
12 we can use that money to spend on community
13 engagement, so that we can work with organizations to
14 respond to the racial equity plan.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And for denied
16 staffing line- sorry, I'm losing my brain cells. Um,
17 you all were subject to that hiring freeze. Are you-
18 that's been lifted? Are you able to move forward with
19 hiring? Are you posting any jobs?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: So right now
21 we have all 15 full-time roles hired and accounted
for. We have one role that is an intern role, which
we have an identified candidate, and we're working
with OMB to move through the process. We are asking

1
2 to hire six additional lines, which are critical
3 lines to enhance our research team, our community
4 engagement team, our communications team, and then
5 our CORE operational supports. As an independent
6 commission, we do not have support from the mayor's
7 team or any other agency to move forward contracts,
8 to make payments, to conduct HR actions. And so all
9 of the required agency roles like a privacy officer,
10 an information officer, a procurement officer, all of
11 that has to happen within CORE. And we have— and a
12 records officer. And so every day we learn of a new
13 title that needs to be applied to staff members, and
14 we've not been able to give them raises either for
15 taking on those new duties. We have asked in the past
16 for our chief of staff and several other roles, and
17 we are going to be submitting that today to OMB as
18 well.

19
20 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And how has the— how
21 has things been under— in terms of the interactions
with OMB be with the new administration?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: We have a
great relationship with our task force. We're very
forthcoming about what we need and also how fast we
need it. We have worked with them to explain what we

1 would do with the \$500,000. How do we work with
2 community groups? We did in fiscal year 2026 go over
3 our organizing budget, and that's a pull from other
4 internal budget line spending close to \$1 million
5 just on community groups and civic participation. And
6 because of that, we felt like that was the strong
7 argument to say, well, the \$500,000 in underspend
8 really shouldn't just be sitting there. We can— we
9 will put it to use as we've done this past year with
our budget.

10 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Right. I know you all
11 had moved offices last year. Are we— we're good with
12 that? We're— is there anything else—

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: [interposing]
14 Well, we still have several launch costs that we're
15 having to pay for. So we are setting up Wi-Fi in our
16 office right now. We do need to get other things like
17 a large printer for the office. There are some key
18 pieces, but I do want to note that it has been
19 communicated to us that CORE is no longer considered
20 a new agency, and so we do have to find funds in our
21 office for launch costs, which we are only 2.5 years
old and we just moved into 22 Reed, our new space,

1 about six months ago. And so we went from borrowed
2 space to our own space that we need to outfit.

3 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, I don't- I just
4 like, I don't know how they're- anyways, I'll reserve
5 my comment. Until I need something.

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: [interposing]
7 Oh, sorry, one more thing. I do want to note that
8 part of our launch costs for our agency is also we
9 have to buy into sign language contracts, language
10 line contracts, and translation contracts. And so we
11 will need operational money for that as well.

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Understood. And you'll
13 let us know what those costs are?

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. For the November
16 Plan in 2024, it included a million in the FY 2026
17 and \$500,000 in FY 27 for the implementation of Local
18 Law 91. It also included \$1 million in FY 26 and \$1.3
19 million in FY 27 for Local Law 92. There has been no
20 increase in funding level for either of these
21 mandates. How is CORE's current budget allowed to
carry out its mandates? I mean, it sounds like you're
telling but again, for the record.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: So the Local Law 91 and 92, which we refer to as Title 34 of the Administrative Code, is one of our main priority asks. It is our first priority ask. We absolutely need to increase the amount of money that we are putting into Reparations, Truth, Healing, and Reconciliation. After doing a national landscape that led to the first report on reparations, it was clear to us that we are spending the least amount of money doing this work when compared to every other jurisdiction that has similar mandates and is establishing a study. This is truly, I think, a complete atrocity. You know, New York City is the center hold. Black people were the first commodity. They made New York City's- financial district was created because of chattel slavery. This is a place where we need absolutely to financially invest in this work. We also need to create a reparations public education campaign. And right now the local law has a Public Education Campaign for Truth, Healing, and Reconciliation. We need to do a comparable campaign for reparations, and so that's part of the ask for the additional funds. Secondly, the research study is focused on how government has

1 perpetuated harm. We are soliciting proposals now,
2 but we do anticipate that researchers will need to
3 continue their work as we— city government has grown,
4 of course, over time. We have over 60 agencies that
5 they will need to be looking at and all of their
6 archival records for as long as those agencies have
7 existed. So we do need to make sure that the
8 researchers are also funded. And then the last and
9 most significant piece is that we have a
10 community-centered model for Reparations, Truth,
11 Healing, and Reconciliation. We have been told by
12 other jurisdictions that the model that we are
13 building is turning out to be a national model. We
14 will be issuing the first ever truth testimony
15 guidebook, and we have worked with UN experts to
16 develop this particular guidebook, and that's a
17 guidebook that will allow for all New Yorkers and
18 anyone that has a connection to New York and a story,
19 either that was passed down in their family or their
20 experience living during Jim Crow and the legacy of
21 slavery. We will have to create an archive that takes
in every single story, and so we have to have that on
our website. We are going to be working very closely
with Doris [sic] to ensure that all of the stories

1
2 are included in the city's history as well. All of
3 this takes additional investment.

4 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And while we're on
5 that, I did have some questions on it. I heard what
6 you said in terms of some other folks contributing to
7 it, but who's going to prepare the guidebook?

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: So we- CORE is
9 developing the guidebook and we hired a consultant to
10 support us who's worked on truth and reconciliation
11 commissions on an international scale. We have a full
12 draft of the guidebook now that we're turning into
13 training material for the forthcoming Reparations and
14 Truth, Healing, Reconciliation organizations that
15 will be a part of the network.

16 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And then my last few
17 questions, and then I'll open it up in case- Council
18 Member Lee, okay. So just in terms of the Truth,
19 Healing, Reconciliation, Reparations report, you all
20 had put out a call for input. What was the most
21 outstanding feedback that CORE considered impactful
from the call for input?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: The call to
community organizations or to-

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] Yeah,
3 you said in your November 2025 report, you said CORE
4 put out a call for input asking for how the
5 Commission should execute-

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: [interposing]
7 Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: the work required. So
9 what was the kind of like the big takeaway there?

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: The big
11 takeaway was the role that community wants to ensure
12 that they play in this reparations work that many
13 members feel like has not happened, whether it be on
14 the state side, our New York State Commission, or in
15 other jurisdictions. Community members shared with us
16 that they want to be a part of the creation of the
17 report. They want to see drafts before it goes out.
18 They want to actively participate in creating
19 reparative policies and really work hand in hand with
20 the Commission and our team to make sure that they're
21 a part of every single step, that there should be no
surprises in whatever the preliminary report says or
what the final report says with respect to policies
that will be issued. The second most critical piece
is the- is really the focus on what happens after the

1 report is done. And so we do ask in our new needs not
2 only for an additional \$3 million for reparations for
3 FY '27, but also for FY '28. The report is set to be
4 done by that time, and the most critical component is
5 making sure that community members and elected
6 officials not only understand what's in the report,
7 but actually take action on the report. The Truth,
8 Healing, Reconciliation legislation has one single
9 line at the end of the bill that says one year after
10 that report is complete, CORE is to implement the
11 citywide process that we've created. Reparations has
12 no such line, but we know that we cannot move forward
13 as a city to fulfill our charter mandate if we are
14 not actually moving forward on the reparations
15 policies. And in order to do that, we need to
16 continue engagement past the final release of the
17 report and ensure that community members are with us
18 every step of the way.

16 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Understood. And then
17 for the Weeksville Heritage Center citywide gathering
18 from June of last year, what was the cost of that?

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: That costs
20 approximately \$60,000 across both materials, space,
21 food, contractors.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And it was the first
3 of three, right, that you're required to have?

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Yes, we are-
5 that is- it was the first of three, that's correct,
6 yeah.

7 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And do you anticipate
8 needing more events beyond the three?

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Absolutely. We
10 are planning a public education campaign that
11 includes borough-based community events, working with
12 community organizations to have hyper-local events.
13 This- the June 10th gathering was really the launch
14 of bringing people together, bringing testimony
15 together. We had a follow-up event on Juneteenth,
16 also in partnership with Tyreke Washington. Both
17 events were done in partnership with Tyreke
18 Washington. Our first event centered the- really the
19 focus was community wants to work closely with
20 government, and the very first step that they told us
21 in our call was we want to co-develop the values of
this work with you. And these are values that
researchers, the CORE team, anyone working on this
project, are going to begin to align with. And that's
what we did together on June 10th. That was the first

1
2 ever citywide gathering, to our knowledge, that the
3 city has ever held, because it was government-led.
4 June- we had one on Juneteenth, and then we also had
5 the November 19th celebration. And what we are
6 looking to do once the network is put together, which
7 we are doing over the next two or three weeks, and
8 the researcher solicitation is out, is being able to
9 launch a broad-based borough-wide campaign
10 accompanied with a social media campaign.

11
12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And I have a little
13 off the off-the-cuff question, and because I don't
14 know the technical rules around it, but are you all
15 able to partner with like, private philanthropic
16 organizations that are invested in this kind of work,
17 either through community organizations that you're
18 partnering with? I mean, are there partners here who
19 can- not help the city sidestep its financial
20 obligations to this mandate, but supplement and
21 enhance what you- the work you all are laying out?

22
23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Well, there
24 are three critical things that would have to happen
25 in order for us to do that. I would say first off,
26 yes, we can do that. However, what we would need
27 first is staff who is able to both apply for those

1 grants and work with the funders. We do not have a
2 strategic private partnership planner, and so that is
3 an ask. We would also need to open up a bank account
4 in order to be able to bring in philanthropy dollars.
5 As an independent commission, it is our
6 responsibility to do that work. We actually just
7 created an impress [sic] fund so that we can give our
8 staff reimbursements, but this is really all a part
9 of launching an independent commission. And I should
10 say that we are the only independent commission in
11 the city that has citywide engagement mandates. And
12 so when we raise- we have procured- we have to do our
13 own procurement, we work on our own labor issues. We
14 need the necessary staff to do that. We have a
15 procurement team of two, me and a senior associate
16 for fiscal- senior fiscal associate. And we have had
17 to figure out procurement on our own, whereas other
18 agencies have teams of 30 or 40 people and job aides
19 and directions to be able to do this. So we would be
20 happy to go out and start working with philanthropy,
21 but we need a robust infrastructure in order to be
able to do that.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, that's helpful
to hear. And one of the things that myself and

1 Council Member Stevens and other Black council
2 members, we're partnering with the state Black Task
3 Force. We requested funding for you all from the
4 state because we think the state should be
5 contributing given that they also have work up there
6 that they're advancing. So, it seems that it
7 shouldn't be all on the city. Certainly we know we
8 can't rely on the federal government right now, but
9 this is a stain on our country that needs to be
10 addressed by as many partners as possible. So, it
11 would make sense that you all can get a bank account,
12 and like, we should work to get them some basic
13 needs. And I'll turn it over to Council Member Lee.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Sorry, just really
13 quickly, because I came from the nonprofit world and
14 started off my nonprofit career with the foundation
15 world, and I'm just- I may send some folks your way.
16 One of the things I think we can think creatively
17 about is how to do more public-private partnerships,
18 because I do think that's very much needed in
19 different spaces. But yeah, the procurement process,
20 I really commend you all for having to do that on
21 your own because that is not easy, having gone
through it many times myself. So it's- there's lags

1
2 there. So it's- this is helpful to hear, and helps us
3 understand what the needs are. So, thank you.

4 GENERAL COUNSEL NATELSON: Yeah, I would
5 add that, that calling it a procurement team is kind
6 of overstating it, and I do think I think, like, just
7 to echo the testimony of EEPC, you know, like, not
8 only is it- you know, does it undermine efficiency of
9 the existing staff that have to wear these different
10 hats and to a degree undermine morale, but it really
11 does present an element of risk to the city when you
12 have people who are not- you don't have dedicated
13 staff to do work that really should be done by
14 dedicated staff. We don't have a dedicated
15 procurement staff. We don't have any IT staff. Like,
16 that- think about privacy and security.

17 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Is there a reason why
18 the city cannot be kind of allowing independent
19 commissions to pull these kinds of basic office
20 operations that are required? I- like, I don't
21 understand.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Yeah, well,
they-

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: that you need to be
independent for the content and the work that you're

1
2 just acknowledge that. I mean, this is just— it just—
3 this is embarrassing, quite frankly. I'm new to this
4 committee obviously, so I'm just disappointed in what
5 I'm hearing in terms of the resources. But I know
6 Council Member Lee has one—

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: [interposing] No,
8 just really quickly, to your point, Chair Nurse, I
9 guess I had more of a big picture question, and I
10 don't know if it's for you guys or just all the
11 different subcommittees— I mean, subagencies that are
12 part of this committee. But because I know that in my
13 time when I was on my former nonprofit back in the
14 day, DFTA, Department for the Aging, used to do a lot
15 of pooled group purchasing, right? And they actually
16 extended that to their providers, right? So we were
17 able to benefit from the health insurance that they
18 had as well as a lot of the vendors that they had
19 access to. And I just wonder if something like that,
20 especially when we're talking about looking at
21 efficiencies, I wonder if there's something like that
that can be done at least within certain groupings of
agencies and commissions that make sense to be able
to share some of those resources. Because a lot of
the Know Your Rights work, the campaigns, like,

1
2 there's got to be a way to maybe centralize some of
3 that a little bit more, because I know that a lot of
4 agencies are wanting and wanting to do more of that,
5 especially now. So yeah, I don't know. I'm just
6 throwing something out there because same, I'm a
7 little- yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Basic stuff, like-

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: [interposing] Right.

10 CHAIRPERSON NURSE:: You know, I- you
11 know, if everybody needs HR- I mean, whatever. These
12 are like- we're now just like ranting, but and-
13 that's a sign that I need to, we need to get moving
14 so we can all eat and get people where they need to
15 go. But I just want to thank you all for coming
16 again. We're looking forward to partnering and
17 looking forward to the release of the plan. So we
18 will be all collectively holding the feet to the fire
19 on that. And, you know, we'll be following up with
20 you all. So thank you.

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TIGANI: Great. Thank
you so much.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you all. All
right, we are going to now open up the hearing for
public testimony. I remind members of the public that

1 this is a formal government proceeding and that
2 decorum shall be observed at all times. As such,
3 members of the public shall remain silent at all
4 times. The witness table is reserved for people who
5 wish to testify. No video recording or photography is
6 allowed from the witness table. Further, members of
7 the public may not present audio or video recordings
8 as testimony, but may submit that stuff in there and
9 transcripts of such recordings to the
10 sergeant-at-arms for inclusion in the hearing record.
11 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please out-
12 please fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant
13 at Arms and wait to be recognized. When recognized,
14 you will have three minutes to speak on today's
15 topic. If you have written testimony or additional
16 statements you wish to submit for the record, please
17 provide a copy of that to the Sergeant at Arms. You
18 may also email written testimony to
19 testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72 hours of this
20 hearing. Audio and video recordings will not be
21 accepted. Okay, so our first panel is going to be
Nicole Sake [sic], Rebecca Cook-Mack, Yvette Chen,
Reggie Chatman. And I thank you all for a very long

1 day of waiting, and you can begin when you're ready.
2 Make sure the red light's on.

3 NICOLE SALK: Good afternoon, and I hate
4 to be between folks and food, so I apologize in
5 advance. I know I can barely think when I don't have
6 enough food, so I'm sorry about that. My name is
7 Nicole Salk. I'm actually sitting here with a number
8 of members. I work at Legal Services NYC, but a lot
9 of us are part of the New York City Human Rights Law
10 Working Group, which has been around since 2014
11 trying to do something about the underfunding of the
12 New York City Human Rights Commission, and we're back
13 here again. And I'm submitting testimony, so I'll try
14 to be very brief. The preliminary budget for the
15 CCHR, as you know, is \$14,961,000. This would be the
16 first budget decrease in five years for the CCHR. And
17 to provide historical perspective, I've actually been
18 doing this work for a really long time. I've been at
19 Legal Services for almost 30 years and doing workers'
20 rights for close to 20. To provide historical
21 perspective, the CCHR has 109 staff members, which is
less than half the number of staff that the CCHR had
under the Dinkins administration in 1992, a time when
the CCHR served fewer people and enforced less

1 expansive laws. Under both the Giuliani and Bloomberg
2 administrations, funding for the CCHR was decimated.
3 In 2013, the Commission had less than 60 employees,
4 and the Commission gained the reputation of being a
5 place to avoid if you wanted justice. Well, and I
6 just want to say, we are so thankful to the City
7 Council for creating really the most robust
8 anti-discrimination and protective laws in the entire
9 country. And this commission needs to be a place that
10 can enforce those incredible important laws,
11 especially at this time. So while funding increased
12 during the de Blasio administration and the
13 Commission was able to begin work towards fulfilling
14 its mandates, the Commission has never been able to
15 to properly investigate many cases of discrimination
16 or do the affirmative anti-discrimination work it has
17 been tasked to do. From the beginning of 2022 through
18 the end of 2025, the budget for the Commission
19 actually increased slightly each year. However, as
20 you probably know, I know you've heard lots of
21 testimony today about problems with OMB slowdowns and
which has cost a lot of qualified candidates who are
forced to wait for months for approval, and the PEGs
and vacancies not being able to approve. And so now

1 the Commission, I think, has over 30 vacancies
2 because of this. It's really causing a problem. So I
3 just wanted to- I know I have very little time. I
4 just have- I wanted to tell you about one of my
5 clients in a case that I have there, who the client
6 was- faced sexual harassment. They continue on the
7 job. That case was filed more than four years ago, or
8 approximately four years ago, they are still facing
9 sexual harassment on the job because that employer
10 has not been held accountable. And that's because of-
11 in part because of the resources and not having
12 people assigned to that case. We are now addressing
13 it, but it's taken a long time. Yeah, thank you.

12 REBECCA COOK-MACK: I'm Rebecca Cook-Mack.
13 I'm a staff attorney in the Employment Law Unit, the
14 Legal Aid Society, and I'm a member of the Human
15 Rights Law Working Group. And I thank you for the
16 opportunity to testify. Thank you for this long day.
17 The preliminary budget proposal compounds rather than
18 addresses the chronic underfunding the New York City
19 Commission on Human Rights has been subjected to
20 since the pandemic and before, as Nicole testified.
21 The proposal cuts the Commission's budget by almost
10 percent, and this would be, as Nicole said, the

1 first budget decrease in years, and it's a mistake.
2 Cutting the Commission's budget means that New
3 Yorkers will wait longer for justice and our human
4 rights laws will go under-enforced. So we're- we join
5 you in calling on the mayor to reverse course and
6 invest in the commission so it's funded at \$25
7 million in FY '27. This is less than 0.02 percent of
8 the city's \$127 billion FY '27 preliminary budget.
9 It's a rounding error. But funding the Commission at
10 \$25 million and allowing it to hire and fill lines
11 will allow Commissioner Clarke to build a robust
12 civil rights enforcement agency for New Yorkers at a
13 time when the federal government has become hostile
14 to these rights. Commissioner Clarke takes the reins
15 at a time when the commission is more important than
16 ever, and she cannot succeed if the city does not
17 give her the resources necessary to do the job, and
18 the preliminary budget doesn't give them to her. In
19 FY 2019, which is pre-COVID, the Commission fielded
20 9,804 inquiries from the public. In FY '25, that
21 number grew by 158 percent to 15,532. More New
Yorkers sought help from the commission than they did
before the pandemic, and this should be no surprise,
right? We have passed laws like the Fair Chance for

1 Housing Law that expanded the commission's role, but
2 we have done that without sort of suitably increasing
3 its funding. In FY25, just three percent of those
4 15,500 New Yorkers who called the Commission for help
5 had complaints filed by the Commission to be
6 investigated. The number of pre-complaint resolutions
7 is down too. Pre-COVID, there were 537 pre-complaint
8 resolutions, and in FY25, that had fallen to 327.
9 These are very small numbers. Council Member Hanif
10 asked about modifications for accessibility earlier,
11 and that's down too by more than half, from 174
12 pre-COVID to just 61 in FY25. So more people called
13 and fewer people got help, and help is also taking
14 longer to get. In FY25, the average age of a
15 complaint with the Commission is 614 days. So that's
16 over a year and a half. The Commission today helps
17 too few people, and it helps them too slowly, and we
18 can do better. Commissioner Clarke has inherited a
19 commission that is not serving New Yorkers at a time
20 when New Yorkers have nowhere else to turn. So the
21 time to reinvest has arrived, and we're glad council
is, is calling for, for more money and pressing the
mayor to make sure he gives Commissioner Clarke the
tools necessary to do the work she was hired for. In

1 his inaugural address, the mayor acknowledged the
2 transformative moment we are in and promised to
3 govern expansively and audaciously. And so we call on
4 council and the mayor to fund the commission at \$25
5 million so that the Commission can do its part to
6 meet the vision and protect New Yorkers from
7 discrimination, thereby building a better and more
8 just city for us all. So thank you for allowing us to
9 testify today, and we look forward to working
together on this.

10 YVETTE CHEN: Hello, my name is Yvette
11 Chen. I'm a policy associate at the Fair Housing
12 Justice Center, a civil rights nonprofit organization
13 serving the NYC area. Our mission is to eliminate
14 housing discrimination, promote accessible and
15 inclusive communities, and strengthen the enforcement
16 of fair housing laws. Chair Sandy Nurse and the
17 Committee on Civil and Human Rights, thank you for
18 the opportunity to testify. As a member of the Human
19 Rights Law Working Group, we asked City Council to
20 reverse the mayor's proposed budget cut and increase
21 the CCHR budget to \$25 million. This budget cut is
the first budget decrease for CCHR in the last five
years, as mentioned, and CCHR needs the ability to

1 spend this money immediately, roll it over year to
2 year, and hire staff to best fulfill their mission.
3 This is especially important given the rollbacks and
4 instability on the federal level. CCHR has a critical
5 role in enforcing NYC's fair housing laws to
6 eliminate source of income and disability
7 discrimination and implement the Fair Chance in
8 Housing Law. A well-funded commission can efficiently
9 investigate complaints and provide meaningful relief
10 to New Yorkers experiencing discrimination. Source of
11 income discrimination is the most common housing
12 complaint complaint, with more than 600 claims filed
13 last year. Without sufficient staff to process cases
14 promptly, voucher holders lose housing opportunities,
15 and this undermines critical rental assistance
16 programs like CityFHEPs. Disability discrimination is
17 the second most common complaint. Reasonable
18 modification requests such as ramps or grab bars are
19 time-sensitive and essential to basic access. New
20 Yorkers are waiting months or even years to be able
21 to safely enter or reuse their own homes. Finally,
the Fair Chance in Housing Law, which took effect
January 1st, 2025, expanded protections for people
with criminal records. Council Finance estimated that

1
2 CCHR needs \$1.4 million to hire staff and provide
3 public education on the new provision. Yet CCHR has
4 not received additional funding to educate the public
5 or enforce this law. CCHR is obligated to enforce the
6 law effectively and ensure that the promise of fair
7 housing is real for all New Yorkers, and so we call
8 on the city to increase the agency's budget to \$25
9 million. Thank you again for the opportunity to
10 testify.

11
12 REGGIE CHATMAN: Thank you, Chair Nurse
13 and members of the committee, for giving me the
14 opportunity to testify. My name is Reggie Chatman.
15 I'm the Director of Policy at the Fortune Society's
16 David Rothenberg Center for Public Policy. I'm also a
17 formerly incarcerated person who spent 25 years in
18 prison. As with many others, my conviction record
19 made it difficult for me for not to find housing. So
20 thus I have professional and lived experience with
21 respect to this issue. I would like to refer to my
written testimony and be succinct as I'm referring to
the budgetary issue. Simply put, we cannot have laws
on the book that do not provide true remedies, and
this is the exact circumstance we are creating when
we fail to resource and fund the Commission on Human

1 Rights. We do thank the council for pushing for more
2 funding last year, which didn't materialize in the
3 budget, but simply, we must do more and we need more
4 money. The Fortune Society is honored to successfully
5 lead the Fair Chance for Housing campaign as well as
6 the commission coalition. In December of 2023, the
7 Commission on Human Rights submitted a physical
8 impact statement for the Fair Chance for Housing Act,
9 indicating that it needed \$1.4 million to hire 10 new
10 staff attorneys and to do a public education campaign
11 alone. Unfortunately, the city did not provide that.
12 As a result, they were unable to do so. Fortunately,
13 nonprofits in the coalition took up that
14 responsibility. In doing so, we trained CCHR staff,
15 City Council Constituent Services, state electeds,
16 and numerous nonprofits and hundreds of directly
17 impacted people. We even got materials that we
18 created into Rikers Island to provide people with
19 their rights and let them know their rights. Further,
20 using private funds, we launched a public education
21 campaign on the side of city buses and bus depots. We
also have nonprofit attorneys in our networks
drafting complaints for submission to CCHR to help
individuals facilitate their complaints. But we the

1 nonprofits, we can't do it all and we cannot enforce
2 the law. I focused on the Fair Chance for Housing Act
3 today, but this is bigger than one law. And finally,
4 I would like to say that budgets are value
5 statements, and if we really believe in equity,
6 especially in these times, we must provide CCHR more
7 funding, specifically \$10 million more funding in FY
8 2027, and exempt them from hiring freezes as well as
9 PEGs. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you so much. And
11 I'd love it if you all have more stories, like human
12 stories, that help New Yorkers understand what the
13 impact of this funding is and what happens when we
14 don't have it. We could really use some of those to
15 help do stronger advocacy. So please let me know. But
16 thank you all for staying and hanging and testifying,
17 and we're going to call up our next panel. Thank you
18 all. Jonathan Eber, Funmi Akinnawonu- I'm so sorry-
19 Dr. Robin Rickant [sp?], and Michelle Lyons. And if I
20 butchered your name, I apologize. Feel free to
21 correct me. And you can begin when you're ready.

19 JONATHAN EBER: Good afternoon. My name is
20 Jonathan Eber. I'm a program manager on the New York
21 Policy Team at Enterprise Community Partners. We're a

1 nationwide affordable housing nonprofit. Chair Nurse,
2 thank you so much for holding this hearing, for
3 staying so late, for joining our rally this morning.
4 We really appreciate all your support. I'm a member
5 of the Human Rights Law Working Group as well. So I'm
6 also calling for this \$25 million increase in FY 27.
7 It's \$10 million up from the mayor's preliminary
8 budget proposal. But I'll talk a little bit
9 specifically about source of income discrimination.
10 So as an affordable housing nonprofit, we are acutely
11 aware of how important fair housing enforcement is.
12 Discrimination really is worsening our city's housing
13 crisis. It entrenches inequality and segregation, and
14 SOI discrimination specifically is undermining New
15 York City's really commendable investments in rental
16 assistance programs recently that are a pathway to
17 housing for so many New Yorkers. And it's been over
18 10 years since New York City has passed source of
19 income laws, but tenants are still facing pervasive
20 discrimination. They're getting ghosted or rejected
21 outright or frozen where, you know, they're not
getting texts back. And the Mayor's Management
Report has noted a decrease in voucher utilization
rates and median search times over the past three

1 years. The NYU Furman Center reported a couple years
2 ago that only about 53 percent of NYCHA Section 8
3 recipients were able to find housing within 180 days.
4 A lot of that is due to discrimination. And so as the
5 city is implementing new voucher programs, investing
6 in CityFHEPs and the Housing Access Voucher program
7 that HPD is rolling out, it really has to confront
8 these barriers caused by discrimination. We're
9 looking forward to the future of the Commission. It's
10 being reinvigorated by a new commissioner who really
11 understands fair housing laws, but the agency remains
12 underfunded, hiring restrictions that make it too
13 slow to respond to New Yorkers' needs. So in addition
14 to the additional \$10 million, we are also urging the
15 city to exempt CCHR from the OMB policy of allotment,
16 the two-for-one hiring freeze, the PEGs, all of that.
17 Then that's it. Thank you.

18 FUNMI AKINNAWONU: Good afternoon, Chair
19 Nurse, and thank you for holding this hearing. My
20 name is Funmi Akinawonu, the Senior Policy Analyst
21 of the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies. We
are a social policy and advocacy organization that
advocates for economic security for all New Yorkers.
Like many of my colleagues, I'm also a member of the

1 Human Rights Law Working Group. I'll try not to
2 parrot too many of the same points, but CCHR is
3 critically underfunded and understaffed, and it has
4 been chronically so for several years. And this has
5 created a real gap between the robust nature of New
6 York City's Human Rights Law and the reality that New
7 Yorkers are being— are not able to receive justice in
8 a context in which the city has been so invested in
9 affordability. It is— it undermines all of the city's
10 efforts if, you know, it's housing— those who receive
11 housing vouchers are facing source of income
12 discrimination and don't have a forum to address this
13 issue. Or those who are, you know, seeking employment
14 are facing harassment and don't have a place to
15 enforce their rights. So this has a particularly high
16 impact on low-wage workers across the city. And in
17 this, you know, particular moment in which the
18 federal counterparts for CCHR, EEOC, HUD, the
19 Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights,
20 the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division,
21 these agencies that would enforce employment
discrimination, address housing discrimination, and
discrimination in education for those with
disabilities. If all of those protections are not

1
2 enforceable at the federal level due to changes in
3 policies, due to reductions in staff, it is
4 incredibly critical, as it has always been critical,
5 for people to have a forum in order to enforce those
6 rights. And so CCHR needs to increase its funding to
7 \$25 million, as well as, address the cumbersome
8 processes, including the two-for-one allotment within
9 OMB that are preventing CCHR from filling its
10 vacancies. But also in this moment when there are so
11 many talented attorneys, investigators, folks with
12 incredible civil rights experience who are leaving
13 the federal government, CCHR is losing the
14 opportunity to recruit and hire these folks, and
15 that's a real loss for New Yorkers. So thank you so
16 much for your time.

14 MICHELLE LYONS: Good afternoon, Chair-
15 council. My name is Michelle Lyons and I reside in
16 the Bronx. I've been there for almost 30 years. I've
17 been having situations started in- during the
18 pandemic back in 2009 when it started. I had problems
19 with my employer. I had problems with my subsidy-
20 rent subsidy program. I had problems with my
21 landlord, and I was unfortunately not able to get any
support and assistance in reference to the agency.

1 I'm not sure, because I heard a lot of them speak
2 about- though they didn't have enough employees to
3 assist me in my situation, but also I wasn't on- I
4 was unable to like reach out to them. Like, you know,
5 when I lost my- I'm a former employee, so I don't
6 have a phone. I don't trust the internet. I'm like,
7 with the- there's just- I'm not very comfortable with
8 that. So it's difficult for me to go into these city
9 agencies and state agency, if they ask me, do you
10 have a phone, do you have a telephone, email, and I
11 speak to them and I say unfortunately not. For some
12 reason, I don't know if it's just a security purposes
13 or what- a new security in the system, it don't allow
14 me to get any type of support as- like go to reach
15 out to them. They don't even make an attempt to even
16 call them to let them know my situation, so they
17 probably don't even know I'm there. This is the
18 security guard I'm referring to, and not the agencies
19 that, you know, I'm coming for support- and let them
20 address my concerns to them. That's basically what
21 I'm trying to do. I just- I'm looking for someone to
help me, because I'm in a process of being convicted-
evict- eviction and I need some lawyer support, some
assistance in reference to helping me- prevent me

1
2 from becoming homeless. So, I'm coming to the council
3 to see if anything, like, they can do, because I try
4 to reach out to my councilman, my- but they just
5 changed them, changed it, so I guess they trying to,
6 like, get things together because it's new. So I'm
7 having difficulties with the, the staff, reaching out
8 to them. So, but I don't know. I'm just coming for
9 help. I don't know what to do.

10 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: If you can give your-
11 well, I guess you don't have a phone, right, is what
12 you're saying? Okay.

13 MICHELLE LYONS: I have a- currently I
14 have an address.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Okay. So we
16 have your address. So, let's see who your council
17 member is. And we can-

18 MICHELLE LYONS: [interposing] Because I'm
19 not- I'm sorry.

20 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Oh, go ahead.

21 MICHELLE LYONS: I'm not sure if you
familiar with the Article 78. I'm- I don't know if
you're familiar with that, because I'm trying- I'm
sorry. I'm trying- I'm trying to prevent my subsidy
pro- my rent subsidy program from terminating my

1 section- my Section 8 due to me not able to reach out
2 to them due to the changes during the COVID, me
3 trying to reach out to them through phone, coming up
4 into the agency, and not successful getting to them.
5 So that's- I need help in that as well.

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, so let me think
7 for a minute. If you hang- if you just hang here for
8 a little bit, let me think about what a next step
9 could be and, and how we can get you connected to
someone to support.

10 MICHELLE LYONS: Thank you. Appreciate
11 it.

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you so much for
13 your testimony. I really appreciate it. Thank you all
14 for being here. And we'll definitely be continuing
15 the conversation. Thank you. Now online we have
Cristobal Gutierrez. If you're there, you can begin.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

17 CRISTOBAL GUTIERREZ: Good afternoon. Can
18 you hear me?

19 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: We can hear you. You
20 can begin.

21 CRISTOBAL GUTIERREZ: Okay, okay, thank
you. Hi, I'm Cristobal Gutierrez. I'm a staff

1 attorney for Make the Road New York, and I am here as
2 part of the working- the New York City Human Rights
3 Law Working Group, as well, mainly to testify. And
4 thank you, Chair Council Member Sandy Nurse, for your
5 leadership and the committee. I'm here mainly to
6 testify as to why it's important that the Commission
7 is duly funded in the \$25 million that we're asking,
8 and it's because undocumented workers really can't go
9 anywhere else other than the Commission when they
10 face discrimination and including sexual harassment
11 at the workplace and/or in their housing or public
12 accommodations. The federal government has increased
13 immigration enforcement against undocumented workers
14 to a level that has not been priorly seen in our
15 country. And the surveillance of undocumented workers
16 has included sharing information between federal
17 agencies that has been protected, that has been
18 deemed as private for decades and protected, like the
19 IRS passing information to ICE. As advocates, we
20 cannot in good conscience advise our clients to go to
21 federal enforcement agencies like the EEOC or the
Department of Housing and Urban Development because
of the risk that they could share our clients'
personal information with immigration authorities.

1
2 The State Division of Human Rights is an agency that
3 really does not have the capacity to take the cases,
4 and we have not gone to them for over a decade, I
5 would say. All these categories— we have one of the
6 most progressive laws in the country because we have
7 such a great number of protected categories like
8 perceived immigration status or gender identity or
9 race, and all these categories can only— perceived
10 immigration status, gender identity, and national
11 origin— national origin is more complicated— but
12 perceived immigration status and gender identity,
13 they can only go to the Commission to find meaningful
14 redress. And I want to share a client of mine,
15 Teresa, who worked at a massage parlor and was
16 brutally raped by her employer. Fearing the
17 retaliation and the loss of her sole source of
18 income, she was forced by her employer into
19 performing sex work in the massage parlor.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you for your
17 testimony. Time has expired.

18 CRISTOBAL GUTIERREZ: Thank you. I've
19 just— we'll finish. Under the threat of being accused
20 of infidelity to her husband. Nearly five years
21 later, the case still remains in the— at the

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Commission without proper redress. We have probable cause, but we really don't have anything else. I ask and request that as city council, you please increase the budget of the Commission. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you, Cristobal. If you are submitting written testimony as well, we'd love to hear more about that case, what- to the degree in which you can share, so we can use it to further advocate. But thank you for your testimony. Okay, I think we've, we've reached the end of the road, friends. Thank you all. Thank you to you all here behind the dais with me, and thank you to the Sergeants and all the tech people. Okay, thank you all. We're closing the Hearing.[gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date May 4, 2026