

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY
WITH THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
SENIOR CENTERS AND FOOD
SECURITY

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February 19, 2026
Start: 1:05 p.m.
Recess: 3:16 p.m.

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

B E F O R E: Susan Zhuang,
Chairperson for the Committee on
Aging

Darlene Mealy,
Chairperson for the Subcommittee
on Senior Centers and Food
Security

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Gale A. Brewer
Harvey D. Epstein
Amanda Farias
James F. Gennaro
Shanel Thomas-Henry

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

Ryan Murray
DFTA

Jacob Berman
IBO

Amanda Raikes-Williams
IBO

Kevin Kiproviski
Live-On NY

Kevin Jones
AARP NY

Jeanette Estima
Citymeals

Jeannine Cahill-Jackson
Legal Aid Society

Khristel Simmons
Goodard Riverside

Anita Kwok
United Neighborhood Houses

Solomon Smart
Bronx Works

Shyvonne Noboa
Sunnyside Community Services

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

Debra Knight
Sage NYC

Evelyn Garcia
Lenox Hill Neighborhood House

Tamika Mapp
68th Assembly District Part D

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ON SENIOR CENTERS AND FOOD SECURITY 4

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Testing, testing. This is a
3 microphone check for the New York City Council
4 Hearing from the Committee on Aging jointly with the
5 Subcommittee on Senior Centers and Food Security.
6 Today's date is February 19, 2026, and we're located
7 at 250 Broadway in Hearing Room 3. This is being
8 recorded by Sergeant Ben Levy (SP?).

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon and welcome to
10 today's New York City Council Hearing for the
11 Committee on Aging, joint with the Committee on
12 Senior Centers and Food Security.

13 At this time, please silence all electronic
14 devices. If you would like to testify, you must fill
15 out a witness slip with one of the Sergeant at Arms.
16 Just a reminder, no one may approach the dais at any
17 time during this hearing.

18 Chairs, we are ready to begin.

19 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Good afternoon. I'm Council
20 Member Susan Zhuang, newly appointed Chair of New
21 York City Council's Committee on Aging.

22 Thank you all for joining us today Hearing on
23 Conditions at Older Adult Centers. I want to start
24 by saying how exciting and humbled I am to have been
25 elected for this role. I often hear from my older

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1
2 constituents and their families and friends about how
3 important the service DFTA provides. I also often
4 hear about issues they face in receiving those
5 services.

6 From food security to ensure that older adults
7 are able to age in a place with dignity, I'm
8 committed to making New York City a better, safer and
9 a more welcome place for older adults. I want to
10 thank Speaker Menin for trusting me for this
11 important role. I also want to recognize the
12 following Council Members that are present today. I
13 have Council Member Aldebol and Council Member
14 Brewer, the Chair of Subcommittee on Aging Center and
15 the Food Security Chair Mealy. Uhm, I think Eric
16 Dinowitz was here, and Council Member Eric Dinowitz
17 and Council Member Thomas-Henry on the Zoom. And
18 with that, we will now move to today's topic,
19 Conditions at Older Adult Centers.

20 As we know, older adults make up about 16 percent
21 and are the fastest growing segment of our city's
22 population. Older Adult Center or OAC's serve a
23 vital role, providing access to activities, resources
24 and social engagement for older adults. Despite
25 this, OAC's are often in dire need of repairs and the

1
2 improvements. Many special adults located in NYCHA
3 facilities have broken HVAC systems, deteriorating
4 floors, malfunctioned elevator, outdated kitchen
5 equipment and aging transportation vans.

6 In the last session, the Council acted by
7 provisioning \$5 million a first of its kind funding
8 initiative geared towards fixing and they improved
9 our OAC's. However, more must be done. We look
10 forward to hear from the Administration's path
11 forward and I want to thank Representative from DFTA
12 for being here today.

13 I will also - we will also be hearing the
14 following the legislation: Intro. Number 238,
15 sponsored by Council Member Crystal Hudson, which was
16 previously heard last session at the Introduction
17 Number 237 on September 22, 2025, and the Intro.
18 Number 280, sponsored by Council Member Linda Lee,
19 which was previously heard last session as
20 Introduction Number 770, also on September 22, 2025.

21 Food Security is a special important issue for
22 older adults, according to New York Health
23 Foundation. A high percentage of older adults in
24 each borough in the city do not have enough to eat,
25 reaching about 11 percent and the 17 percent depend

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2 on the borough, which this bill, Bill 62 addresses
3 the issue. The first of the bills we are hearing
4 today Intro. 238, sponsored by Council Member Hudson,
5 could require DFTA to establish a grab and go meal at
6 Older Adult Centers. It will be a daily program
7 valuable to all members at OAC's.

8 The second bill sponsored by Council Member Lee,
9 is Introduction 280 which would require home
10 delivered meals to be delivered each day of the
11 calendar year, including weekends.

12 Currently, home delivered meals are only
13 delivered on weekdays and usually only one meal a day
14 is delivered. For more than 24,000 homebound seniors
15 who rely on this program, it's not enough. I want to
16 thank both sponsors for working hard to assure
17 vulnerable older New Yorkers have enough to eat.

18 I will now pass to Council Member Chair Mealy who
19 will make a statement on your agenda, legislation.

20 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Thank you Chair. You hear
21 me? Alright, good afternoon, I'm Council Member
22 Darlene Mealy, Chair of the Subcommittee of Senior
23 Centers and Food Insecurity. I am excited to Co-
24 Chair this hearing with Susan Zhuang and I want to
25 thank Julie Menin for entrusting me in this Committee

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2 in which I love and seniors are dear to me. Older
3 adults are a vital part of our city's fabric and
4 Older Adult Centers play a critical role in fighting
5 food insecurity in older adult population. My
6 Subcommittee and this Council are dedicated to
7 ensuring that older adults have the nutritional food
8 they need and deserve. We are hearing two bills
9 today, Introduction 238, sponsored by Council Member
10 Hudson and Introduction 280, sponsored by Council
11 Member Lee, which will help increase older adults
12 access to food by expanding two already existing
13 programs, Grab and Go hmmm, meals and home delivery
14 meals. There are many ways in which we can utilize
15 our older adult centers to fight food insecurity and
16 we will continue to explore options to improve this
17 ability for our seniors.

18 And I want to thank my colleague for Chairing
19 this meeting with me and I'm looking forward to
20 serving with you and I will pass this back over to
21 our Chair Zhuang.

22 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you. Uhm, now - thank
23 you and now I want to pass the microphone to
24 Committee Counsel to administer the oath to members
25 of the Administration.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair. Good
3 afternoon. If you could please raise your right
4 hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole
5 truth, and nothing but the truth and to respond
6 honestly to Council Member questions before this
7 Committee?

8 RYAN MURRAY: I will.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may proceed with your
10 testimony.

11 RYAN MURRAY: Good afternoon Chairs and
12 congratulations on your appointment to the Committee
13 and reappointment in expansion of the work that we
14 will be doing together between the Department for the
15 Aging and the Council.

16 My name is Ryan Murray, I am the Executive Deputy
17 Commissioner and Chief Program Officer for the New
18 York City Department for the Aging, NYC Aging, which
19 many of you still refer to affectionately as DFTA.

20 I am grateful for the opportunity to speak with
21 you today about these two bills, which are directly
22 related to our meal programming and services for
23 older New Yorkers. The ability to age in place in
24 New York City and our mutual goal of building an age
25 inclusive city, centered around community based care.

1
2 As we frequently say, nearly two million New Yorkers
3 are age 60 or older and that number is expected to
4 increase significantly in the next decade. As the
5 city's population ages, so does the need for expanded
6 services to help older adults remain in their homes
7 and communities and age with dignity.

8 This includes functioning centers in up to date
9 spaces where older adults can socialize and access
10 services. We're committed to ensuring that centers
11 run by our network of providers are welcoming and
12 safe places for older adults.

13 Older adults are particularly vulnerable to
14 challenges like social isolation, financial
15 insecurity, and limited access to culturally
16 competent care, which can worsen such conditions such
17 as depression, anxiety, and cognitive decline.

18 At NYC Aging, we're particularly sensitive to the
19 connection between financial insecurity and food
20 insecurity. These two challenges for the growing
21 population of older New Yorkers possess one of the
22 most pressing threats to the ability for our city's
23 population to age in place and the communities that
24 they've built with the dignity they deserve.

1
2 It is clear to us that older adults experiencing
3 food insecurity will more than likely also experience
4 financial insecurity, which affects other areas of
5 life.

6 When we provide a meal for an older adult, we are
7 alleviating a specific concern, which prevents them
8 from meeting another basic need, like housing, health
9 care, buying prescriptions or any basic facet of
10 life. That is why we view these two introductions we
11 are discussing today as fundamental to the work that
12 we do.

13 As we've said in past hearings, older adult
14 centers occupy a range of building types and
15 ownership structures. A requirement of the Older
16 Adult Center RFP, is that providers retain site
17 control of their location at the time the contractors
18 registered. For OACs in private buildings, this may
19 be a lease or a written agreement if the OAC is not
20 paying rent to the organization which owns the
21 building.

22 For NYCHA based OAC,s we have operating
23 agreements in place in lieu of leases, which define
24 the terms of how the center will operate on that
25 site. Some OAC's are part of a larger organization,

1 which own the buildings in which they're located.
2
3 Additionally, there are some OACs which operate in
4 city owned buildings. This range of OAC facility
5 type means that capital improvements take a different
6 form based on what type of building or ownership
7 exists for the OAC.

8 While our partners at NYCHA are not here today,
9 we do take our role in the NYCHA spaces very
10 seriously. As you know, roughly one-third of our OAC
11 portfolio is located in NYCHA buildings, and we
12 worked very closely with NYCHA to address those
13 issues.

14 In our last hearing on this topic, where I
15 testified in January 2025, we were joined by NYCHA to
16 discuss our partnership regarding programs locating
17 in the developments they own. We're happy to
18 continue conversations with you about NYCHA base OACs
19 but would like to also have them at the table for the
20 benefit of the Council.

21 Two of aging core services are Older Adult
22 Centers and Home Delivered Meals program, which are
23 intrinsically connected to providing meals and
24 nutrition assistance to older adults. In recent
25 years, we have altered our own thinking and clearly

1 see congregate, our home delivered meal programs,
2 which we provide as food, as medicine. These are
3 essential services for healthy living and preventing
4 social isolation which could affect older adults at a
5 very basic level. The work done by OACs, HDM
6 programs and our case management agency providers
7 combats poverty and financed security, which
8 addresses the needs when struggling with activities
9 of daily living.
10

11 For older adults experiencing food insecurity, it
12 is typically represented by financial insecurity and
13 we continually work to meet those two distinct needs
14 within our network of providers. We continue to see
15 significant levels of need in meal delivery, with a
16 current record of more than ten million meals served
17 to older New Yorkers throughout the five boroughs.

18 This includes 6.1 million meals served at the
19 older adult centers, the 300 plus centers that you're
20 aware of across the network, and 4.2 million meals
21 delivered by our HDM providers. We fully anticipate
22 that we will match that number again at the close of
23 this physical year in a few months and we're
24 confident that the aging population in New York City
25

1 and that NYC Aging serves will continue to serve more
2 than 10 million meals annually in years to come.
3

4 This is an incredible achievement when
5 considering the dollar to dollar impact of meal
6 provision as an anti-poverty measure in the lives of
7 older adults. When the Older Americans Act was
8 passed in 1965, a reason for creating this pivotal
9 legislation was to address older adult poverty
10 nationwide through nutrition and support programs.

11 While much has changed about being an older adult
12 since the 1960's, life expectancy increasing of
13 course and longevity being central to how we live,
14 the basic human need and for dignified life, meals,
15 health, agency, income, all remain the same.

16 The purpose of today's hearing is to address
17 Introduction 238, a bill to establish Grab and Go
18 Meal program and Introduction 280, a bill to require
19 home delivered meals every day of the calendar year.

20 Regarding these Introductions, we agree that
21 these bills could improve meal delivery and nutrition
22 programs for older adults but we want to highlight
23 the operational challenges, which can be addressed
24 during the negotiation phases of the bill as they
25 age. Particularly regarding Grab and Go options at

1
2 OACs, we're mindful of the federal requirements in
3 the older Americans Act, specifically titled 3C1,
4 which is congregate meal funding necessitates that
5 congregate meals provided at older adult centers and
6 services happen at the same location.

7 Without consideration of the Older Americans Act
8 Mandate, or changes to federal law there will be
9 funding implications to Intro. 238, which diminishes
10 the role of the federal government in reimbursing
11 those meals.

12 Similarly, Introduction 280, would necessitate
13 seven days of daily meal deliveries and is currently
14 achieved through public private partnerships which
15 supplement the NYC Aging HDM contracts. Nonetheless,
16 the daily meal delivery requirement is difficult to
17 achieve given the labor needs and will need to be
18 carefully considered as we look at various models and
19 their associated costs.

20 We look forward to discussing these bills further
21 with you and in the future, as these important topics
22 of older adults and to NYC Aging. I want to say that
23 I greatly appreciate both sponsors of today's
24 introductions, Council Member Hudson and Council
25

1
2 Member Lee, who have been so collaborative and
3 forthright with us on these bills.

4 We are always grateful to have a relationship
5 with the Council, which I know we will continue,
6 where we can find solutions that work for the agency,
7 the providers, clients, and the shared goals of the
8 Council, which we share and we think are aligned.

9 At NYC Aging, we are pleased to provide services
10 to older New Yorkers through our OACs, our Home
11 Delivered Meals distributed to homebound older New
12 Yorkers and we look forward to continuing these
13 efforts to address the needs of the growing
14 population in New York City.

15 I want to thank all of you for your commitment to
16 older New Yorkers over the years, that partnership,
17 that alignment, those shared goals have truly made
18 the work of this agency more successful. Thank you
19 and I look forward to answering your questions.

20 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you and also I want to
21 recognize Council Member Amanda Farias is here. Uhm
22 and then let's move to the Q&A portion of this
23 hearing.

1
2 I do have a lot of questions. The first
3 question, how many OACs does DFTA oversee and provide
4 funding for.

5 RYAN MURRAY: We oversee approximately over 300
6 Older Adult Centers, which we fund.

7 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: And like how do they divide
8 it by borough, by any concentration area?

9 RYAN MURRAY: Sure, so our programs as you are
10 aware are across the five boroughs. I'm happy to
11 follow up with a detailed list with you with a
12 breakdown of where the centers are, how many are in
13 each borough and community district.

14 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Okay, we're going follow up
15 with you definitely. And also, second question, uhm
16 can DFTA provide the information on the type of
17 buildings and where those building OACs are located?

18 RYAN MURRAY: Certainly, we can.

19 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Yeah and are you going to
20 give me afterwards?

21 RYAN MURRAY: We will.

22 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Okay and also, I want to
23 know how many NYCHA buildings?

24 RYAN MURRAY: Sure, for NYCHA, there are about
25 106 Older Adult Centers located in NYCHA facilities.

2 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: So, it's half in NYCHA
3 buildings?

4 RYAN MURRAY: One-third.

5 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: One-third.

6 RYAN MURRAY: Yeah, so it's a three, three, and
7 three. Uhm, privately owned, city owned and operated
8 and NYCHA buildings.

9 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: So, before you said 300 OACs
10 does DFTA oversee and provides funding for is 300 and
11 the 460, is in NYCHA buildings?

12 RYAN MURRAY: 106.

13 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: 106, okay.

14 RYAN MURRAY: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Are any location of where is
16 lack of OACs or too few OACs in the neighborhood? Is
17 there anyone complaining about that?

18 RYAN MURRAY: I can't speak to specific
19 complaints today. What I can say is that we're
20 always looking at the distribution of Older Adult
21 Centers across the five boroughs and in the context
22 also the population growth, population shifts. Uhm,
23 you may have heard us at Council hearings before talk
24 about hot zones and cold zones across the five
25 boroughs, where there's some shifts in population

1 where we've seen significant growth in older adults
2 and therefore, when you look at those, there is an
3 opportunity in the future when there is a request for
4 proposal as an example or if it's through
5 discretionary process uh to possibly look at those
6 locations. But that is a process that we're always
7 considering.

9 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: And also, a lot of younger
10 senior adults age between 60 to 64, any service you
11 guys particularly provide to this group of people?

12 RYAN MURRAY: Sure, so I'll take a step back,
13 when we think about and talk about older adults and
14 with older adults, I must add, we acknowledge that
15 the needs like New York, uh New Yorkers are diverse
16 and those needs vary. So, I wouldn't want to suggest
17 that there's one specific thing that works for an age
18 group. What we are seeing, however, and this is
19 anecdotally because we get feedback from the network
20 continuously. We pull together advisory board
21 sessions with older adults uhm where we found that
22 some of the programming folks want may want more
23 exercise and recreation programs. People talk a lot
24 about wanting to go on trips and others are also
25 looking to work and continue to volunteer.

1
2 So, those are some anecdotal things that we find
3 in the data for folks in the 60 to 64 range but I
4 don't want to pigeon hole individuals because the
5 needs are diverse, also culturally diverse depending
6 on the community folks are in, depending on where
7 they might call home. Whether it's New York City and
8 other state or another country that folks might be
9 healing from. Culturally speaking, there's a range
10 of needs but we are very aware that we should be
11 thinking about how we respond to those needs with our
12 provider network as a part of the age cohort as well
13 as cultural sensitive programming.

14 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: So, is any particular
15 program you have folks on this group?

16 RYAN MURRAY: Sure, I'll say this, what we
17 started three years ago, uhm was an event that I
18 think many of you have been a part of talent is
19 timeless. We've also stepped it up in terms of
20 making sure that there's public events. You came to
21 Chair an event in Foley Square last year where we
22 were doing yoga and meditation and so on. So, what
23 we found in general, is that the need for aging to be
24 a part of amplifying exercise and entertainment and
25 talent is something that's very important for folks

1
2 in the younger age groups but it's not solely to that
3 group because we find that our purchase patient range
4 is across the age groups.

5 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Okay and uh I have a lot of
6 questions. Let me pass the microphone to my
7 colleagues and then - Chair Mealy, you have
8 questions?

9 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: I just want to thank AARP in
10 the house. Thank you for showing up and showing out
11 and that's what we have to do and I want to thank
12 Mount Ararat Senior Center, they are online and we're
13 getting them online that they could see these
14 hearings, that they would know what we're talking
15 about because it's about them. It's not about us.
16 It's about them, so thank you Mount Ararat, they are
17 online. We got to get technology more in our senior
18 centers.

19 Okay, I have quick questions uhm then I can pass
20 it over to my colleagues that they can - uh with
21 Intro. 280, home delivery meals, what meals must Home
22 Delivery Meal program providers according to the
23 guidelines and how often must each kind of meal be
24 delivered?

2 RYAN MURRAY: So, our Home Delivery Meal program
3 as you are maybe aware, is four individuals who don't
4 have the ability to prepare a meal themselves or have
5 someone else who can prepare that meal at home.

6 That need might be temporary or it might be more
7 permanent. So, our case management agencies where we
8 help folks with navigating supports, if people are
9 homebound and our in home services like home here,
10 cleaning and so on is the gateway for our Home
11 Delivered Meals program.

12 So, who is the program for? Again, unable to
13 provide uh, to prepare a meal at home on your own.
14 There's no one else in your life that is preparing
15 that meal. The range of how that happens though, so
16 an individual might need a meal two or three times a
17 week or there may be individuals based on their case
18 management and their life needs who will require a
19 meal every single day, right? And so, that varies.

20 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: What deliveries, uhm if
21 someone is vegan, they are all in the same delivery
22 truck when they deliver them?

23 RYAN MURRAY: Sure. The way our program is
24 structured, there are about 17 providers across the
25 five boroughs who take on a geographic area. Based

1 on the meal plan, so the individuals who are
2 recipients of meals are assessed and I know Council
3 Member Brewer would love this. If you're a vegan,
4 uhm, you know the meal that is part of your plan, is
5 tailored to you or a vegetarian. If it is a kosher
6 meal or a halal meal or other cultural needs in a
7 particular geographic area, we look at 15 percent if
8 there is a particular population that might prefer
9 you know Asian meals or -

11 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: No separate trucks.

12 RYAN MURRAY: There's no separate truck.

13 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: All [INAUDIBLE 00:24:51].

14 RYAN MURRAY: It is - it is each - correct. Each
15 provider is responsible for making sure that they can
16 respond to the needs of the individuals who are on
17 their caseload.

18 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: So, who - who uhm - look over
19 - because sometimes you can't cross contaminate some
20 people don't like pork. So, have you all inspected
21 these trucks anyway to see how they are really being
22 separated inside the truck before they are delivered
23 to individuals?

24

25

2 RYAN MURRAY: Sure, we have uh - so at our
3 agency, our programs are separated into program
4 officers who go out often -

5 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: They go out and inspect.

6 RYAN MURRAY: And we have our nutrition advisors,
7 many of whom are registered dieticians and they look
8 at the one, the production. They make sure that the
9 food standards are followed. They also look at a
10 food policy and make sure that they're meeting the
11 nutritional values. So, safety, nutritional quality,
12 and then looking at the operation is the things that
13 are our nutrition advisors do, yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Okay, uhm one thing I wanted
15 to ask in regards to the deliveries. If they go
16 seven days a week, are you paying the driver's extra?
17 Will funds be incorporated in that also if they go
18 seven days a week?

19 RYAN MURRAY: So, one of the things that we - we-
20 as you know, we contract with our providers and so,
21 they will follow all the typical guidelines that they
22 have for labor. Some of that, if you're asking about
23 time and a half and those kinds of policies. Those
24 are at the provider level right? Because you could
25 also have a staggered schedule with an individual,

1 right where you know you're not going 40 hours a week
2 and then a weekend where it's you know a 60 hour
3 week. It could be that the individual is working
4 four hours a day to get through the deliveries and
5 they spread that out across the week, if there is a
6 seven day delivery, that would be part of the case
7 but those are for the providers.
8

9 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Okay, my last question and I
10 will turn it back over to the Chair. Has DFTA
11 explored requiring providers to deliver fresh produce
12 and groceries so that the older adults who can and
13 are able to cook for themselves?

14 RYAN MURRAY: So, our - what this program, the
15 Home Delivered Meal program in particular, is focused
16 on folks who aren't. What we have done though is
17 with the state, we set a record last year of having
18 the most vouchers for a Farmers Market program.
19 70,000 vouchers were distributed to older adults.

20 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: How many?

21 RYAN MURRAY: 70,000 were distributed to older
22 adults last year for the Farmers Market coupon
23 program and those are \$25 vouchers where folks can go
24 and get fresh fruits and vegetables.

2 So, that is one of the things that we partner on.
3 There are community partners who also take that on
4 but this particular program, home delivered meals is
5 focused on prepared meals for individuals.

6 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Okay, thank you so much.
7 I'll hold my other questions. I'll turn it back over
8 to our Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you and the Council
10 Member Brewer.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much.
12 Uhm, a couple issues, one is you know the Mayor has
13 this 1.5 percent mandate to cut and I just hope it's
14 not going to be from the centers. Can you be
15 specific as to what programs or services could be cut
16 with this 1.5 percent mandate?

17 RYAN MURRAY: I don't want to get ahead of the
18 budget season and testimony for that. We obviously,
19 as with every other agency, our Chief Financial
20 Officer, we have an incoming Commissioner and working
21 with the new leadership at OMB, folks are actively
22 looking at what programs you know if there are
23 savings to be realized but we're not currently
24 talking about cuts. So, I just want that to be clear

1 but I don't want to get ahead of budget season and
2 those deliberations. You're welcome.

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: There was a \$5 million
5 capital investment for the centers, thanks to the
6 City Council and I'm just wondering how many have had
7 infrastructure repaired? How have - are still to be
8 considered and how you're making a decision because
9 as you know, there are so many repairs needed. How
10 are you dealing with this \$5 million?

11 RYAN MURRAY: Sure. Uhm, I will ask the Council
12 for the ability to follow up with project lists on
13 those projects in the intake. I'll just give you
14 some background, our team actively has at least 120
15 something projects that are on our radar for various
16 types of improvements, where we are either providing
17 technical advice to helping folks to redesign a space
18 or might be working closely with NYCHA on a
19 particular issue that needs to be addressed.
20 Obviously first and foremost, we look at health and
21 safety, right? Places have to be health safe to
22 enter. Where there are upgrades to a facility,
23 there's an HVAC issue, as you well know because we
24 talk about this every few months. That is a longer
25 window. Sometimes it's within what our agency would

1
2 coordinate and other times because there might be
3 something with a roof that requires much more repair,
4 we need to work closely with whatever the ownership
5 party is, whether it's NYCHA or private. So, I'll be
6 happy to follow up with our current projects list
7 with you to give you a sense of where those projects
8 are.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. I mean the
10 NYCHA ones, that third NYCHA is a big problem and I
11 have lots of NYCHA developments and lots of NYCHA
12 centers and it's always an issue. So, and there's
13 very little transparency. In other words, we don't
14 know when the money is being spent. Now, some of it
15 is NYCHAs fault. I'm not saying it's DFTAs fault but
16 I do think it should be more transparent where this
17 \$5 million or other dollars are going because nobody
18 knows. We all spend hours calling and calling to
19 find out.

20 So, the ones that have co-violations that are
21 NYCHA, do they - are they or maybe you don't know,
22 are they prioritized? See what happens is, you got
23 to deal with Aging, the Fire Department, NYCHA, the
24 Health Department and so on and so forth and there's
25 a lot of code violations. So, I just was wondering,

1
2 how you think in the future to be more transparent
3 about those infrastructure issues, particularly with
4 the NYCHA?

5 RYAN MURRAY: Well, as I said in my testimony, I
6 would want to make sure that NYCHA is with me in the
7 conversation.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

9 RYAN MURRAY: Out of respect for them. However,
10 if we - if there is a need for additional
11 transparency, that is something that we absolutely
12 can look at and as you know, we are grateful to
13 Council for all the investments that you make. So,
14 you've had us before talk about the HVACs
15 improvements that we've made to certain centers. If
16 there's an additional level of transparency reporting
17 that we need to consider, happy to look at that and
18 report back to you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay and then we love
20 Lennox Hill as you know because they do scratch
21 cooking, and so, I'm wondering how you are working
22 with other centers to help do that kind of scratch
23 cooking? Obviously you need capital investments in
24 the kitchens and you need to have you know the
25 support that goes with that but is there any

1 discussion about how to work with the Lennox Hill
2 teaching kitchen to make other centers have as
3 excellent a meal as what is provided at Lennox Hill?
4

5 RYAN MURRAY: I don't want to commit Lennox Hill
6 to additional work yet.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Well, we'd love to help.

8 RYAN MURRAY: But Council Member and Chairs and
9 everyone here, you are aware that part of our
10 oversight is really technical assistance. So, on our
11 side as well, our team of nutritionists are often in
12 partnership with others providing technical
13 assistance on how to iterate meals. In one of our
14 systems, we capture, this is just an example, all of
15 the menus across the programs and we will provide
16 technical assistance on how to make sure your menu is
17 more pleasing, nutritious, as well as obviously
18 following the guidelines.

19 In our centers, we also last year, uhm,
20 implemented a kiosk so that people can do you know
21 the - how good is the food on a particular day? And
22 we take that data very seriously and are working with
23 each of the centers to make that - we rotate across
24 the network where there are improvements to be made
25 that is real time data that we have. So, there is of

1 course, you need good chefs and there's an investment
2 in making sure that folks improve.
3

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, obviously good food
5 will bring more older adults and we want more of them
6 at the center, so - and you know I hate plant-based
7 Monday's, Tuesday's, Wednesday's, or whatever the
8 hell the day is.

9 RYAN MURRAY: It varies.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I think they should have
11 it if they want it but they shouldn't have to have
12 it. So, I won't - one last question and then I'll
13 stop. The older adult social centers, those are the
14 private ones, I do not like them.

15 And so, are you aware, I mean obviously they are
16 pulling individuals from our - the third and the
17 third and the third. The ones that you fund. What
18 are you doing in terms of their I think malfeasance
19 in terms of providing services to our seniors?

20 RYAN MURRAY: So, as you know, a prior Chair, uhm
21 Margaret Chin -

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Margaret Chin, she and I
23 worked on this issue.
24
25

1
2 RYAN MURRAY: Exactly. Uhm, helped to implement
3 with us our ombuds program for social adult daycare
4 programs.

5 As a reminder to everyone, our oversight
6 responsibility for the SADCs, we don't operate them.
7 We are making sure that they're registered. That the
8 hours of operations are there. We go out where there
9 are complaints and we go out proactively for
10 inspections. Our jurisdiction is also limited.
11 However, we do have our colleagues, whether it's the
12 State Department, the Office of Medicaid Inspector
13 General, the State Department of Health, and where
14 there are concerns about a particular operator or
15 issues that we receive, our role is to make sure that
16 they're aware and encourage them to follow up in
17 their oversight duties.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright, thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you. I'm amazed
20 Council Member Brewer asked a very good question and
21 about the \$5 million capital spending. Can you email
22 not only her, everything at once here? We'd like to
23 know what's the process. How long it takes about the
24 repair? Is that ten years or five years or one year?
25 We'd like to know because everyone is aging. No one

1
2 is getting younger; we want them to enjoy the
3 facility also.

4 And the next one, we have Council Member Amanda
5 Farias.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Thank you Chair, thank
7 you so much for being with us today. We did not plan
8 this; to talk about NYCHA and their properties but I
9 have a couple questions on some of the senior centers
10 I have in my district particularly that are actually
11 somewhat directly related to the food insecurity
12 issue that we see across this city and for our older
13 adults. I know NYCHA is not here and according to
14 your testimony, the last time you folks had a joint
15 hearing was in January of 2025, correct?

16 RYAN MURRAY: That is correct.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay, so we're over a
18 year now since you folks have been at the same table
19 to talk about this really critical issue. Glebe
20 Senior Center in my district has been closed due to
21 HVAC, mold, plumbing issues, the lot and there's
22 currently no timeline for repairs. Have you folks
23 been in direct conversation with NYCHA about a
24 potential timeline for mediation or reopening?

1
2 RYAN MURRAY: I'll tell you on every one of the
3 closed centers, we're in contact with NYCHA and any
4 other party. I know you're focused on NYCHA right
5 now but particularly with NYCHA, you've heard me say
6 this before, we do have a taskforce session, biweekly
7 meeting where we're looking at issues small and large
8 where there is a more significant issue about you
9 know whether there was a flood or leakage and then a
10 remediation plan. We do discuss timelines on again,
11 they're not here today, and so, I don't have the
12 timeline in front of me but I would want to follow-up
13 with you on that. But to your question, absolutely,
14 we do talk about timelines and we are escalating.
15 Some of these jobs require specialists at a longer
16 runway but where there is a closure to a center for
17 anyone who is listening, we spend a fair amount of
18 time making sure that there is referrals to other
19 nearby centers. If there are transportation needs
20 because they are a little further then they could be
21 for some of the folks who frequent those centers,
22 uhm, if individuals prefer not to go, we are also
23 looking at other services that can be provided to
24 those individuals.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Well, I'd love to keep
3 the conversation going. Right now, we do have an
4 interim site, location that is quite a distance away
5 from Glebe and obviously this temporary location is a
6 shared space, has some scheduling conflicts. Uhm, we
7 know that the folks that are relying on breakfast and
8 lunch services are currently unable to access meals
9 due to mobility barriers. So, would love to keep
10 this conversation going offline and figure out how to
11 best assist. On top of that, for this center
12 specifically, we have a couple development
13 opportunities coming up in the next 18 months or so
14 in the area and while we're in a temporary space, I
15 have had ongoing conversations with some of those
16 teams on how could they provide a community center
17 space. One actually directly behind the current
18 Glebe Center building.

19 So, would just like to keep talking about that.
20 Chair, if I may a couple questions? Thank you. Just
21 to the neighborhood shop at Lafayette Estates, our
22 office - my office currently provides discretionary
23 funding to help cover their rent. They had a
24 longstanding relationship with a previous developer
25 and management company that offered them a free

1 rental space. That location switched hands and the
2 new owner is now charging them a rental fee for
3 operational costs. Is DFTA conducting a facility
4 needs assessment for neighborhood shop sites to
5 identify capital upgrades needed before they become
6 emergencies and/or looking at budgetary allocations
7 to ensure that some of these new incurred costs,
8 operational costs are covered under the contract?
9

10 RYAN MURRAY: So, rent increases as you know is
11 always a concern for everyone in New York City, and
12 especially for nonprofits who operate programs. And
13 so, we are always actively looking at whether the
14 budget that the current provider has - there could be
15 shifts in if it's reasonable that is right? There's
16 shifts in what could be covered if there's a
17 reasonable increase and we could shift the budget
18 around, that is something we do.

19 Neighborhood Shop, you know Katerine Martinez is
20 not shy at all and so, she is actively working with
21 our Older Adult Center team. Our facilities group
22 that helps them think about whether or not a new
23 space is viable, appropriate, uhm it it's in the
24 right zone for the center. Those are things that
25 we're working with Katherine on as well.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Great, well if the local
3 City Council Member can help them with the
4 operational costs, I believe DFTA can do it for sure.
5 Other than that, you know the only other flag that
6 I'd like to - we don't have to talk about it today,
7 but I'd just like raise it in this hearing because I
8 have a moment. The James Monroe Community Centers,
9 another center that's on a NYCHA campus. It is while
10 physically the facility is up to date and complete,
11 it is being presented with a lot of outstanding
12 inspections and violations and such that it is still
13 keeping it unopened and I just would like to continue
14 talking about that as well. Thank you Chair for the
15 additional time.

16 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you and we have
17 Council Member Aldebol.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ALDEBOL: Thank you. I have a
19 similar question regarding a senior center located at
20 Balcom Randall Houses. That is utilized not just by
21 the folks who live there but they utilize also by our
22 seniors who live in Throggs Neck Houses and Skyler
23 Houses. It's you know 58 percent of residents in our
24 NYCHA houses are over the age of 65 and there's a
25 great need to have those services and centers for our

1 seniors to you know be able to get what they need,
2 have meals, everything, running the gamut for
3 everything and you know our - the uh centers that are
4 housed in NYCHA properties are in various states of
5 disrepair. This one in particular is closed and so,
6 seniors are - the proposal is to transport seniors to
7 other centers, which is you know it's not the best
8 solution and certainly not a long-term solution, so.
9 Just would like to have more information about where
10 we are at with reopening that center and finding a
11 location that's closer that seniors could actually
12 access. And then I had a second question about your
13 Farmers Market Voucher programs. We have no Farmers
14 Markets anywhere near folks in various parts of the
15 district. I have a very huge geographic district. I
16 have a lot of seniors who live in my district and
17 there's a lot of food insecurity in my district. So,
18 coming up with solutions for people who can cook, who
19 are mobile but are experiencing food insecurity and
20 would prefer to cook their own meals for various
21 reasons. Uhm, would like to figure out a solution
22 other than Farmers Markets, which we don't have
23 access to.
24
25

2 RYAN MURRAY: Yeah, of course and uhm, you know
3 we work also closely with the Mayor's Office of Food
4 Policy and other city agencies that operate -
5 coordinate different kinds of programs and so, uh
6 happy to think with you about what some options might
7 be for your particular Council District. You're
8 welcome.

9 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you and also, I have
10 some questions too. For additional after that \$5
11 million about the capital repairs, is any other
12 organization, senior centers in the waiting list?

13 RYAN MURRAY: Maybe I need you to state the
14 question a little differently.

15 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: So, last year, the City
16 Council initiative is \$5 million for the repairs for
17 senior centers. Is any other senior center, not
18 included in this \$5 million? Like a lot of people in
19 the waiting list.

20 Do you have that? Is any priority there? This
21 year, we can help the senior centers because as a
22 Council Member, we always see when we go to senior
23 centers, almost every single senior center needed
24 repair.

1
2 RYAN MURRAY: Sure, so the short answer is,
3 there are always needs that go beyond current
4 allocation of resources. So, yes and we're happy to
5 work with you on what those needs might look like.
6 We have as I said earlier, there are some 120
7 something projects I'm aware of that are on the list.
8 Some may not be included and covered by I should say
9 the \$5 million.

10 Our team and providers are always looking for
11 additional resources. We recently had a nonprofit
12 work with the state as an example, through one of
13 their programs to get funding to renovate an Older
14 Adult Center in Queens. And so, we always know
15 generally the needs and then we're thinking about
16 with providers how to meet those but yes, there are
17 centers beyond that go beyond the \$5 million in terms
18 of needs. Happy to follow up and talk about you
19 about those.

20 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: And do you guys have like
21 say this one elevator broken?

22 RYAN MURRAY: Sure.

23 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: It's more a priority than
24 the covered needs hinge.

2 RYAN MURRAY: We have a priority list that we
3 always prioritize as well if new funding comes in.

4 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Okay can you email everyone
5 here afterwards?

6 RYAN MURRAY: We will follow up with you.

7 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: And also, for the question I
8 have about the Grab and Go meal, what preparation of
9 OAC already offer those service.

10 RYAN MURRAY: Sure, our Older Adult Centers as I
11 said, over 300, there are 113 programs that offer
12 Grab and Go meals. A little background. This has
13 been an option for the older adult centers who
14 proposed our RFP a few years ago when it was on the
15 streets. This was one of the options and so, those
16 providers who said that this was something that was
17 relevant for their community and tailored their
18 programs, have Grab and Go as an option already. So,
19 there are 113 of those programs.

20 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: How much could they cost to
21 expand these meals to all OACs?

22 RYAN MURRAY: I'd have to follow up with you on
23 that number.

24
25

CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Okay and for home delivered meals, how much would the increase meal delivery to seven days per week?

RYAN MURRAY: Uh, our Commissioner previously testified and shared that based on the way the legislation is currently written, the estimate might be around \$27 million. That's something that we shared with you all already on the fiscal impact statement.

One of the things that I just want to ask you to consider though is you know as we talk about red line and negotiate the bill further, that may not be the final number right because you know looking at how people operationalize this. Again, there are some communities and individuals who may not want seven days a week delivery. The option should be there, we agree. We don't disagree with us responding to food insecurity but the operational way that we respond to that, you know some folks have medical appointments and other things, right? So, not everyone wants a meal every single day of the week based on how we design - we finally - we agree on the legislation and designed the program with our operators, the number might change.

2 So, that figure that you have on file is subject
3 to additional revision.

4 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Okay and also what - is any
5 map we can see how many meals delivered in every
6 neighborhood?

7 RYAN MURRAY: We could look at that. We do know
8 where deliveries happen. On any given day there are
9 about 25,000 people - in any given year, there's
10 25,000 folks who are served by the program. On any
11 given day, that number might vary again as I said
12 based on the delivery pattern but we're happy to
13 think about how to display that for a discussion.

14 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Okay, thank you. Let me
15 pass to Chair Mealy.

16 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Okay, thank you. Since
17 you're DFTA, uhm currently New York City Aging capped
18 a plan as of the Fiscal 2026 Adopted Plan totals
19 about \$75.3 million. The largest project in relation
20 to relocation of DFTA headquarters. New York City
21 Aging headquarters with the runner up being projects
22 associated with Older Adult Center renovations. So,
23 could you tell me what capital amount of dollars
24 located to renovate and address the repairs of older
25

1 adult centers? Just for your relocation with \$75.3
2 million.
3

4 RYAN MURRAY: Sure.

5 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: So, how much remodeling older
6 adult center do you feel that renovation would cost?

7 RYAN MURRAY: That is a - so as I shared earlier,
8 one of the things that I could look at are the
9 projects that are known to us today and what those
10 estimated costs might be. At the hearing where I
11 testified last year, you heard that in the hundreds
12 of millions was a figure that was floated on older
13 data for NYCHA facilities, right? So, that's just a
14 one estimate but again, the capital budget over all,
15 like for our center varies across the types of
16 operators. So, what I wouldn't want to do is give
17 you a ballpark figure today based on - because we
18 need to go back in every center right? Those needs
19 change consistently but what I am committed to doing
20 is of the projects we're aware of now, where there
21 are estimates based on the scope of work. We're
22 happy to size those and follow up with the Council
23 about those needs, knowing that there are always
24 going to be something happening in a development or
25 something happens at a center where you know it's

1
2 been snowing a lot right and there's been rain and so
3 on, and something could be effected. So, know that
4 that would be a point and number but I today, it
5 wouldn't be responsible of me to give you a ballpark
6 figure for all of our 300 centers because not every
7 single one is requiring a significant upgrade or
8 repair today. We could follow up on the 126 or there
9 about projects we're aware of.

10 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Thank you but going back to
11 my colleague, what is DFTA doing in regards to if
12 it's a center, a full desert, like my colleague just
13 said. Who is assessing to make sure that all our
14 seniors have senior centers? I'm the Chair of Senior
15 Centers. Senior food insecurity and it's alarming
16 that she does not have a senior center.

17 You know and walking distance and to make sure if
18 the majority of our seniors want fresh produce to
19 cook for themselves. Why are we not addressing those
20 issues? So, I'm looking forward to working with my
21 colleagues to make sure that fresh food that they
22 cook themselves because that's the population that
23 we're just overlooking. What is your administration
24 doing to combat that?

2 And then, the next question, how long would it
3 take an RFP for a new center to be in existence?
4 I've been waiting for one going on four years now.
5 It's going on five now.

6 RYAN MURRAY: So, we've shared with you before
7 Chair, that our planned RFP, we're in a new
8 administration -

9 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Let's not even talk about new
10 administration. I'm talking about four years. I've
11 been putting half of my budget to make sure a senior
12 center that was closed; I don't know how it was
13 closed, but when I got in office, I reopened it. I
14 make sure they have food.

15 That's millions that could have been going to
16 another part of my community but I know it's
17 important to make sure this is a 420 unit of all
18 seniors. They live in now because their senior
19 center is there. So, how long would it take my
20 colleague to get a senior center? Because to me,
21 that's saving lives.

22 RYAN MURRAY: So, one I want to -

23 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Don't forget the RFP.

24 RYAN MURRAY: Yeah, I can ask answer both
25 questions. One, on the - you're talking about Mount

1 Ararat again and so I just want to be clear, great
2 hello Mount Ararat again. I think we are aware that
3 there are 30 something, 30 - 30 hopefully partner
4 with us not come after us. Uh, 30 or so older adults
5 who are online right now I believe is what you're
6 saying. Who are participating in the older adult
7 center.
8

9 I know there are 420 something in the
10 development, 30 something participate on any given
11 day and I just want to say thank you again to
12 Claudette Macey and team at Fort Greene for stepping
13 in to make sure that -

14 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: It's about 50. We do boots
15 on the ground and we teach them sign language, so
16 it's a big population now.

17 RYAN MURRAY: Got it.

18 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Thank you.

19 RYAN MURRAY: So, the 30 that we saw before, uhm,
20 when we visited Mount Ararat, I'm glad the center is
21 open. As you are aware, I think the \$250,000 was
22 also allocated from the administration in the last
23 budget for Mount Ararat.

24 And so, as we're looking at any additional areas
25 where we don't have a center, I think I heard Throggs

1 Neck was the specific example where we've been
2 working to get that reopened. I'm happy to work with
3 any Council Member here where there are deserts. If
4 we need to have particular programming, whether it's
5 by a current operator, and it might be a meal
6 service, it might be to your point, a grab and go
7 program that is available. Those are things that
8 we're always looking to do in collaboration with the
9 community. So, happy to take that on.
10

11 On the fresh produce, just to close that out,
12 again, they are partners like City Meals on Wheels
13 and others who do have those kinds of programs and
14 through the Mayor's Office of Food Policy. If the
15 Farmers Market is not the option, with food
16 insecurity, we're committed to looking at using every
17 single tool in the toolbox to make sure that folks
18 get food on their tables.

19 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: The RFP, how long will it
20 take for RFP for a senior center?

21 RYAN MURRAY: Sure.

22 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Isn't one coming up?

23 RYAN MURRAY: We have tentatively communicated
24 that the option is there to have a request for
25 proposals that happen sometime in the spring. We

1
2 have communicated here before. The Commissioner
3 testified I think recently that our older adult
4 centers, our NORC programs and our Transportation
5 programs, have the option to be released for
6 proposals sometime this year but those are decisions
7 that we're going to have to work with the
8 administration to determine what those timelines are.
9 We're in February and so, the plans that we've had
10 are subject to being reviewed.

11 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: I have one question. How
12 often does Aging Connect receive inquiries about
13 OACs? Are seniors utilizing their services? And I'm
14 going to turn it over to my colleague.

15 RYAN MURRAY: Is your question whether or not
16 individuals are using the Older Adult Centers?

17 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: No.

18 RYAN MURRAY: Go ahead, say it again.

19 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Connect, it's connecting them
20 like calling them.

21 RYAN MURRAY: Sure, so we have our Aging Connect
22 program. We're happy to follow up with you on the
23 numbers or the number of calls that we get on Older
24 Adult Centers and so on.

25 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Is it going up or?

2 RYAN MURRAY: Our Aging Connect numbers have
3 consistently been high but again, I will follow up.
4 I don't want to make a misstatement. I am under oath
5 on the record.

6 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Thank you.

7 RYAN MURRAY: And so, I want to make sure that we
8 get you the facts. Aging Connect and 311 are the two
9 places where our calls come in, whether folks are
10 looking for a center. We also have a finder on our
11 website, where you can go in put your zip code in and
12 figure out what's nearby. It will tell you the
13 distance from the center as well and you know again,
14 if there is a center that is temporarily closed or
15 long term closed for some reason, we work with our
16 operators or provider partners to transportation.
17 Even if it's not the ideal, we want to make sure that
18 folks are able to connect to a place where they can
19 have food.

20 So, yes, our Aging Connect numbers are high. I
21 will get you the figures on those and older adults do
22 call about services whether it's our Older Adult
23 Centers or it's other programs.

24 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Thank you.

25 RYAN MURRAY: You're welcome.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Turning back over to Chair
3 Zhuang.

4 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you and is that true
5 the Grab and the Go meal are not treated as a
6 supplement to congregate meal in DFTA contract and
7 uh, considered a primary meal?

8 RYAN MURRAY: The Grab and Go as it is designed
9 and as I shared about, congregate meals under the
10 Older Americans Act have a particular set up where
11 they are to be consumed in the location. The Grab
12 and Go is if you're not having one of those meals and
13 you're taking it to go and there's some very good
14 reasons how that happens, right? Like, for example,
15 there are many older adults; you asked about younger
16 or other ages who would come for an activity and
17 they're not staying for a meal in the center but they
18 do want a congregate meal and a meal in general to
19 go. It will be the same type of meal but packaged
20 appropriately with instructions on how to reheat and
21 make sure it's refrigerated appropriately.

22 So, our Grab and Go are not to be consumed at the
23 center again, based on the Older Americans Act.

24 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: And also, have you done a
25 survey in Older Adult Centers about the Grab and the

1
2 Go meal options, is there any survey that has been
3 done?

4 RYAN MURRAY: So, I can't speak today about the
5 survey for Grab and Go but however, we have been
6 actively talking about Grab and Go programming with
7 our Older Adult Center providers over the last few
8 months. We're looking at innovations. We have an
9 executive director and program directors; we have
10 monthly meetings. So, I can't speak to a formal
11 survey but we're always looking at ways to improve
12 our Grab and Go operations.

13 The other thing I want to actually share with you
14 is we have launched over the last three years what's
15 called a pop up café and what that means is, it is an
16 extension of our ability to serve communities. And
17 so, the meals that are available there, we have ten
18 operating pop up café's now. It's an innovation
19 funded by the Administration for Community Living.
20 About 9,500 older adults who 50 something percent of
21 them are not connected to Older Adult Centers
22 actually and go in for a meal. It's café style, so
23 you can pick which thing you want whether it's your
24 apple, your sandwich, your soup, your salad, as
25 opposed to the same kind of meal for everybody. And

1
2 that we find is an innovation. So, we appreciate you
3 putting the Intro conversation today but we're not
4 just waiting for legislation to think about
5 innovation. We're always looking at ways to innovate
6 what we're doing. And we found it to be successful
7 so far. Our goal is to reach about 14,000
8 individuals through that initiative. The current
9 network will pitch whether or not they want to be an
10 operator. We give some supplemental funds and they
11 will set up a new site in a community where that Grab
12 and Go option, which isn't you know a café style if
13 you will, the pop up café, that is available as an
14 option for innovation today. And they're in
15 operation for about one year.

16 So, I just want to let you know that that is
17 another thing we are doing.

18 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: We both like it and also, is
19 that possible for senior centers doing Grab to Go
20 meal and also, congregate meal together in the same
21 center?

22 RYAN MURRAY: They're so, there are options where
23 there's Grab and Go and congregate in the same
24 center. Again, in the 113 yes but you can't consume
25

1 the meal, the Grab and Go at the center. That is to
2 go.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Alright, I remember my
5 grandma 15 years ago, she go to senior center, pay
6 \$1.00, get a meal for lunch and eat half and then
7 bring the other half home for dinner.

8 This is very helpful for seniors. They just need
9 to heat it in the microwave and the portion is big.
10 So, if she's not finished and then sometimes she
11 offered it to me. This is very helpful with seniors
12 and I appreciate that.

13 RYAN MURRAY: And Chair, let me just clarify one
14 thing for the record. It is a contribution. It is
15 voluntary and so, we could always continue to do
16 education on that.

17 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: May I Chair?

18 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Yeah.

19 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Why do they have to pay the
20 \$1.00? That's volunteer -

21 RYAN MURRAY: The Old Americans Act does ask that
22 you know - we have to ask for a contribution.

23 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: You have to ask?

24 RYAN MURRAY: The program has to request a
25 contribution.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Haven't our seniors paid more
3 than enough years taxes and now some of them, who is
4 regulating this? I could go to a senior center and
5 I'm going to - I got to say it. I did fish, a fish
6 fry. I produced all the fish, paid for or not, it's
7 free. I get there, the directors was charging the
8 seniors \$5.00. She said because she made spaghetti.
9 So, it's a donation. Please clarify that with me. I
10 would love to hear this.

11 RYAN MURRAY: It is a donation, a contribution
12 and there should be a sign -

13 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: How high can it go?

14 RYAN MURRAY: This is dependent on the meals in
15 the centers. I'm happy to speak more with you about
16 this and that specific center.

17 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Please.

18 RYAN MURRAY: But it is a contribution and I
19 always have to make that clear. There's also
20 supposed to be a sign that shows that it's voluntary.
21 If a sign doesn't exist, our team is happy to come
22 out and make sure that that is -

23 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: If the sign does not exist,
24 it's free. Huh, I'm sorry, I'm just asking a
25 question.

1
2 RYAN MURRAY: The centers are supposed to ask for
3 a contribution but I wanted to be clear with the
4 Chair that you know it is a contribution, not a
5 absolute requirement.

6 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: She thought everyone have to
7 pay \$1.00 but yeah, and now I think the Center
8 increased to \$3.00.

9 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: That's a lot of money. I
10 have a center right now, they want to go on a trip
11 and the money should be going from that \$250,000 that
12 I advocated for, for from the last Administration to
13 go to food and a show but now they have to pay
14 \$75.00. I'm not understanding how our seniors still
15 have to pay top dollar. Whenever I do something in
16 my community, it's free because they already paid
17 their tax dollars, their blood, sweat and tears for
18 living this long and now they are retiring. They
19 should be - everything supposed to be free for our
20 seniors. So, I would love to talk with you offline
21 to see how we can regulate this a little. You're
22 saying they have to pay \$1.00. How high do that
23 donation or how high can that donation go?

2 RYAN MURRAY: And to be clear, I didn't say they
3 have to pay \$1.00. I said, it's a contribution that
4 has to be requested.

5 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: That's like a museum. You
6 could give a donation for.

7 RYAN MURRAY: Correct.

8 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Okay, so you really don't
9 have to -

10 RYAN MURRAY: That's really what I wanted to
11 clarify for the Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: So, where does that money go?

13 RYAN MURRAY: Those programs are supposed to
14 reinvest those dollars into - based with their
15 advisory board and others in the community, what
16 makes sense for that center.

17 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: So, they could pay for a bus
18 if they raise enough money?

19 RYAN MURRAY: It depends on the value of the bus.
20 It depends on the Advisory Board and if that's the
21 priority.

22 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Thank you. Would love to
23 talk to you.

24

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Okay, I have just two more
3 questions. What do you see operational challenges to
4 expand the Home Delivered Meal service?

5 RYAN MURRAY: As you're talking about seven days
6 a week, uhm I think you know as I shared earlier, we
7 want to make sure that providers have the capacity to
8 do that. Many of our programs have staff and
9 volunteers right who are people delivering the meals.
10 We also want to be thoughtful. Not everybody wants
11 you to see them every single day, right? Thinking
12 about whether it's religious observance or other
13 practices where you don't want a visit every single
14 day. Those kinds of things we'd want to work with a
15 network of providers who and you know Council Member
16 Lee who ran one of these programs and introduced
17 legislation, we want to really spend time thinking
18 about that with you.

19 The point here I think of the legislation is you
20 want to make sure that everyone has a meal seven days
21 a week and that's a core part of the Home Delivered
22 Meals program. We absolutely agree with that. How
23 that's implemented in terms of whether it is you can
24 receive meals on a Friday and have those meals
25 available for the weekend or you, depending on your

1 situation, have a daily visit seven days a week, we
2 want to make sure that this is very thoughtful with
3 providers as opposed to requiring it to be a delivery
4 of a meal every single day. But again, we get the
5 spirit of this. We don't disagree with having this
6 be a full service program. We want to work through
7 that with the network.
8

9 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: So, it's only seven
10 providers. Can anyone be a provider?

11 RYAN MURRAY: Uhm, there's 17.

12 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: 17?

13 RYAN MURRAY: Yeah, we had a request for
14 proposals a few years ago and so, those individuals,
15 those groups who have the capacity to deliver meals,
16 and remember our Home Delivered Meal program isn't
17 just about the meal delivery. It's about that
18 connection to the older adult, to check on them, to
19 see how they're doing. It's someone who is often for
20 those who live alone, you know the one visit they
21 get, right that week, multiple times or once
22 depending on their preference. And so, that's what
23 we're looking for. They have a social service
24 connection and they're able to meet all the
25 requirements to deliver the meals. They have the

1
2 equipment and the vehicles as well as the team to
3 prepare the meals and oversee the operation.

4 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Okay, my last question. Is
5 DFTA on track for more home delivered meals delivery
6 this fiscal year than last FY25?

7 RYAN MURRAY: We believe that we uh you know, we
8 believe that we are on track for at least the similar
9 level. It's February, once this quarter closes,
10 we'll look at those data more carefully and then we
11 have one more quarter to go. The way this program
12 works Chairs is as you know and I shared earlier,
13 you're assessing individuals for the Home Delivered
14 Meal program. And so, again, your meal delivery
15 pattern based on your ability to prepare your own
16 meals, your wellbeing might be different. And so,
17 you might have someone who is better and we have a
18 greater need coming into the program. Currently,
19 based on what we know of the data, I think we're on
20 track for at least the similar level. I wouldn't
21 want to overstate here yet without looking at the
22 quarter close, whether or not we will exceed that but
23 the need continues to be high for home delivered
24 meals.

2 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: We'd love to see the data
3 also. We'll follow up with you about the data and
4 also my colleague Chair Mealy.

5 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: This is my last question.

6 RYAN MURRAY: Sure.

7 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Intro. 280, would require New
8 York City Aging to deliver home delivered meals each
9 day of the calendar year. Expanding the program to
10 include service on the weekend.

11 One, does New York City Aging support this effort
12 to expand meal provisions to homebound older adults?
13 Yes or no, do you support it?

14 RYAN MURRAY: We support the intent of the bill
15 to expand services.

16 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: The intent of the bill.

17 RYAN MURRAY: And we want to work with you on how
18 to operationalize this.

19 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Okay and b, how many meals
20 does New York City Aging estimate will be delivered
21 on weekends and have there been any studies, survey
22 or assessment done to gather data on the program
23 demand?

24 RYAN MURRAY: Yes, there have been studies on
25 demand.

2 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Have you estimated how much
3 this will cost more? How much more would it cost for
4 the weekend?

5 RYAN MURRAY: Sure, so again, I think you
6 received a cost estimate before. The Commissioner
7 testified in September that based on the current
8 design, about \$27 million was what was in our cost
9 estimate, which has already been shared with you as a
10 part of the bill. Again, based on how we are looking
11 at operationalizing this, as we get through redlines
12 and so on, that figure could change.

13 Uhm, one thing you should know that we you know
14 we released, as you've heard before, a service needs
15 assessment in 2024, where we received 8,600 New
16 Yorkers, older New Yorkers and caregivers responding
17 and so, our study of affordability, our study of you
18 know folks housing and other things, really does
19 indicate to us that the needs will continue to
20 outpace the resources. You've heard us say that
21 before and we always need to be looking at what that
22 demand looks like. Thank you for the questions about
23 demand in Older Adult Centers and where people are
24 today. We're always looking at as people move around
25 the city, our population growth happens for older

1 adults, so this is the kind of thing that we are
2 studying and looking at and happy to have
3 conversations with you about it.
4

5 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Thank you and I want to ask
6 my Chair; we have to definitely meet with him for the
7 pop up café. I want to see where those are, so we
8 would love to go whenever you have time. Thank you
9 so much.

10 RYAN MURRAY: Happy to go with you.

11 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: That's what we want.

12 RYAN MURRAY: We'll take you on a tour of a pop
13 up café.

14 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Thank you. I'm looking
15 forward. Thank you Chair. This has been a great
16 meeting that opened up my understanding on a lot of
17 other things that the seniors need. Thank you so
18 much.

19 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Council Member Brewer.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. One question.
21 I know a lot of folks have brought to my attention
22 your data system, your VIVE data system and I want to
23 know how do you - It has a lot of glitches in my
24 understanding and so, I'm wondering what you're doing
25 to work them out and how do you factor them into any

1
2 program evaluations? Just like you - I mean just in
3 data, evaluation, and I didn't know if, you know some
4 of the programs that have problems will be held
5 harmless given the rollout of this new data system.

6 RYAN MURRAY: This is a two part question. So,
7 on the what are we doing to fix it? We launched a
8 system last year. Had a pilot go from June until
9 about November. We've expanded the group that's
10 involved in that since then and we have an active
11 what we call a user group of you know champions from
12 the provider network. You should be happy to hear
13 that when you know we talk to them, they've markedly
14 improved but still a ways to go. It's a new system,
15 less than a year old, right?

16 And so, we - the point of VIVE was that we would
17 have the ability at NYC Aging our CIO Kamlesh Patel,
18 will have the ability to make those changes directly
19 as opposed to having it outsourced to an entity where
20 we you know have to spend a lot of money.

21 So, now it's going to be in house in the next few
22 months and that will we believe speed up our ability
23 to keep this being what it means, VIVE is for life,
24 right? So, that's the goal of the fixes.

2 Part two of your question, uhm you know we're
3 actively looking at what the data says around
4 participation and if there were any blockers for
5 certain providers to get their information in. We,
6 as I said, we have a providers group and our
7 assistant - our associate commissioner and other team
8 members are looking at those data together so that
9 folks aren't negatively affected because of a data
10 issue.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, will that public -
12 that data be public at some point? How do you share
13 that data if at all? You know, what's going on in
14 the agency?

15 RYAN MURRAY: Sure, uh which data Council Member?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: In other words, you're
17 collecting data, which is good to see what works and
18 doesn't work basically. Is that something that's
19 going to be shared publicly in the future?

20 RYAN MURRAY: Sure, so uh in our needs
21 assessment, that was one way. We are actively
22 releasing issue briefs on various parts, safety and
23 affordability and so on. In terms of performance, we
24 do have our MMR as you know and that's a place where
25 a lot of our how are we doing data goes.

2 COUNCIL MEMEBR BREWER: Okay, some of it I think
3 has to go on my open data bill platform.

4 RYAN MURRAY: Great.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, thank you.

6 RYAN MURRAY: Okay.

7 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you and also, I have a
8 new question. Do Older Adult Centers that offer both
9 congregate meals and the Grab and Go Meals have
10 bigger contracts? If that's compared to just what of
11 that kind?

12 RYAN MURRAY: I don't want to give a blanket
13 response to that Council Member. I want to take a
14 look at those data because you might have proposed
15 something that accounts. You know say this is
16 hypothetical, many of our programs might have at
17 least a \$500,000 budget. If at the time of proposal,
18 you submitted something that said a portion of this
19 will be Grab and Go and some of this will be
20 congregate within the budget, then you have the same
21 budget. Others may have proposed something different
22 but let me take a look at that and let you know what
23 those budgets look like but this was at the time of
24 proposal and we had a maximum budget available and
25 that by the way was based on how many people you were

1 seeing, right? So, the model budget at the time was
2 if you had a smaller amount of people that you're
3 seeing, there's a smaller budget. This is just rough
4 numbers. If it was a larger group, how you divide up
5 those services could vary.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you.

8 RYAN MURRAY: You're welcome.

9 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Now we will move to public
10 testimony.

11 RYAN MURRAY: Thank you Chairs. Thank you
12 Council.

13 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: I now open the hearing for
16 public testimony. I want to remember - I want to
17 remind members of the public that this is a
18 government proceeding and that decorum shall be
19 observed at all times. As such, members of the
20 public shall remain silent at all times. The witness
21 table is reserved for people who wish to testify. No
22 video recording or photographic is allowed from the
23 witness table.

24 Further, members of the public may not present
25 audio or video recordings as testimony but may submit

1 transcript of such recordings to the Sergeant at Arms
2 for inclusion in the hearing record. If you wish to
3 speak at today's hearing, please fill out an
4 appearance card with the Sergeants at Arms and wait
5 to be recognized.
6

7 When recognized, you will have two minutes to
8 speak on today's topic or legislation. If you have a
9 written statement or additional written testimony you
10 wish to submit for the record, please provide a copy
11 of that testimony to the Sergeant at Arms. You may
12 also email written testimony to
13 testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72 hours of this
14 hearing. Audio and video recordings will not be
15 accepted.

16 The first one is Jacob Berman and the second is
17 Amanda Raikes-Williams.

18 AMANDA RAIKES-WILLIAMS: Can you hear me well?
19 Hi, thank you so much. Good afternoon Chairs Zhuang
20 and Chair Mealy and Members of the Committee on
21 Aging. I'm Amanda Raikes-Williams, I'm the Budget
22 and Policy Analyst - sorry about that. I'm the
23 Budget and Policy Analyst at the New York City
24 Department of Independent Budget Office. I am joined
25 by my colleague Jacob Berman, Assistant Director for

3 Social and Community Services. IBO is a nonpartisan
4 independent government agency mandated by the New
5 York City Charter. IBOs mission is to enhance public
6 understanding of the New York City's budget, public
7 policy, and economy through independent analysis.

8 Oh, I'm so sorry. Sorry about that. Today, we
9 will discuss the Older Adult population trends in New
10 York City, the budget structure for the Department
11 for the Aging, New York City Aging and Transit usage
12 for Older Adult Centers and meals both delivered to
13 homes and in congregate settings. Understanding how
14 programs are funded and how NYC Aging contracts with
15 providers for each service is important context as
16 you consider these two introductions.

17 According to the US Census Bureau data, the share
18 of NYC population that is 65 and older has increased
19 from 15 percent in 2020 to 17 percent in 2024. The
20 share of older adults living in poverty has also
21 increased by 18 percent to 20 percent in 2024. Now,
22 a higher share than the actual total of New York City
23 population.

24 On the other end of the spectrum, when
25 considering the share at or above 150 percent of the
poverty line, 70 percent of older adults fall at or

1 above that threshold, slightly lower than 74 percent
2 of the total New York City population.
3

4 In other words, just as there are more older
5 adults living below the poverty line, there are fewer
6 adults living more comfortably above the poverty
7 line.

8 Relatedly, a larger share of older adults receive
9 SNAP benefits or food assistance compared with the
10 total New York City population. A larger share of
11 older adults is also classified as being rent
12 burdened, spending 30 percent or more of their income
13 on rent than total New York City population. It is
14 clear - can I continue? It is clear that income and
15 food insecurity continue to be a concern for older
16 New Yorkers.

17 New York City Aging has \$618 million budget for
18 Fiscal Year 2020 as of the November Plan, funded
19 mostly by city funds. Uhm, while these services
20 include case management, transportation and other
21 services, the main program areas related to Intro.'s
22 are Older Adult Centers. We provide opportunity for
23 socializing and meals and home delivered meals.
24 These two areas account for \$348 million, 56 percent
25 of the New York City's Aging's total budget in 2026.

1 This spending has grown over time. In 2026, these
2 two areas were budgeted at roughly twice as much as
3 actual expenditures in 2021. However, amounts have
4 fluctuated over the years in 2022 through 2024,
5 federal pandemic relief funds were used for home
6 delivered meals and those funds were replaced by city
7 funds in 2025.
8

9 OACs were subjected to reductions in Fiscal Year
10 of 2024. Before those funds were ultimately restored
11 by the Executive Budget, the following year, funds
12 were initially reduced by \$13 million each year for
13 2027 and 2028, and then an additional \$18 million for
14 2024 and \$2 million for 2025 through 2028.

15 Though the Adams Administration decided
16 underutilization as a reason for both reductions, the
17 Mayor's Management Report, the MMR indicates that
18 participation steadily increased and recovered since
19 the pandemic 2022.

20 In the Preliminary MMR, shows that for 2022
21 through 2024, demand for utilization of OACs has
22 increased as measured by the total number of
23 participants and average daily participants, as well
24 as demand for meals and OACs also increased.
25

1
2 On the other hand, fewer home delivered meals
3 were served in 2024 compared to 2022 and fewer
4 clients were served. While this could be interpreted
5 as decreased demand for services, IBOs analysis of
6 the Census data indicating greater reliance on SNAP
7 benefits to just that perhaps the way program is
8 designed may not align with client needs.

9 In analyzing city financial data and talking to
10 providers, we have learned that providers experience
11 challenges with the frequency of procurement and
12 segmented service provision.

13 Furthermore, there is a strong desire for more
14 community centric and integrated programming, design
15 and implementation. For example, an older adult
16 inquiries about home delivered meals at an OAC. That
17 provider that operates the OAC, may not have any
18 information about who delivers home delivered meals
19 in that area.

20 It is common for a provider to be awarded
21 contracts with certain services within an area but
22 not others. As the need for meals have grown, these
23 two Intro.'s, establish a year around home delivered
24 meal requirement that aligns with frequent funding
25 increases and will allow Grab and Go meals as an

1 option for participants who may not need OAC services
2 but expand flexibility and allow participants to take
3 additional meals home, more product support nutrition
4 access for older New Yorkers.
5

6 Finally, IBO is proud to serve as a resource to
7 the community, advocates, journalists, and elected
8 officials alike. IBO takes requests from the public
9 to explore specific research questions and to leave
10 budget trainings at community meetings, see our
11 website to request please. Thank you for the
12 opportunity to testify and we are happy to answer any
13 questions you may have.

14 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you and the first
15 question I have with the Senior Meals on Wheels and
16 also Grab to Go meal. Which one needs more budget
17 and which one is more important with seniors?

18 AMANDA RAIKES-WILLIAMS: I'm going to defer to my
19

20 -

21 JACOB BERMAN: So, in terms what needs a greater
22 budget, uhm, IBO does not generally issue policy
23 recommendations about that. What we do is we provide
24 data about historical budget trends and what has been
25 budgeted moving forward.

1
2 So, we're happy to answer any specific questions
3 about kind of historic funding, meals, yeah, historic
4 funding levels or service usage but we don't know
5 what should have you know greater funding moving
6 forward.

7 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: And also, my other question
8 is, you guys mentioned, you mentioned that the area
9 needs additional Meal on Wheel, additional Grab to Go
10 meal. Do you have a data to show where those area is
11 and then we can do - no?

12 JACOB BERMAN: So, we have some data that we have
13 gotten from NYC Aging but we're in constant
14 conversations to get more and if there's specific
15 areas that you want us to work on analyzing, we'd be
16 happy to do that.

17 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: I think it's important for
18 us to know and then we can provide additional service
19 to those areas.

20 JACOB BERMAN: Absolutely.

21 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Chair Mealy.

22 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Yes, thank you for
23 testifying. Since you all do data, with this new
24 administration, uhm, the big, beautiful bill - they
25

1 say SNAP benefits, people would have to work for them
2 and I see you have an analysis.
3

4 JACOB BERMAN: Hmm, hmm.

5 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Relatedly a large share of
6 older adults receive supplemental nutrition assistant
7 programs. So, do you think - what age do you all
8 know of would have to work if they get SNAP?

9 JACOB BERMAN: So, the requirements have changed.
10 That it used to be previously that our understanding
11 is that you - the big change was on the younger end
12 that people, you had to - you would be exempted from
13 working up until 18 or 21, whatever it was. I can
14 get the specifics but that now after the one big,
15 beautiful bill act, uhm that exemption no longer
16 applies. And so, the work requirements are now
17 greater and there's also the income threshold has
18 changed too.

19 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Do you kind of know
20 specifically what age it cuts off or does?

21 JACOB BERMAN: Uhm, it does. I don't know off
22 the top of my head but I'm happy to look that up and
23 get that.
24
25

2 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Because I tried to get on - I
3 got on I couldn't get to your web page. I was going
4 to see -

5 AMANDA RAIKES-WILLIAMS: We can follow up and
6 provide you that information.

7 JACOB BERMAN: Yeah, definitely.

8 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Thank you. That's all I
9 have.

10 JACOB BERMAN: Yeah, we have a report series that
11 we worked on a lot last fall that's ongoing where we
12 talk about federal changes and local impacts and one
13 of the pieces was specifically about income - the
14 impacts on lower income families and we spent a lot
15 of time talking about SNAP in there, so.

16 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Okay I will look forward to
17 following up on that because we have to be very clear
18 what age it cuts off because they keep moving the
19 line. First 62, now 65, now 70. So, please let us
20 know. We shouldn't be working.

21 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you and also, I have
22 additional question about food insecurity. In my
23 district, I see every time we do - our office almost
24 weekly doing food pantry. Every single wait in the
25 line probably 90 percent seniors and is the food

1 stamp stolen, thief issue, is the biggest impact in
2 seniors and also, how much the impact? And uh, uhm,
3 what is your suggestion for city to do about this?
4

5 AMANDA RAIKES-WILLIAMS: Well, we don't provide
6 suggestions on things like that. What we can do is
7 we can look and figure out uhm, what food insecurity
8 looks like based on community levels. We can
9 probably look at that data and provide that to you.

10 JACOB BERMAN: And also, I just heard from my
11 colleague that's it's 54 is the age.

12 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: I have 16 to 59. The US
13 Department of Agriculture said - if you're 16 to 59,
14 you have to work for your SNAP benefits.

15 JACOB BERMAN: Yeah, so that's definitely a
16 change, yeah.

17 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: But none of us - we passed 59
18 right? Same with me. So, okay, that's good to know
19 though.

20 JACOB BERMAN: Absolutely.

21 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Okay, let me pass the
22 microphone to Council Member Brewer.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright thank you IBO.
24 My question is and I think you have alluded to this.
25 There are x - you know more people participating

1 post-pandemic and so that's a good thing and your
2 data shows that. Do you have any data as to what
3 uhm, you know looking at the number of older adults
4 that are in the city and then what could be - it was
5 you know even more impactful, innovative, etc., older
6 centers could in fact use the centers. In other
7 words, we're trying to see how many more people would
8 in fact be eligible.

9
10 Now of course, you don't have to go but it seems
11 to me that might be a good number so that we could be
12 planning for the future. In other words, what is the
13 number of individuals who are of the age in the City
14 of New York right? Compared to who uses the centers
15 now? That kind of data.

16 JACOB BERMAN: Yeah, that is a good question. I
17 don't have those figures in front of me but we can
18 absolutely look into that and follow up and get those
19 to you, absolutely.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, that would be
21 helpful. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you. I think we're
23 done with the questions.

24 JACOB BERMAN: Thank you so much.

25 AMANDA RAIKES-WILLIAMS: Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: And then we're going to move
3 on to the next panel. We have Jeannine Cahill-
4 Jackson, Jeanette Estima, Kevin Jones, Kevin
5 Kiproviski.

6 When you guys are ready, you can start. Anyone
7 want to come first?

8 KEVIN JONES: Oh, good afternoon. So, first,
9 thank you Chairman Zhuang, Chairman Mealy for uhm, uh
10 presiding over this hearing today on these very
11 important issues. My name is Kevin Jones. I am the
12 Associate State Director of Advocacy at AARP New York
13 and I am here on behalf of the 750,000 members across
14 New York City and the more than three and a half
15 million adults age 50 plus across the borough.

16 So, right now the Department for the Aging
17 receives less than half of one percent of the overall
18 city budget. Despite the fact that they serve about
19 20 percent of the population that are 65 or over.
20 Over the last decade, this 65 plus population grew by
21 approximately 34 percent and the number of adults
22 living in poverty has increased by 50 percent.

23 But the funding and city budget has not kept pace
24 with that reality. So, we are here one, to strongly
25 support both of the meal program bills that are

1 before us. Uhm, for Grab and Go and for Home
2 Delivered Meals but I also want to say that we also
3 support expansion of the Congregate Meal programs as
4 well because for many older adults, these meals are
5 not optional. They are absolutely essential. They
6 prevent malnutrition, reduce hospitalizations, and
7 they allow older adults to remain safely in their
8 homes. And expanding access will help those who
9 cannot get these meals on their own or otherwise but
10 I also want to stress that this expansion cannot
11 occur without proper funding to make sure that the
12 providers that do all this hard work to get the meals
13 to people, that that extra burden is not passed onto
14 them.
15

16 So, we want these meals to be expanded but we
17 also want to make sure that the funding is there for
18 my colleagues organizations that are actually getting
19 these meals to people.

20 Also, we're here to support the uhm, one, to
21 thank the Council Members who were part of the budget
22 process last year for the older adult repairs in the
23 budget and to say that we think this is absolutely
24 crucial to continue going forward because as we know,
25 we've all seen this older adult centers have many

1
2 problems. Sometimes a cooling center, for example,
3 won't have an air conditioner or a Grab and Go meal
4 location will be on the second floor and there's no
5 elevator that's working there, right?

6 I will submit a longer written testimony but we
7 are definitely excited to work with the new members
8 of the Committee along with the returning members of
9 the Committee and thank you very much for your time.

10 JEANNINE CAHILL-JACKSON: Thank you. Thank you
11 Chairs for convening this hearing. My name is
12 Jeannine Cahill-Jackson, I'm the Director of Elder
13 Law at the Legal Aid Society. First, the Legal Aid
14 Society supports bill Intro. 238 2026, requiring the
15 daily Grab and Go meals. The expansion to include
16 Grab and Go meals at OACs can meaningfully increase
17 access to food for older New Yorkers that may not be
18 able to attend the congregate meals at OACs.

19 It provides them with an affordable option to
20 have nutritious food on their continuing limited
21 income. It enables older adults to still be able to
22 get the meal if they may not be able to stay at the
23 center due to doctors' appointments or other
24 important appointments. We know this first hand at
25 the Legal Aid Society where we work with our clients

1 to schedule our appointments with attorney's and
2 paralegals around their meals at the OACs. But many
3 institutions like doctors and otherwise might not be
4 able to do so for our clients, so it can be really
5 important.
6

7 To that end, it could be useful to extend the
8 availability of Grab and Go meals, maybe right around
9 the lunch time. For example, maybe starting at 11
10 a.m., ending at 3 p.m.. So, if they have kind of a
11 lunch time appointment, they would be able to make it
12 to the center and then still make it to where they
13 need to go.

14 Additionally, older adults may have health
15 concerns regarding eating in congregate settings due
16 to acute or chronic health condition. And so, this
17 would also create an opportunity for them to still
18 access food while minimizing exposure to possible
19 illnesses if that's of a concern to them.

20 In regards to Intro. 280, Legal Aid is also in
21 support of this bill, providing home delivered meals
22 each calendar year. We would actually suggest, while
23 we're looking to first get to seven days a week, some
24 further enhancements. For example, more than one
25 meal per day as proper nutrition for an adult really

1
2 is an excess of one meal and often when people are -
3 our clients are relying on the home delivered meal,
4 this is their one meal a day. May I continue? Thank
5 you.

6 So, if possible, some day to reach two or even
7 three meals a day if people do need that.

8 Additionally, the Legal Aid Society proposes the
9 eligibility be expanded to older adults who receive
10 eight hours or more of home care. This isn't an
11 expressed limitation but it's how it's applied. If
12 there's no one available to make a meal, that's the
13 rule which is currently when it's implemented is
14 resulting in the denial of home delivered meals of
15 our clients if they have home care of eight hours or
16 more.

17 The reality is, is that if an individual requires
18 home care, there's a lot more needed in the eight
19 hours then shopping and the preparation of meals.
20 And so, that often leaves them without actually
21 getting that assistance from the home health aide and
22 without being able to qualify for more hours for home
23 healthcare and then also not being able to access
24 home delivered meals because they require help with
25

1 also bathing and dressing and other things in the
2 home.
3

4 Uh, additionally, many of our clients share that
5 this is their only source of social interaction per
6 day. I think that was shared in prior testimony as
7 well. We suggest that perhaps the program could
8 expand acknowledging that there is a social component
9 to maybe build in a weekly visit or sort of social
10 component option and an actual check in with the
11 older adults for whom this is their only source of
12 social interaction.

13 Lastly, regarding the different types of meals.
14 There has been testimony regarding culturally
15 appropriate meals and other things such as vegetarian
16 and veganism. I want to also raise the need for
17 medically appropriate meals, such as addressing meals
18 for individuals with hypertension, other heart
19 conditions, perhaps diabetes that could also uhm,
20 really help support them in their health journey as
21 well as not only have nutrition.

22 Lastly, we propose a grocery delivery program.
23 So, not only access to perhaps Farmers Markets with
24 fresh vegetables but actually how to get their
25 groceries.

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CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Can you wrap up?

JEANNINE CAHILL-JACKSON: Yes. That was actually all I had to say. Thank you very much for the additional time. I could also just provide quickly, uh information regarding the SNAP eligibility for seniors. The age is 64 that max for the work requirement but there's also a disability exemption. So, if you have health conditions that prevent you from being able to do the work requirement and you're younger, you can still apply for an exemption to the work requirement and I'm happy to provide any additional information offline.

CHAIRPERSON MEALY: 64 years old?

JEANNINE CAHILL-JACKSON: Yes, that's what it was increased to.

CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Okay, thank you. Next one.

KEVIN KIPROVSKI: Good afternoon. My name is Kevn Kiprovski and I'm the Director of Public Policy for Live-On New York. Thank you all for the opportunity to testify. Just for some context, we represent over 110 community based organizations that provide aging services in every Council District in the city.

2 I also want to say we are holding a training on
3 the SNAP situation in two weeks so we can send that
4 out to everybody. It has all the information for
5 staff and for Council.

6 So, Council discretionary funding is foundational
7 to the work our networks does. It forms a
8 disproportionate amount of DFTAs budget compared to
9 other agencies, so I always want to say we're so
10 grateful for the work that you do to make sure that
11 this entire network keeps going. I want to talk
12 about Older Adult Centers and the huge capital need
13 they have. Many of them have deteriorating spaces,
14 appliances, vehicles that have gone without upgrades
15 for the past decade. Some have broken refrigerators,
16 floors, bathrooms, kitchens, HVAC systems, roofs,
17 elevators, I can go through the whole thing and a lot
18 of these are actually in NYCHA spaces. Some of
19 these, as we've heard are completely closed because
20 they have either fixed it and have not been able to
21 get inspections or just are just not workable at all.

22 I want to say a lot of our recommendations have
23 to do with some things that cost money and some
24 things that are absolutely free that we can do today
25 to fix some of these issues. The first one is we

1 need to investigate the true cost of bringing all of
2 these centers up to standards. The city has
3 estimated that fixing just NYCHA centers will cost \$1
4 billion dollars and they haven't estimated across the
5 entire system because not all these centers are
6 capital eligible and they are only analyzing the
7 capital eligible centers.
8

9 Two, we need to reform the capital eligibility
10 rules with NYCHA centers because I can tell you
11 there's a lot of our members that have sought funding
12 through state and federal levels that rules that the
13 city have prevented that money from being spent.
14 Just to be clear, millions of dollars have been
15 blocked from being spent because NYCHA rules have
16 prevented center and center directors from using them
17 for just administrative reasons that we don't know
18 why that's happening, so we'd love to look into that
19 a little bit more.

20 We'd also like to create contracts that allow
21 organizations to have a longer term lease because
22 that prevents capital eligibility if they do not have
23 site control by the city's bond rules, which require
24 typically ten years of site control but sorry - ten
25 years of site control, leases are - contracts are

1 three years long. You tell me how that's supposed to
2 work. We're still trying to figure that one out.

3
4 Next, an interagency organization needs to be put
5 together to coordinate responses to NYCHA based
6 building code violations. We have had members who
7 have been threatened with arrest after going to an
8 OATH hearing because the FDNY has given them a
9 violation. NYCHA has not allowed them to fix the
10 violation and OATH does not accept that as a reason.
11 There is no communication happening between these
12 agencies at the back level, which is causing centers
13 to close, causing personal liability for directors
14 and causing centers to remain in violation because
15 they cannot fix it. We're also calling for an
16 increase in congregate meal rates, which have not
17 been increased since before the pandemic. I know
18 that food has been more expensive for me seven years
19 ago, so I really think we need to be upping that
20 because centers have been using the same amount of
21 money to provide the same amount of services and it's
22 really stretching them thin.

23 And last, the \$5 million that the Council gave
24 last year is the first time that most of these places
25 have been able to fix problems they've been seeing

1
2 for decades. I cannot stress how critical this money
3 is and how important it is to keep this funding going
4 because right now, it's the only band aid that
5 centers have to fix these problems. In terms of the
6 bill, absolutely support both of them. We'd like to
7 talk about some of the federal implications of Grab
8 and Go because they renegotiated the regulations last
9 year. That really hasn't come up a lot but we do
10 believe that there is a possibility that Grab and Go
11 might be allowed. We'd love to have those
12 conversations and as long as funding is there because
13 our members are really stretched thin as is. We also
14 100 percent support seven day a week meals. Thank
15 you so much for the opportunity. Sorry for going
16 over.

17 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you.

18 JEANETTE ESTIMA: Good afternoon. My name is
19 Jeanette Estima and I'm the Director of Policy and
20 Advocacy at City Meals on Wheels. Thank you for the
21 opportunity to testify today. City Meals supports
22 both the bills before the Committees today and we're
23 grateful to the bill sponsors for their work to
24 expand food access for older New Yorkers.

25

1
2 When we surveyed 500 people receiving meals at
3 OACs and through Home Delivered Meals programs a few
4 years ago, we learned that half of them were food
5 insecure and 65 percent were living on \$15,000 a year
6 or less.

7 While these programs are critical antihunger
8 interventions, they do not go far enough for those
9 who physically cannot get to a grocery store or a
10 food pantry or afford the food that they need beyond
11 the meals that they receive. Currently, the city's
12 Home Delivered Meals program provides only one meal a
13 day, five days a week. Participants receive meals on
14 weekends because city meals privately fund raises to
15 cover some of that cost.

16 In Fiscal Year '25, we funded over 1.4 million
17 meals at a cost of over \$14 million but these meals
18 do cost more to provide well beyond our capacity to
19 fund raise.

20 Following our research, we developed two
21 innovative cost efficient programs to get more food
22 to our most food insecure home delivered meals
23 recipients. Our Breakfast Box program provides
24 enough food for a second daily meal to those with the
25 highest need. And our Mobile groceries program

1 provides 14 meal equivalence on a monthly basis.
2
3 These programs are bridging the hunger gap for 2,600
4 people enrolled but there are thousands more who
5 could benefit. Expanding the home delivered meals
6 program and offering Grab and Go meals at OACs would
7 provide older adults with the dignity of having
8 enough food and a choice in what, where, when, and
9 how they eat. These bills do exactly that and we
10 urge the Council to pass them with adequate funding.
11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you and I have some
13 questions for AARP. You said before the seniors, you
14 said only 34 percent under poverty and now changed it
15 to 50.

16 KEVIN JONES: Uh, the increase in poverty rate
17 was 50 percent, yes. So, it went up to 34 percent.
18 The increase in poverty rate was 50 percent. It did
19 not go up to 50 percent but it increased by 50
20 percent, sorry.

21 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: So, what's the major issue
22 you think except everything, inflation and is there
23 any solution?

24 KEVIN JONES: Well, I couldn't give you an entire
25 list but I think you know certainly cost is a big

1 driver of that, right because cost as we all know is
2 outpacing incomes right. And for a lot of the folks
3 that are our members, their incomes are steady right.
4 They are constant and they are not changing. So, the
5 cost going up in housing, the cost going up in
6 transportation because we work on issues, not just
7 about food and health but also, you know
8 transportation and workforce and all kinds of things,
9 right? Every aspect of the older adults life.
10

11 But as we all see it as my friend here mentioned
12 earlier, costs for - you know he knows the costs for
13 him have gone up, right but also most of us that are
14 still in the workforce, we get some sort of COLA you
15 know every year even if it doesn't keep up. And
16 that's not necessarily the case with a lot of our
17 members.

18 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you and then also,
19 does that mean; I just want to put it on record, does
20 that mean if city doesn't look at more funding for
21 seniors, city's putting seniors life in danger.

22 KEVIN JONES: Uh, yes and I mean the other thing
23 -

24 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: And we all agree right?
25

1
2 KEVIN JONES: Right and that is again half of one
3 percent of the budget is going to serve 20 percent of
4 the population.

5 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you and for the
6 repairs and budget be blocked? Can you give me more
7 detail why the budget be blocked?

8 KEVIN JONES: Yeah, so if you are trying to
9 secure funding for a NYCHA Center and let's say that
10 you received a grant from the state level, if you do
11 not have documents that prove site control, they will
12 not release the funding to you. So, we have members
13 who have gone to their state legislatures secured
14 funding but NYCHA is refusing to give them a pathway
15 to prove site control even if that center has been
16 there for 50 years. There's a lot of discussions
17 that we can have offline as to why because each
18 center has you know different reasonings but NYCHA
19 can provide a document stating that they have site
20 control and in some cases, they just not.

21 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: NYCHA doesn't want to?

22 KEVIN JONES: In some cases, they have just not
23 and we have actually had people who have secured
24 \$250,000 to repair a room or the roof is collapsed.
25 Have not been allowed to spend it for ten years and

1 then the funding even gets revoked and that's money
2 that could be coming into the city. That is not
3 coming into the city because of administrative rules
4 that for some reason, are not being changed.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you. And also, for
7 the - I really like you said, sometimes it's only a
8 one time interaction when they deliver the meal. Is
9 there any program, nonprofit can help have an
10 intergeneration contact, adopt a grandparent, adopt a
11 senior, like an older adults program?

12 JEANNINE CAHILL-JACKSON: So, I think if anybody
13 knows of them, please share. Uhm, one that I'm aware
14 of is not intergenerational but there's a Friendly
15 Visitor program that DFTA does run but and we
16 actually don't have many clients that participate in
17 that program but I'm aware of that. I'm not aware of
18 any other visiting programs but they may exist.

19 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Because in my district, I
20 see that I participated in one of the programs with
21 my daughter. They deliver food to holocaust
22 survivors. A lot of times, those people already over
23 90 years old. They are in a wheelchair, when they
24 see kids - I went with my daughter, she was eight at
25 that time. They are very happy to see someone at

1
2 their door and just talk to them because a lot of
3 times, this interaction really makes your - they feel
4 someone cares about them.

5 KEVIN JONES: Just one step that really jumped
6 out at me and I heard it I think my first week at
7 AARP. Social isolation is as negative - has an
8 impact on your physical health, that's equivalent to
9 smoking 15 cigarettes a day, right? So, we know that
10 it's the right thing to do just on an emotional level
11 but it has a huge impact on physical health as well.

12 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you. Thank you for
13 the information. Chair, do you have questions?

14 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Uhm, I really hope that this
15 uhm - we can come together and see if we can have
16 groceries delivered just like the meals. That was a
17 good suggestion I must say and to see if we can do 11
18 to 3 for the centers are a great thing just as well.
19 So, thank you. I thank you all and looking forward
20 to working with you. And can I have your notes or
21 something because you went straight to what I was
22 looking for with the groceries? Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you guys so much.
24 It's a lot of information we learned today and thank
25

1
2 you. And we have next is Khristel Simmons and also,
3 Anita Kwok. You can start, thank you.

4 KHRISTEL SIMMONS: Thank you Chairs Zhuang and
5 Mealy, Speaker Menin and the New York City Council
6 Committee on Aging and Subcommittee on Older Adult
7 Centers. My name is Khristel Simmons and I'm the
8 Associate Vice President of Aging and Nutrition
9 Services at Goodard Riverside Community Center.

10 I am here today to testify to the issues we have
11 faced with ensuring capital improvements for our
12 older adult centers and how they impact the health,
13 safety and community wellbeing of older adult
14 members.

15 The capital funding process is already incredibly
16 complex and we agree with many of the critiques from
17 other organizations testifying today that we'll flag
18 about this process.

19 However, my testimony today focuses on clearly
20 outlining a major concern regarding the use of
21 capital project dollars within our NYCHA based
22 community and older adult centers. The core issue is
23 this, many of our sites operate in NYCHA spaces due
24 to cost and proximity to residents who need support
25 and our shared goal is simple, we want environments

1
2 that are safe, comfortable, warm, ADA accessible and
3 inviting for our older adult members. Our program
4 contracts with agencies like NYC Aging that assume we
5 are providing services out of sites with property
6 owners who are going to be responsible for basic
7 repairs.

8 However, too often, city capital project funding
9 is being directed toward repairs that are the
10 landlord responsibilities, rather than being used to
11 enhance and augment the spaces for the community
12 members we serve. Capital projects should not be
13 used to fix foundational issues such as roofs,
14 plumbing, heating and flooring. These should be
15 considered core structural obligations of NYCHA as
16 the landlords.

17 A prime example, is one of our Older Adult
18 Centers, which has had a leaking roof for over a year
19 and I do have the pictures to document and the NYCHA
20 tickets dating back to 2024. As of today, it still
21 has not been fixed. So, when it rains outside, it
22 pours inside the center. As a result, our center has
23 been forced to cancel programs multiple times. May I
24 continue?

1
2 Thank you. Cancel programs multiple times after
3 the storms because the conditions become unsafe for
4 our members, staff and volunteers. These
5 cancellations have real consequences. We are
6 contracted to deliver a certain number of program
7 units each year and every single cancellation is a
8 loss of unit, a loss of a program for our older
9 adults that rely on and a loss toward meeting our
10 annual commitments in our city contracts.

11 And importantly, NYCHA does not bear the
12 responsibilities for these missed units. We, the
13 providers do. Our older adults have worked their
14 entire lives. They deserve better and we, New York
15 City owe them better. They deserve modern community
16 centers that support their wellbeing, provide a safe
17 and welcoming environment, ensure access to healthy
18 and nutrition meals and offer a place to connect, not
19 only with their peers but with the broader community.

20 It is time for our older adults to thrive, not
21 merely survive. We all share the same mission, to
22 ensure our older adults can age comfortably in place
23 in their homes and the community centers. To make
24 this possible, we need collaboration, not additional
25 barriers.

1
2 Capital project dollars must be preserved for
3 improvements that truly enhance our centers. To
4 support transparency and accountability, we need a
5 clear, public, digital NYCHA capital project tracker,
6 along with ticket tracking and documented timelines,
7 so we can see where requests stand and prevent issues
8 from stalling for months or sometimes years.

9 We also thank the Council for reviewing the
10 legislation being heard today. I would like to also
11 respond to Intro. 238 on the day to day experience of
12 providing Grab and Go Meals at our Older Adult
13 Centers. Grab and Go Meals have been a wonderful
14 addition to the OAC contract, however, they should
15 function as an option within the congregate lunch
16 model, not as a separate line of metrics.

17 For example, in Fiscal Year '25, our site, one of
18 our sites delivered 6,000 Grab and Go units
19 surpassing a target of 3,000 by 100 percent. While
20 this demonstrates strong participation and community
21 need, it came at the expense of our congregate lunch
22 numbers. This model forces providers to choose
23 between meeting one metric or another, even though
24 both services support older adults access to healthy
25 meals.

1
2 I thank you and I look forward to working
3 together toward a solution that prioritizes the
4 safety, dignity and wellbeing of our community
5 members. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you and also, for the
7 Center you just mentioned, it's raining outside, is
8 it pouring inside?

9 KHRISTEL SIMMONS: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Can you give me a list?

11 KHRISTEL SIMMONS: So, this is at our Isaac
12 Center, Community Center. It's located at 415 East
13 93rd Street in the Isaacson's homes community, NYCHA.

14 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: I want to go there to visit.

15 KHRISTEL SIMMONS: I would love for you to come
16 and visit. You too Chair Mealy if you will, okay?

17 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: I would love to.

18 KHRISTEL SIMMONS: Okay, that's a date. Thank
19 you.

20 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you.

21 ANITA KWOK: Thank you Council Member Zhuang and
22 Mealy for convening this oversight hearing. My name
23 is Anita Kwok, a Policy Analyst at United
24 Neighborhood Houses. A federation of settlement
25

1 houses serving 840,000 New Yorkers. Khristel is
2 actually one of our members.
3

4 NYC Aging funded programs often face major
5 difficulties with aging buildings and equipment
6 upkeep, systemwide needs include HVAC repairs,
7 accessibility upgrades, technology systems, kitchen
8 equipment, bathroom repairs and more. Providers
9 frequently express problems with leaks and flooding
10 after storms. Both of which will be more frequent as
11 climate change accelerates with the rate and
12 intensity of weather related disasters. Capital
13 funds keep buildings and equipment in a state of good
14 repair but aging programs have longstanding capital
15 needs that have not been met. Without sufficient
16 capital streams, repair needs are exacerbated, which
17 may, for example, cause the AC or heat to stop
18 working during the winter or summer.

19 Our Settlement House members pursued
20 discretionary funding from the Council but these
21 funds are never stable or consistent and not every
22 organization is able to access them.

23 We're grateful for the pot of \$5 million to
24 repair infrastructure at Older Adult Centers and we
25 hope the Council maintains this funding. UNH also

1 supports - we're continuing to support Council Member
2 Hudson's 238, Intro. 238 for Grab and Go meals and
3 Council Member Lee's Intro. 280 for home delivered
4 meals. So, as long as there is enough funding for
5 providers, especially with older adult hunger addict
6 crisis level. I have a lot more in my testimony.
7 Thank you for your time.
8

9 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you. Is there anyone
10 in the room still want to testify? If not, now we're
11 going to move to virtual testimony. Please wait for
12 your name to be called to testify and please select
13 unmute when prompted. Solomon Smart.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

15 SOLOMON SMART: Hi, good afternoon. My name is
16 Solomon Smart, Associate VP of Older Adult programs
17 for Bronx Works, which has served older adults since
18 1972. Many Older Adult Centers deal with aging
19 infrastructure, as we've heard. As an example, our
20 East Concourse Older Adult Center deals with year
21 around leaks in its roof. Thanks to the support of
22 NYC Aging, the membrane was replaced in 2007 but
23 after 19 years, it's due for replacement.

24 Our centers also have aging HVAC systems. While
25 the associated cost with replacing and repairing

1 heating and cooling units are not included in the
2 centers annual budgets, they are still often taken
3 from our bottom lines, reducing our limited funding.

4
5 And finally, our OACs must often retrofit
6 facilities, not initially designed for Older Adult
7 Services. Adding proper offices and programming
8 spaces comes at a great cost. Therefore, we
9 wholeheartedly endorse enhanced capital funding for
10 OACs.

11 We also support Intro. 238. During 2025 calendar
12 year, Bronx Works served 108,000 meals including
13 breakfast and lunch to older adults, more than 3,200
14 of them. All in person and in congregate setting but
15 based on frequent requests for to go meals from
16 seniors who are not able to sit and eat, we estimate
17 that we could serve anywhere from 10,000 to 16,000
18 additional meals in the first year of this
19 initiative. Increasing our impact on food security
20 by 10 to 15 percent. Considering that there are over
21 300 Older Adult Centers across New York City, this
22 could easily reduce the meal gap for older adults by
23 millions. We agree that having less than half of one
24 percent of funding from the city's budget is
25 inadequate. Thank you for your time.

2 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you and the next one,
3 we have Shyvonne Noboa.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

5 SHYVONNE NOBOA: Good afternoon. Thank you. My
6 name is Shyvonne Noboa and I'm the Associate
7 Executive Director for Older Adult Services at
8 Sunnyside Community Services. I want to thank the
9 Chairs for the opportunity to present testimony today
10 on the importance and urgent need to fund meals seven
11 days a week for homebound older adults.

12 I'll give you a brief snapshot of what Sunnyside
13 does. We believe that our continuum offers older
14 adults to remain safe, active in their communities
15 and live with dignity. We have services that span
16 family caregiving. We have an older adult center,
17 elder justice, geriatric mental health. We have a
18 social adult day program and citywide homecare
19 services. We also have Medicaid enrollment to help
20 people apply for Medicaid and live in their homes for
21 as long as possible.

22 All of our screening and referrals are
23 coordinated through our centralized intake team. In
24 addition, we also have NYC Aging funding case
25 management programs here in Queens. We serve

2 community districts 1, 2, 3, and 5 and this is a
3 crucial service that bridges vulnerable older adults
4 to the supports they need to remain safely at home.

5 We're here in strong support of Intro. 280, which
6 fund meals seven days a week. So, at Sunnyside, we
7 have 17 case managers who are responsible for
8 assessing and authorizing meals for older adults in
9 their home. Currently, we approve meals for seven
10 days a week, however, door to door hot meal delivery
11 is only available five days a week with frozen meals
12 provided for the weekend through Thursday or Friday
13 deliveries. We're grateful for the support but meals
14 offer far more than nutrition, they are a critical
15 lifeline.

16 First, they provide eyes on the ground, ensuring
17 someone regularly checks on our isolated older
18 adults. This routine contact prevents crises and we
19 can identify emerging needs earlier.

20 Second, we heard earlier today, even brief
21 interactions with delivery staff provide meaning
22 social connections for many of our clients who often
23 live alone and cannot leave their homes.

24 And finally, for many of our clients who are
25 living with disabilities or increasing frailty, they

1 can't stand at a stove. They cannot prepare their
2 own meals, and they don't go out to get food simply
3 because they can't.
4

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

6 SHYVONNE NOBOA: I just wanted to share a quick
7 story if I may?

8 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Yes.

9 SHYVONNE NOBOA: Thank you. So, we have a 62
10 year old client who rents a room in a shared
11 apartment and he has limited access to a kitchen. He
12 previously worked in a restaurant prepandemic but now
13 has poor mobility and partial paralysis. Not only
14 does he require Access A Ride and an escort to move
15 around for medical appointments, he cannot stand for
16 prolonged periods or sit upright without support.
17 Cooking safely is not an option. So, after a home
18 visit, our case manager was able to secure a
19 replacement toaster oven in 2023 so he can benefit to
20 heat his home delivered meals. We tap into NYC Aging
21 supplemental funds. We purchase microwaves and
22 toaster ovens for many clients so they can safely
23 reheat weekend frozen meals. They don't have ovens
24 that work and sometimes they just can't use the
25 stove. We hear about concern from clients about

1 sodium levels, as an example, which can exacerbate
2 conditions like hypothermia. Fresh meal delivery
3 would reduce the need for heavy preservation and
4 better support the health needs of older adults that
5 we serve.
6

7 So, I want to thank you for the partnership. I
8 do believe we have a collective responsibility to
9 care for older New Yorkers and we're hoping that you
10 prioritize this expansion. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you and the next is
12 Debra Knight.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

14 DEBRA KNIGHT: On behalf of Sage and the LGBTQ+
15 Older Adults and living with HIV, whom we serve,
16 thank you to the New York City Council Committee and
17 Chairs Zhuang and Mealy for providing a platform. My
18 name is Debra Knight; I'm the Senior Director of
19 Programs at Sage NYC. The oldest and largest
20 organization dedicated to improving the lives of
21 LGBTQ Older Adults.

22 Today, we're expressing our support for Intro.
23 238 as cuts to federal programs, the risk of food
24 security in New York City is also growing. The
25 challenges are more difficult for Sage's

1 constituents, LGBTQ+ elders and older New Yorkers
2 living with HIV are often disconnected from services
3 and socially isolated. They have less familial
4 support. Many mistrust the government and other
5 institutions based on past discrimination and
6 mistreatment. These challenges are further
7 exacerbated for transgender and LGBTQ+ Older people
8 of color.
9

10 In a 2025 survey, transgender and BIPOC older
11 adults were twice as likely to report food
12 insecurities. Even older adults who are already
13 connected to meal programs struggle to achieve food
14 security. A survey by CUNY and Urban Food Policy
15 Institute and City Meals on Wheels found that 60
16 percent of older adults receiving home delivered
17 meals experience food security within the past year.
18 Food insecurity can have serious health consequences
19 for older adults. Providing Grab and Go meals at
20 centers where they receive other services is an
21 effective way of providing these additional meals.
22 Sage already provides Grab and Go meals at our Sage
23 Center in Harlem twice a week, our ED Winter Center
24 serves 195 Grab and Go meals per week and Sage Center
25

1
2 Stonewall in Brooklyn serves 150 Grab and Go meals
3 per week.

4 At Sage Center Bronx, many participants live
5 alone and subsist on little to no income. The Grab
6 and Go meals are vital to meeting their nutritional
7 needs. Expanding the availability of these meals
8 through the Department of the Aging will go a long
9 way to reducing the number of older New Yorkers who
10 go without adequate food.

11 When Grab and Go meals began there was a fear
12 that older adults would miss out on engagement at
13 Older Adult Centers. If the opposite has proven to
14 be true.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

16 DEBRA KNIGHT: If I could have a couple more
17 seconds.

18 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Please wrap up.

19 DEBRA KNIGHT: This touchpoint has helped
20 strengthen their engagement with the centers overall.
21 The Grab and Go distribution creates a natural
22 pathway for deeper support. For these reasons, we
23 urge the City Council to pass Intro. 238 to help
24 ensure that the growing population of older adults
25

1 would be able to meet nutritional meals. Thank you
2 for your time.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you and the next one
5 is Evelyn Garcia.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

7 EVELYN GARCIA: Good afternoon Chair Zhuang and
8 esteemed members of the Committee on Aging. My name
9 is Evelyn Garcia and I'm the Executive Chef and
10 Director of Culinary Programs at the Lenox Hill
11 Neighborhood House. Lenox Hill Neighborhood House
12 was originally founded as a kindergarten in 1894 for
13 immigrants and is among the oldest settlement houses
14 in the nation.

15 At its core, the work has not changed since our
16 founding as we remain dedicated to improving the
17 lives of New Yorkers through education, nutrition and
18 wellness and mental health services. Among a variety
19 of community based programs providing daily across
20 the table meals, activities, and social services to
21 over 13,000 older New Yorkers living in all the five
22 boroughs each year is key part of our mission.

23 Today specifically I want to speak about one of
24 the programs that while simple in concept, has proven
25 transformative in practice, which is our Grab and Go

1 meals for older adults. Older New Yorkers face a
2 combination of serious challenges, such as food
3 insecurity, social isolation, mobility limitations
4 and the competing demands of medical appointments,
5 caregiving and work. These variables impact the
6 daily lives of many.
7

8 An older adult managing a chronic illness, may
9 have a doctors appointment at the same time that our
10 congregate meals at an Older Adult Center is served.
11 A kinship caregiver or a grandchild may not be able
12 to attend an Older Adult Center for meals. For these
13 individuals and many other similar cases, a
14 congregate meal program alone is not enough to meet
15 the needs for food insecurity and the needs to
16 supplement. This is vital.

17 Grab and Go meals fill the gap with dignity and
18 flexibility. They ensure that older adults never
19 have to choose between attending to important demands
20 of their lives and eating a nutritious meal. During
21 the COVID-19 pandemic, the Neighborhood House began
22 distributing Grab and Go meals to our older adult
23 clients and we have continued to support this mission
24 throughout as well as our daily congregate breakfast,
25 lunch and dinner meal.

1
2 What began for us as supplemental support has
3 become essential. Each week, we not only see our
4 numbers grow but we hear directly from clients who
5 have expressed deep gratitude for receiving these
6 farm table meals beyond our standard operating hours.

7 That feedback reinforces that something
8 fundamental, which is that access and flexibility
9 matter as much as quality. At Lenox Hill
10 Neighborhood House, we have expanded our Grab and Go
11 efforts and because we understand that food
12 insecurity has a severe impact on -

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

14 EVELYN GARCIA: May I continue please.

15 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Please wrap up.

16 EVELYN GARCIA: We prioritize regional sourced
17 ingredients and culturally reflective meals. This
18 legislation is more than a distribution model; it is
19 preventative health policy in economic equity and a
20 reflection of how we value our older adults in the
21 city. Investing in Grab and Go meal programs is
22 investing in stronger families and more resilient
23 communities.

24 Uhm, we also support and ask for modernized
25 kitchens and adequate storage for accessible spaces

1
2 and these would make a strong impact on service
3 delivery for thousands of New Yorkers. Thank you
4 again for your time and commitment to the wellbeing
5 of our older New Yorkers.

6 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you. Next is Tamika
7 Mapp.

8 TAMIKA MAPP: Hi, thank you so much. Good
9 afternoon Chair and Members of the Committee. My
10 name is Tamika Mapp and I am the District Leader for
11 the 68th Assembly District Part D. I am here to
12 speak for seniors of East Harlem on the upper east
13 side who are currently invisible to the city service
14 providers. We have a crisis of outreach. We have
15 programs on paper but if a senior doesn't walk up on
16 116th Street, doesn't know they exist. These
17 programs don't exist. We need a robust, boots on the
18 ground outreach strategy that meets our seniors at
19 their doors. Not just on a website they cannot
20 access or reply or they never see.

21 Furthermore, we must address the culture of our
22 senior centers. These are supposed to be sanctuaries
23 but for many, they have become places of anxiety. We
24 are hearing from the community members who refuse to
25 go to their local centers because of the abuse and

1 mistreatment they have witnessed or experienced.

2 Currently when staff members are abusive, the system
3 solutions often require transfer to another facility.

4 A transfer is not accountability; it's a relocation
5 of harm. We must stop the cycle of shuffling bad
6 actors around our community. If you mistreat an
7 elder in our district, you should be barred from the
8 industry, not given a new desk at a different center.

9
10 Finally, we must address the food security. It's
11 a disgrace that the city with this much wealth, many
12 seniors have access to Grab and Go meals one or two
13 days a week. Hunger doesn't happen on a schedule.

14 To address these barriers, I'm calling on the
15 Committee to create a senior center accountability
16 registry. Any staff members terminated for substance
17 abuse or neglect must be barred from working in any
18 city funded seniors facility. No more transfers.

19 Mandate a seven day fresh food access program by
20 funding mobile markets and pantry deliveries that
21 provide fresh produce daily. Invest in human
22 outreach, hire community liaisons to go door to door
23 building trust and physically bringing our seniors
24 back into the state services they deserve.

2 Our seniors shouldn't be afraid of the people who
3 care for them and they shouldn't be left hungry in
4 the dark. We need real oversight and real access
5 now. Thank you for your time.

6 CHAIRPERSON ZHUANG: Thank you. Thank you to
7 everyone who has testified. If there is anyone
8 present in the room or on Zoom that has not had an
9 opportunity to testify, please raise your hand.

10 Okay, no more. Seeing no one else, I would like
11 to note that written testimony which will be reviewed
12 in full by Committee Staff may be submitted to the
13 record up to 72 hours after closing of this hearing
14 by email to testimony@council.nyc.gov.

15 [GAVEL] Thank you everyone.
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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 March 11, 2026