

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION
JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE
ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY

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June 13, 2023
Start: 1:38 p.m.
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HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM-CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Shahana Hanif,
Chairperson of the Committee on
Immigration

Tiffany Cabàn,
Chairperson of the Committee on
Women and Gender Equity

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Carmen N De La Rosa
Rita C. Joseph
Shekar Krishnan
Francisco P. Moya
Pierina Ana Sanchez
Sandra Ung
Kevin C. Riley
Jennifer Gutiérrez
Althea Stevens
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A P P E A R A N C E S

Nadeen Amatear
Advocate representing the Promise NYC program

Elizabeth Wolkomir
Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Child and
Family Well-being at the Administration for
Children's Services

Michelle Paige
Executive Director of the Office of Child Care
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Hella H. (SP?)
Hispanic Mother

Vianey Romero Mendez
Mixteca Organization and Community We Serve

Josena Ponsey (SP?)
Coordinating Attorney for Policy and Advocacy at
Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation

Sonia Nieto
Mother of two children who benefitted from
Promise New York City program

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

Sonia Oquendo
Sunset Park Group Family Day Care

Julia Na
Director of Strategy at the Korean American
Family Service Center, KAFC

Ronice Bryant (SP?)
Mother of a 12-year-old young lady

Gregory Brender
Day Care Council of New York

Liza Schwartzwald
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Steven Morales
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Rebecca Charles
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Committee for Children

Betty Baez Melo
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Education Project at Advocates for Children of
New York

Musfika Moshahid
Muslim Community Network

Ingrid Chungata
Committee for Hispanic Children and Families

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

Pedro Suarez
Program Director at LIFT-New York

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3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: This is a microphone check for
4 the Committee on Immigration jointly with the
5 Committee on Women and Gender Equity. Today's date
6 is June 13, 2023 located in the Committee Room;
7 recording done by Pedro Lugo.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon and welcome to
9 the New York City Council Committee on Immigration
10 and Women and Gender Equity. At this time, please
11 place all phones on vibrate or on silent mode. If
12 you want to submit testimony, send it to
13 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again that's
14 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

15 At this time, during this hearing do not approach
16 the dais. Thank you for your cooperation. Chairs,
17 we are ready to begin.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: [GAVEL] Good afternoon
19 everyone, I'm Council Member Shahana Hanif, Chair of
20 the Committee on Immigration. Thank you for joining
21 today's joint hearing with the Committee on Women and
22 Gender Equity to discuss access to child care for
23 immigrants in New York City and the urgent need to
24 invest \$20 million into the Promise NYC program in
25 Fiscal Year 2024. I'd like to begin by thanking
Women and Gender Equity Chair Tiffany Cabàn for her

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3 support putting this hearing together. I want to
4 thank my Council colleagues, representatives from the
5 Administration, child care providers, and the public
6 for being here in the Chambers with us or
7 participating remotely over Zoom.

8 Last year, the Administration and the Council
9 invested \$10 million to launch Promise NYC, a new
10 program to provide child care for immigrant families
11 who would be otherwise ineligible for other existing
12 child care options due to their immigration status.
13 This program was announced this time last year,
14 before New York welcomed almost 70,000 asylum
15 seekers. The dramatic spike in the number of recent
16 arrivals has created a significantly higher than
17 anticipated demand and made the program even more
18 critical.

19 The initial \$10 million investment has been
20 extremely fruitful, allowing approximately 600
21 families to secure child care for six months from
22 January to June of this year. For children, this
23 access has provided emotional and social support that
24 benefits their development. For parents and
25 guardians, this access has given them the freedom to
work and provide for their families. The Council is

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3 united in calling for a \$20 million investment in
4 FY24, so that the program can continue year around.
5 ACS, it's partner agencies and the four contracted
6 providers, Northern Manhattan Improvement
7 Corporation, The Center for Family Life Chinese
8 American Planning Council and La Colmena have done
9 exceptional work in successfully operationalizing
10 this program over a short period of time. We look
11 forward to hearing their testimony this afternoon.

12 However, despite the success of the program, the
13 need to continue it year-round and the increased
14 demand due to the arrival of asylum seekers, the
15 Administration failed to include any funding for
16 Promise NYC in this Executive Budget released in May.

17 Given the Administrations admirable advocacy for
18 work authorization for asylum seekers, it is
19 befuddling that they are threatening to cut the
20 resource that allows our newest New Yorkers,
21 especially those who are women, to go to work. This
22 program is an economic driver that will make asylum
23 seekers more self-sufficient and less reliant on
24 costly city funded shelter beds.

25 The Council was encouraged during the Committee
on Finance's Executive Budget Hearing, when Budget

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3 Director Jacq Jiha testified that the Administration
4 intended to work with the Council to renew this
5 program. We hope that today they will follow-up with
6 a firm commitment to continue this program year
7 around. I want to thank all the Committee Staff for
8 their work on this issue, including Jayasri
9 Ganapathy, Senior Legislative Counsel, Rebecca
10 Barilla, Policy Analyst, Brenda McKinney, Senior
11 Legislative Counsel, Cristy Dwyer, Senior Policy
12 Analyst, Florentine Kabore, Principal Finance Analyst
13 and Crilhien Francisco, Assistant Director.

14 I'd also like to thank my staff, Legislative
15 Director Alex Liao, Communications Director Michael
16 Whitesides and Chief of Staff Nora Brickner, the
17 Sergeants at Arms, the interpreters and all other
18 staff working to make this joint hearing run
19 smoothly. Now, I will turn it over to Council Member
20 Cabàn for her opening statement.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Thank you Chair Hanif. My
22 name is Tiffany Cabàn. My pronouns are she, her and
23 I am the Chair of the Committee on Women and Gender
24 Equity and I'd like to begin by thanking my colleague
25 Chair Shahana Hanif from the Committee on Immigration
for holding this important hearing with me today.

3 We know how important high quality child care is
4 for children, their families and our city's economy.
5 And the public safety and public health outcomes we
6 all need and deserve. And yet few people today are
7 able to pay the high cost of child care services
8 available to them. Simply put, the cost of child
9 care is just too high for most working-class families
10 to afford. For most working families to afford and
11 what's worse, in the Mayor's Executive Budget, public
12 support for child care and pre-K is going in the
13 wrong direction, defunding, not enhanced investment.

14 Of particular concern is the fate of Promise NYC,
15 a program we fought for and won just one year ago
16 after the state specifically excluded undocumented
17 kids from child care subsidies. Last year, the city
18 devoted \$10 million to this program. That lasted six
19 months and only for a few hundred families. Given
20 the full year of funding we need for a significantly
21 increased population of undocumented children, owing
22 also in part to our recently arrived and might I say
23 welcome asylum seekers and migrants, \$20 million is
24 the bare minimum we need to sustain this vital
25 program.

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3 We were encouraged to hear that OMB wants to fund
4 this program. We are nevertheless very concerned
5 that the Executive Budget allocates zero dollars to
6 continuing this program, which would leave hundreds
7 of families without child care access less than three
8 weeks from today. Promise NYC is about nurturing
9 every child's promise to be an important part of our
10 city and so, we'll keep our promise to them.

11 I'd like to thank my own staff Celia Castellan my
12 Chief of Staff, Jesse Myerson my Communications
13 Director, Madhuri Shukla my Legislative and Budget
14 Director as well as our Committee Staff Senior
15 Committee Counsel Brenda McKinney, Senior Legislative
16 Policy Analyst Cristy Dwyer for their work on this
17 hearing and I'll turn it back over to Chair Hanif
18 now.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much. I want to
20 acknowledge that we've been joined by Council Members
21 Kevin Riley and Sandra Ung. Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair Hanif.
23 Before we begin today's hearing, I will let you know
24 my name is Jayasri Ganapathy, I am Counsel to the
25 Committee on Immigration. And for those of you who
are joining us via Zoom, I just would like to remind

3 you that you will be on mute until you are called on
4 to testify. I will be calling on public witnesses to
5 testify at the conclusion of the Administrations
6 testimony and Council Member questions, so please
7 listen carefully for your name at that time.

8 Council Members, you will be called on for
9 questions after the full administration panels have
10 completed testimony. We will be limiting Council
11 Member questions to three minutes and please note for
12 the purposes of this hearing, we do allow a second
13 round of questioning. We will actually be calling
14 one public witness to testify in advance of the
15 Administration. At this time, we will call up Nadeen
16 Amatear to testify. You can get started whenever
17 you're ready, you just push the microphone till the
18 red light is on.

19 NADEEN AMATEAR: Okay, is it on? It's on, yeah,
20 okay. Good afternoon, my name is Nadeen Amatear. My
21 pronouns are she, her. I am here as an advocate
22 representing the Promise NYC program. A program that
23 subsidizes child care for undocumented children in
24 New York City.

25 For nearly six months, I've been working on the
frontlines, with the Promise NYC program in the

3 Borough of Queens. In the past months, our city has
4 experienced an unprecedented influx of asylum-seeking
5 families with children. These families have been
6 forced by sociopolitical factors beyond their control
7 to flee violence, unrest and dire circumstances in
8 their home countries in search of a safe and stable
9 future for their children.

10 These families need to access employment in order
11 to sustain themselves and contribute to our city. In
12 order to work, parents need affordable child care.
13 Let me be perfectly clear, access to affordable child
14 care saves lives and creates futures. One mother
15 enrolled in our program explained that she and her
16 children came to the U.S. in order to escape life
17 threatening shortages of medications that they faced
18 in Venezuela.

19 Her oldest child would have died without access
20 to medications and treatment. There was no time to
21 wait for immigration processes. Now, undocumented in
22 the U.S. and seeking asylum, she is relying on
23 Promise NYC so that she can access childcare for her
24 children and thus access employment and income to
25 support her family while also making sure that her
oldest child receives the medical attention that he

3 needs. This is just one of many stories. Right now,
4 Promise NYC is not accounted for in the 2024 fiscal
5 year budget. That means that Promise NYC and access
6 to child care for these families will end on June
7 30th. We are asking for \$20 million in the 2024
8 Fiscal Year budget in order to allow this program to
9 continue serving this community and these families.
10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you Nadeen. We really
12 appreciate your commitment to ensuring that our
13 undocumented families have access and we are just
14 thrilled to hear this testimony and why this program
15 is lifesaving according to your testimony. Could you
16 describe what the impact of discontinuing Promise NYC
17 would mean for the current families and I'd also love
18 for you to walk us through what the outreach has
19 looked like to inform families that this program
20 exists? Thank you and I'd love to open it up to my
21 colleagues for questions as well.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Thank you and thank you
23 for the work that you're doing. I know that you
24 spoke a bit about one participants experience but can
25 you describe a few more of the success stories you
have heard about first hand from the folks that

3 you're working with and then also, the other side of
4 the coin, sort of what some of the biggest issues and
5 challenges you find with the program as it exists?

6 NADEEN AMATEAR: Yes, so, uhm I will address Ms.
7 Hanif's questions first. To be quite frank,
8 discontinuing the program would be devastating for
9 these families. It would be traumatic for these
10 children who have already endured great traumas
11 getting to the United States, immigrating to the
12 United States who have just found a sense of place
13 and a sense of self in the child care facilities and
14 discontinuing this program would mean that their
15 parents would not be able to afford continuing to
16 have them in those centers and they would again be
17 displaced in another way.

18 So, it would be quite frankly traumatic for these
19 children and you know we see so many stories. We've
20 done outreach at many of the shelters that have
21 popped up all over Queens that have provided refuge
22 to these families with young children. We have done
23 outreach via on social media and have found different
24 ways to make sure that these families feel
25 comfortable and feel safe reaching out to us and
accessing this help.

3 I'm sorry, can you repeat your questions please?

4 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Yes, I'd just love to, now
5 you talked about one of the participants but I'd love
6 to hear some more stories. I know that there are
7 folks here to testify but I know that there are many
8 people who have benefited from this program. If
9 there are any that stand out to you, I'd love to hear
10 more about them and then in addition sort of what
11 have been some of the biggest issues and challenges
12 that with the I hope the continuation of this program
13 that we can do to strengthen it going forward.

14 NADEEN AMATEAR: Yes, we see a lot of single
15 mothers who have immigrated with their children. We
16 have participants who are survivors of domestic
17 violence and who rely on this program in order to
18 access employment and income and safety and stability
19 for themselves and their children. We see you know
20 couples who have immigrated with young children
21 because they're fleeing violence in their countries
22 of origin and come to the U.S. trying to make a life
23 for themselves and find safety for themselves and
24 their children. There are hundreds of stories and
25 these are folks who are coming in search of the

3 American dream and in search of stability and safety
4 and a future for their children.

5 And in terms of improving the program, I think
6 the \$20 million is a great place to start and you
7 know that would enable the program to continue, which
8 is really what we need and what these families need,
9 is that sense of stability.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much Nadeen.
11 Your comments really address the real issues of what
12 is foundational for stable communities and child
13 care. Discontinuing child care access to our newest
14 neighbors would be absolutely dramatizing and
15 destabilizing, so thank you so much for your work.
16 Do my colleagues have any questions? Okay, thank you
17 so much.

18 NADEEN AMATEAR: Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. At this time, I
20 will call up the Administration witnesses to testify.
21 We have Elizabeth Wolkomir, Deputy Commissioner
22 Division of Child and Family Wellbeing at ACS. And
23 for Q&A we have Michelle Paige, Executive Director of
24 the Office of Child Care and Early Childhood
25 Education, Melissa Aviles-Ramos, Chief of Staff for
the New York City Public Schools DOE, and Jodina

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3 Clanton, Senior Director of Policy, Research and
4 Special Projects Division of Early Childhood
5 Education at DOE.

6 If you could please raise your right hands. Do
7 you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and
8 nothing but the truth before these Committees and to
9 respond honestly to Council Member questions.

10 PANEL: Yes.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You can begin
12 when you are ready.

13 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: Good afternoon. I'm
14 Elizabeth Wolkomir, I use she, her pronouns and I'm
15 the Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Child and
16 Family Well-being at the Administration for
17 Children's Services. I want to thank Chair Hanif,
18 Chair Cabàn, and the other members of the Committees
19 on Immigration and Women and Gender Equity for
20 holding this hearing on access to child care for
21 immigrants.

22 It's a critical topic, and I'm glad to be here
23 joined with colleagues from the Mayor's Office of
24 Child Care and Early Childhood Education, as well as
25 New York City Public Schools to discuss it today.

3 The Division that I lead focuses on investing in
4 families and communities, including through the
5 provision of assistance to help families cover the
6 cost of child care. With the support of child care
7 vouchers, parents and caregivers can pursue work,
8 education, and stable housing, knowing their children
9 are in safe and developmentally appropriate care.
10 Much of the subsidized care in New York City for low-
11 income families is funded by the New York State Child
12 Care Block Grant, or CCBG.

13 As the local social service district, ACS is
14 responsible for administering CCBG, which supports a
15 part of the City's contracted child care system
16 administered by New York City Public Schools, as well
17 as child care vouchers issued by ACS and the New York
18 City Human Resources Administration. The block grant
19 is a mix of federal and state funds, and therefore is
20 constrained by relevant federal and state laws and
21 regulations.

22 Unlike federally funded education, federally
23 funded public benefits, which includes child care
24 subsidies, are limited to citizens and individuals
25 that qualify as a result of certain immigration
status, such as refugees and legal permanent

3 residents. These rules are based on the federal 1996
4 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity
5 Reconciliation Act, which is commonly known as
6 "welfare reform."

7 As you know, the Governor committed to providing
8 New York City with approximately \$4 billion over the
9 next 4 years in CCBG funding to support child care
10 assistance in New York City. This is a vital
11 investment, but based on federal rules these funds
12 cannot support many of our neighbors whose children
13 lack qualified immigration status, including many of
14 the asylum seekers that have arrived in the City over
15 the last months.

16 Importantly, to receive CCBG-funded child care
17 assistance, it is only the child for whom a family is
18 seeking care that must meet these criteria. This
19 means, many immigrant parents are able to receive
20 child care assistance through contracted or voucher
21 care if their child was born in the United States or
22 has another qualified status. In addition, the City
23 has several options for children that do not meet
24 criteria for CCBG-funded subsidies based on their
25 immigration status.

3 New York City Public Schools operates a continuum
4 of Pre-K and 3-K programs that are available to
5 children without regard for citizenship or
6 immigration status. In addition the City's Head
7 Start and Early Head Start programs both those
8 administered by NYCPS and direct federal grantees are
9 also an important part of the early childhood
10 continuum; because they are educational programs,
11 they also do not have an immigration or citizenship
12 eligibility requirement.

13 These programs are a lifeline to immigrant
14 families. However, to adequately support this
15 population, we desperately need changes to federal
16 rules. I urge you, as Council members, to also push
17 our federal partners to revisit the laws that prevent
18 many children, particularly undocumented children,
19 from receiving CCBG-funded child care assistance.

20 As you also know, in the Fiscal Year 2023 Adopted
21 City Budget, ACS received \$10 million of one year
22 city-funding to create a new program for children
23 who, as a result of their immigration status, are
24 ineligible for state and federally funded child care
25 assistance.

3 This funding was used to create Promise NYC. ACS
4 used the first five to six months of the fiscal year
5 to develop the program, to contract with four
6 community-based organizations, each with deep ties to
7 the immigrant communities in their respective
8 boroughs, and to support the CBOs as they hired and
9 trained staff, developed policies and procedures for
10 Promise NYC, and rolled out their programs.

11 The CBOs operating Promise NYC are Chinese
12 American Planning Council, in Queens; La Colmena in
13 Staten Island; the Center for Family Life in
14 Brooklyn; and NMIC in the Bronx and Manhattan. The
15 funding provided to the CBOs pays for both the
16 administrative costs of running the new program and
17 for child care subsidies during the latter 6 months
18 of the fiscal year.

19 Eligibility for Promise NYC is based on a child's
20 age as well as the family's income and residency.
21 Like the federally funded child care voucher program
22 ACS administers, Promise NYC serves children living
23 in New York City ages 0 to 13 years old from families
24 earning under 300 percent of the federal poverty
25 level.

3 All four Promise NYC programs launched between
4 late December 2022 and January 2023. The four CBOs
5 implementing Promise NYC are responsible for serving
6 families across the borough they were, respectively,
7 contracted to serve. They have conducted outreach to
8 the target population; completed screening and made
9 eligibility determinations; and supported families
10 eligible for Promise NYC in finding and securing
11 child care enrollment.

12 Families receiving Promise NYC subsidies could
13 use the support to enroll their children at any
14 licensed center-based or registered home-based
15 provider across the City. Once children are enrolled
16 in care with a Promise NYC subsidy, CBOs make monthly
17 payments directly to child care providers. CBO staff
18 were also trained in the full continuum of child care
19 available in New York City, and when they encountered
20 families eligible for other types of child care
21 assistance, they connected them to those programs.

22 As a result of their efforts, by the end of April
23 we had met our target of reaching over 600 children
24 enrolled in child care with the support of a subsidy
25 from Promise NYC. About 70 percent of the children
enrolled are ages 0 through 4 years old. The subsidy

3 Promise NYC provides covers the full cost of care at
4 the provider of the caregiver's choice, up to \$700
5 per week. With only a few exceptions, this has meant
6 that Promise NYC covers the full costs of care for
7 nearly all participants. The four CBOs implementing
8 Promise NYC have been invaluable partners, driving
9 the success of the program. We are deeply grateful
10 for their commitment to Promise NYC and the children,
11 families, and communities they support.

12 And I want to take this moment to publicly thank
13 them for the partnership they have fostered both with
14 ACS and with one another over the past year to design
15 and launch this program in an extremely condensed
16 timeline, which is truly exemplary.

17 ACS is extremely appreciative to Mayor Adams, the
18 City Council, our contracted partners and the many
19 other city stakeholders that were involved in making
20 Promise NYC a success.

21 We look forward to the outcome of the ongoing FY
22 24 budget discussions between the Administration and
23 City Council. We also continue to hope that our
24 collaborative advocacy can bring change at the
25 federal level, so that we do not need to rely alone
on city funds for child care assistance for this

3 population and can more adequately support the
4 families that need it. Thank you very much.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much for being
6 here with us. We appreciate your testimony. To kick
7 us off, I just want some clarity, so there is no
8 commitment at this time for a reinstatement of the
9 Promise NYC program?

10 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: The budget process
11 discussions are ongoing, as you all know and we're in
12 close communication with both City Hall and OMB about
13 the future of this program. So, we are looking
14 forward to the outcome of those discussions.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And are you able to share if
16 those negotiations have included the call for \$20
17 million, a doubling of what we began with to really
18 ensure the scope of the need is covered?

19 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: I'm not able to share any
20 specifics about the discussions but the discussion
21 about the budget is ongoing.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, to back track a bit,
23 could you walk us through the timeline in getting the
24 program operationalized? We are really fortunate to
25 have had ACS as a partner and commend the ways in
which the agency has worked very diligently with our

3 providers to get the program up and running and we
4 thank you for prioritizing child care for immigrant
5 New Yorkers and for running an effective and
6 culturally competent program. And so, this
7 partnership is one that I really want to uplift and
8 acknowledge as one of the successes of all of our
9 first year in office and in such a politically
10 tumultuous time as we continue to welcome asylum
11 seeker families.

12 So, I'd love to know just from the beginning what
13 it looked like to get this operationalized and then
14 ACS's role in administering Promise NYC.

15 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: Certainly, so as you noted
16 earlier, we received the funding as of July 1st of
17 last year, so about a year ago now. ACS worked with
18 our procurement partner, internal procurement
19 partners as well as MOCs to identify a pathway for an
20 expedited procurement process and then identified
21 objective criteria by which we could select CBO
22 partners that were going to have the capacity and the
23 experience to be able to get this program off the
24 ground. So, we were able to complete those contracts
25 in a very timely manner in the first half of the
year. We then worked with our community-based

3 organization partners to design the program. We had
4 weekly collaborative sessions to talk through what
5 policy and all of the instruments from screening to
6 applications to what the enrollment with child care
7 providers would look like on the ground. So, we
8 built that program over the first six months and then
9 as I said, all of the programs launched between the
10 end of December and throughout the month of January,
11 where they began screening, determining eligibility
12 and ultimately supporting families toward enrollment
13 and child care.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And what are some of the
15 successes of the program?

16 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: I think that we are thrilled
17 that by the end of April from launching in January to
18 the end of April that had hit our target of enrolling
19 600 children with the support of a subsidy from
20 Promise NYC in care. We also learned a lot as we
21 moved through this process. I think one of the
22 things that became very clear and where the CBO
23 partnership was extremely valuable is that families
24 in general need some support navigating the child
25 care landscape in New York City and that's especially
true for families that may have limited English

3 proficiency that may have just arrived in the city
4 and that really don't know the landscape. And so,
5 having that support directly from the community-based
6 organizations that are trusted partners on the ground
7 to help them find child care was really critical and
8 a huge success of this program and an enormous
9 learning.

10 We also really learned that child care providers
11 needed to hear from ACS and understand what this
12 program was and that it was backed by the city. And
13 so, we were able to successfully communicate to child
14 care providers on the ground and our CBO partners
15 were really able to build partnerships with local,
16 culturally competent child care providers that were
17 selected by families that were eligible for Promise
18 NYC.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Absolutely and what we heard
20 during Nadeen's testimony is exactly the strength and
21 what the deep collaboration meant for the families
22 and a discontinuation of the program is going to be
23 traumatizing and another layer of trauma after giving
24 some of these families an opportunity to heal or to
25 feel encouraged that the city will be taking care of
their children while they figure out what it will

3 look like to succeed in a very difficult to navigate
4 language and accessible city. And so, I'm trying to
5 understand the rationale because I'm hearing you
6 really speak to the highlights, the benefits of this
7 program that is so unique to New York City and
8 really, we should be leading these kinds of programs.
9 And so, I'm trying to understand why there isn't a
10 commitment and I totally hear the piece about
11 negotiations being underway but could you speak a
12 little bit more about what ACS is doing or in
13 relationship with other agencies and Mayoral offices
14 to bolster the necessity of Promise NYC?

15 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: Yeah, I mean, as I
16 mentioned, we're definitely in discussion with City
17 Hall and with OMB. We have shared the findings that
18 we're sharing here today with all parties that are
19 involved in discussions around the budget, so I think
20 that we have made folks aware of what the program has
21 looked like on the ground. What we've been able to
22 achieve over the last year.

23 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood, I mean we have
24 been hearing feedback from providers and we were just
25 at a rally earlier this afternoon to hear from them
and their feedback is that this is a lifeline and

3 this is a necessity and discontinuing this program
4 will be really harmful as students get more
5 acquainted with the city as young people find their
6 voice in this city. And so, we urge this partnership
7 to continue. We urge the expansion of this program
8 to reach more providers and to reach more families of
9 course.

9 Are you able to share some of the enrollment data
10 with us? Particularly, I'm interested in the
11 families, the children on the wait list. Are there
12 families on the wait list that are directed anywhere
13 else? How many children have been served to date?
14 And then the target number of children by June 30th?
15 And then the number of children on the waiting list?

16 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: So, I'll take those in a
17 little bit backward order, which is that the target
18 for the year for June 30th was 600 children. Today
19 we have 606 or as the beginning of June, I should
20 say, we have 664 children enrolled in care with the
21 support of a Promise NYC subsidy. ACS doesn't
22 maintain a waitlist for the program. So, I can't
23 speak to those numbers. I do know however, that some
24 of our community-based organization partners do keep
25 lists of families that are interested, who may be

3 eligible or potentially eligible, so that if
4 appropriate in the future, they can make contact with
5 those families but I don't have numbers on a
6 waitlist.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, I can be sure to have
8 that conversation with the providers during their
9 testimony. And then would the providers be more
10 familiar with where else families on the waitlist are
11 directed to?

12 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: So, they can certainly speak
13 more to it as well but as I mentioned in my
14 testimony, we were really conscious of ensuring that
15 the CBO providers were trained on the full continuum
16 of child care options in the city. So, that when
17 families are eligible for a federally or state funded
18 voucher or contracted seat, that they could be
19 directed there because as I mentioned, the child's
20 immigration status is what matters for purposes of
21 eligibility there.

22 We also made sure that our CBO partners were well
23 aware that the school day, 3K and PreK continuum is
24 available to this population as well as Head Start
25 and Early Head Start. And so, I know that they have

3 been making referrals to families and discussing with
4 families their full set of options.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, so I know you said that
6 the target number is 600. Have 600 children been
7 served to date?

8 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: Yes, there are over 600
9 children enrolled today.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Do you have a full?

11 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: 664.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: 664, okay, incredible. I
13 want to acknowledge that we've been joined by Council
14 Member Althea Stevens and Jennifer Gutiérrez and for
15 folks tuning in, this is a joint hearing between
16 Immigration, Committee on Gender, Women and Gender
17 Equity on child care options for immigrant families
18 with a focus on Promise NYC.

19 Could you share the overall feedback you've
20 received from the four contracted borough-based
21 providers?

22 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: Absolutely. We're in weekly
23 conversation with them. So, they've been coming to
24 us with successes and challenges all along the way,
25 some of which I reflected to you. I think that I
certainly don't want to speak for them but I know

3 that they have expressed that this program has been
4 extremely valuable as they've been working with
5 community members and as you heard previously from
6 Nadeen.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then the overall feedback
8 from participating child care sites?

9 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: We don't have direct contact
10 with the child care sites, so I don't have direct
11 feedback on that.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, I have a few more
13 questions but I'll turn it over to Council Member
14 Cabàn and then to some of our colleagues.

15 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you and thank you for
16 being here. I want to start by saying that this
17 program has been one of the biggest points of pride
18 doing this work. I know that that is the case for
19 many of the people in your agency as well. It has
20 been super critical, absolutely life changing and I
21 have not hesitated. Every single time ACS has been
22 before this body to say, how impressed and grateful I
23 am with the work that you have done with Promise NYC.
24 It is just in partnership with the community-based
25 organizations been incredible.

3 I will say though that the testimony given today
4 has such a different tone than the testimony given by
5 Commissioner Dannhouser at the Executive Budget
6 hearings. And I think it's important to put on the
7 record some of the contrast because when he testified
8 at the Executive Budget hearing, he lifted up Promise
9 NYC as again something that the agency was incredibly
10 proud of. Saying that we know and I'm quoting from
11 his testimony, I have it here with me. "We know that
12 access to child care is essential for families. This
13 past year, we have made tremendous progress in
14 increasing the number of children receiving child
15 care assistance including for the first time ever for
16 undocumented children through FY23 funding for
17 Promise NYC. We know that what we talk about in the
18 limited time when we're getting public testimony, is
19 there's a lot that we could say and despite it not
20 being included in the Mayor's Executive Budget, he
21 saw fit to uplift how important it was. The
22 questions that myself, Chair Hanif asked, asked him
23 to highlight and he said it was something that he was
24 the most proud of in terms of what this agency has
25 been able to accomplish. And so, I read today's
testimony and a lot of it is just sort like the

1 basics on how the program has worked but the front
2 end, I'm not satisfied with it because it talks a lot
3 about the onus being on the federal government. We
4 know that we're not getting that funding for specific
5 reasons from the federal government. It did not stop
6 us last Fiscal Year to fill that gap when the
7 governor left our undocumented families out of the
8 budget for these subsidies.

9
10 And so, I don't think it's good enough to pass
11 the buck and we should be a yes and city to say yes,
12 we all can continue to fight for federal changes but
13 in this moment, in the short-term, where there is a
14 critical need, we have filled the gap and we
15 absolutely should be filling the gap again,
16 especially when the gap that \$20 million gap, is one-
17 fifth of one percent of the entire city's budget.

18 And so, I want to see us be a yes and not pass
19 the buck to the federal government because we've done
20 it in the past. We have OPCs because the Department
21 of Health and DOHMH said, we know that the federal
22 government doesn't allow this but it saves lives, so
23 we're going to do it and we forge forward and we save
24 lives. We know that the federal government does not
25 allow for the provision of dollars towards programs

3 like this and last year, and I commend the Mayor on
4 this, did the right thing and provided these
5 subsidies.

6 And so, what we're saying right now is that we
7 have to continue it. It's so critical, especially
8 now, so I just want to; I mean, I little bit
9 perturbed by kind of like the difference in
10 comparison to the last piece of testimony and I know
11 that I'm going on a little bit of a silique here and
12 I apologize but I thought it was worth noting. It's
13 not enough to say that the federal government has to
14 step up. We know that but we also need to step up
15 too.

16 Some of the questions I want to ask have to do
17 with if you can talk a little bit about you now you
18 said that the 600 families were serviced. Uhm, you
19 mentioned also in the testimony that Early Head Start
20 programs are also capturing some of these folks, but
21 clearly the need is not being met in terms of
22 capacity. So, do you believe that in the absence of
23 the funding for Promise NYC that the existing
24 programs that were mentioned in your testimony would
25 do the work of filling the gap? And then some of the
need that we're seeing in the current moment,

3 specifically for child care and early education for
4 undocumented families?

5 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: I mean, I can't say for
6 sure. I think that though the interest and
7 enrollment in this program would suggest that you
8 know that families are interested in it. I'll also
9 say that there is a difference in the age range that
10 Promise NYC serves versus the other parts of the
11 continuum that families can access.

12 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Okay, so it would be fair to
13 say that Promise NYC is filling a very or has filled
14 across the last six months a very specific gap in
15 lack of child care access, is that correct?

16 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: It's definitely meeting a
17 need, yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Okay, and would you also
19 agree that those 600 plus families for that six
20 months, while really incredible that it fall short of
21 meeting the need. Basically saying that need
22 outpaced capacity.

23 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: I think that's fair to say.
24 As I mentioned, we don't maintain a waitlist but
25 knowing that community-based organizations have other
families reaching out to them would suggest that

3 there are more families interested in Promise NYC
4 than we're currently serving.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And does ACS or any other
6 agency that's here today, have a sense of how many
7 children under five have arrived in New York City who
8 are receiving asylum?

9 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: I don't have those numbers
10 and I don't believe my colleagues do but we can
11 certainly reach out to city colleagues and get back
12 to you if there is an existing estimate on that.

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And do you have a - I'm
14 sorry?

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I was just going to say that
16 it would have been helpful if the Mayor's Office of
17 Immigrant Affairs was present.

18 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Uhm, and do you have - I know
19 that you can get back to us on that, my first
20 question, but in a follow up to that, are there, do
21 you have a sense that there are current asylum
22 seekers that have been enrolled in Promise NYC or
23 other child care programs provided by the city?

24 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: I don't have specific
25 numbers on that but I do know that new arrivals have
26 been enrolled in Promise NYC. We don't keep that

3 information for obvious reasons of trying to keep
4 families as safe and protected as possible. With
5 that said, our partners on the ground as you heard,
6 worked very closely with DHS rent shelters as part of
7 their outreach strategy.

8 Our partner in Manhattan NYMIC also we created
9 with H&H a direct referral pathway with the HERCs and
10 so, we know that families who are new arrivals in
11 those types of facilities, were accessing Promise NYC
12 during this period but I can't speak to exactly how
13 many.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Okay, uhm, and I want to
15 move. I would love to get follow-up from you all on
16 some of those data points. But I want to move a
17 little bit into budget. Is Promise NYC funding
18 considering emergency funding at all?

19 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: Is it considering I'm sorry?

20 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Emergency funding?

21 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: Can you say a bit more about
22 your question?

23 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: So, the Mayor has talked
24 about our current - the current influx of asylum
25 seekers as an emergency right? And so, obviously we
have made fast and hard decisions on how to try to

3 allocate resources to address the emergency. And
4 directing funding to things quite – is that something
5 that is part of the discussions when we talk about
6 providing for our newly arrived immigrant neighbors?

7 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: I'm not aware of whether or
8 not it's being classified as emergency funding, but I
9 can certainly check on that.

10 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And was there any PEG applied
11 or unallocated funding for Promise NYC in the
12 Executive Plan?

13 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: I'm sorry?

14 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Was there any PEG applied?

15 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: PEG applied?

16 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Hmm, hmm.

17 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: To Promise NYC?

18 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Yeah.

19 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: No, it was one year funding,
20 so it wasn't cut during the course of that year.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Great, thank you. Uhm, you
22 talked in the beginning of our questioning really
23 about just how – clearly about how this program has
24 been filling a gap that was not met previously and
25 so, if we go from the \$10 million over the six months
that we used to an executive budget that includes

3 zero dollars for Promise NYC, what impact would an
4 allocation of zero dollars have on the program and
5 the families that rely on it?

6 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I
7 think the first thing that we would do if we were in
8 that circumstance is to have conversations with City
9 Hall and OMB about what a responsible ramp down would
10 look like. We would also do everything we could to
11 try and identify families currently enrolled in
12 Promise NYC that may be eligible for another program
13 that they could access being Early Head Start, Head
14 Start, 3K or PreK and try and make very warm handoffs
15 to those programs before we would make any decisions
16 about cutting but ultimately, you know not having
17 funding for the program, may mean that some families
18 wouldn't have an option.

19 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: I think more accurately it
20 would mean that many families would not have an
21 option and I'm very confused on what a ramp down
22 would look like if you're going from \$10 million to
23 zero. A ramp needs a runway and that is no runway.
24 I mean, not to mention the fact that outside of that,
25 it is an essential service that needs to not just
exist but be expanded but again, I don't know how we

3 can characterize it as a ramp down if it goes
4 literally down to zero.

5 Uhm, I have other questions but I want to make
6 sure I make room for our colleagues to be able to ask
7 theirs.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I'd like to
9 acknowledge that Council Member Moya is on the Zoom
10 and so, we have quorum. Council Member Moya, if you
11 have any questions, I'd like for you to go first.
12 Okay, I will pass it to Council Member Gutiérrez.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you both Chairs
14 Hanif and Cabàn for collaborating on this important
15 topic and thank you all for your testimony. I
16 certainly want to echo so much of what my colleagues
17 have said today about the importance of this
18 initiative and the real transformative change that it
19 has provided for those communities that have been
20 able to benefit from it.

21 I represent a district where we house a number of
22 the temporary migrant shelters, family shelters and
23 so, hands down, this is something that I would love
24 to see expanded into my district, knowing good and
25 well how impactful it could be for those families.

3 Let me see if I can, which one I think make the
4 best, the most sense. I have a question about the
5 just the process of the getting the voucher. Promise
6 NYC operates like a voucher system, is that correct?

7 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: It operates a subsidy, so
8 essentially, when a family is found eligible for
9 Promise NYC and then works with the CBO to find a
10 child care provider whether that be homebased or a
11 center-based provider, then the CBO works directly
12 with the provider to make monthly payments, weekly or
13 monthly payments on behalf of the child that's
14 enrolled.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: I see and has the city
16 considered opening center-based programming near
17 shelters or HERCs I guess, more of the family
18 shelters to serve asylum seeking children?

19 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: I'd have to defer to my
20 colleague on that.

21 MICHELLE PAIGE: Hi, good afternoon. I'm
22 Michelle Paige, I am the Executive Director for the
23 Office of Child Care. Could you repeat the question
24 about the HERCs?

25 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Sure, uhm, have you
all thought about opening, has the city thought about

3 opening center-based programming near shelters or
4 HERCs to serve asylum seeking children?

5 MICHELLE PAIGE: Sure, currently our office is
6 connecting existing shelters, existing community-
7 based organizations to the shelters in their
8 locations. What our office is doing is making those
9 connections that are not organically happening.
10 There are Early Head Start, Head Start and New York
11 City Public School funded programs that are located
12 near these existing shelters. So, our first step
13 right now is to make sure that we're doing an
14 operationalized connection so that the staff at these
15 shelters are aware of the available seats for
16 different types of funding. So, that's what we're
17 currently doing now. We have not had discussions
18 about expanding into new centers at the moment.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, thank you and
20 what resources do migrant families have for child
21 care outside of Promise NYC?

22 MICHELLE PAIGE: Sure, so families have access to
23 Early Head Start and Head Start programs.
24 Immigration status is not a qualifier of attending –

25 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: But if there are no
vacant seats?

3 MICHELLE PAIGE: If there are no vacant seats,
4 you could be put on a waitlist that's part of the
5 Early Head Start and the Head Start model is to make
6 sure that we stay connected to families even if there
7 isn't a seat available. Also, New York City Public
8 Schools has school day seats for 3K and PreK and
9 those are also available.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: But between zero to
11 three, there are no options if there is no available
12 seats at a Head Start near you?

13 MICHELLE PAIGE: Correct, Early Head Start would
14 be the option for birth through three.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: So, eliminating
16 Promise NYC, what is the anticipated income of that
17 if we're not able to fund it at the same amount or
18 even expand it, which is what we're asking for.

19 MICHELLE PAIGE: Hmm, hmm, well, the impact of
20 any program closing is directly associated with how
21 the families will be able to navigate systems. So, I
22 think to the comment earlier before, it's our
23 responsibility to make sure before there is a seize
24 of this program, to connect families to existing
25 programs, so that they can be connected. So, it's
just not a cutoff.

3 Any kind of program that ends, there is a direct
4 impact on disconnecting those families to services.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Can I ask just one
6 more question Chairs? So, for the Head Start, so you
7 all have a sense of how long waiting lists are.

8 MICHELLE PAIGE: It depends on the program. Head
9 Start in New York City there are programs that have
10 direct funding from the federal government and then
11 there's programs that are associated and affiliated
12 and funded through New York City public schools.

13 Each of those programs are responsible for
14 maintaining their own waitlists. So, Program A may
15 have openings for ten children while Program B may
16 have no vacancies based on full enrollment.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Do you see disparities
18 in those Head Starts in communities of color versus
19 gentrified or gentrifying communities? Can you speak
20 to any of that data just the differences?

21 MICHELLE PAIGE: So, Early Head Start and Head
22 Start is you know one of the primary reasons for
23 eligibility in this income. So, those income
24 benchmarks transcend and go through the different
25 districts. So, there are pockets of neighborhoods
that do have more Early Head Start and Head Start

3 programs because the demographics of the income,
4 median income for those families reflect the need for
5 that type of program. So, there are disparities,
6 they're based on income.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much. I'd like
9 to acknowledge that we are joined by Council Member
10 Althea Stevens, Rita Joseph, and Carmen De La Rosa.
11 Do either of you have any questions? I can come back
12 to you. Council Member Riley.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you Chair Hanif and
14 Chair Cabàn. Hello everyone. Just a few questions.
15 So, families within the shelter system, what is the
16 city's plan to provide children, excuse me, child
17 care for those families in the shelter system? Are
18 there any onsite enrollment support for those parents
19 and if so, what does that look like for child care
20 vouchers, such as Promise NYC and others that enroll
21 into DOE 3K system?

22 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: I'm happy to speak about
23 Promise NYC and then I can turn it to my colleagues
24 at New York City Public Schools. Uhm, so for Promise
25 NYC as you heard our community-based organizations
each made connections with shelters and created

3 referral paths outreach and warm referral pathways
4 and so, they were accepting throughout this period of
5 time eligible families and each family that applied
6 for Promise NYC went through a facilitated
7 application process so they were supported all the
8 way through application to enrollment.

9 JODINA CLANTON: Good afternoon. Jodina Clanton,
10 Senior Director of Policy Strategy and Special
11 Projects at the Division of Early Childhood at New
12 York City Public Schools. To answer your question,
13 at our shelters with regards to Early Childhood
14 programming, we have staff that are there to support
15 both family workers, social workers as well as
16 coordinators that are there to support the families
17 that have questions about any of child care options
18 that the New York City Public Schools has available
19 and depending on the criteria or what they're looking
20 for they're able to -

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Is the staff walking the
22 families through the process of applying for the
23 vouchers? And if so, how much staffers are at these
24 locations?

25 JODINA CLANTON: So, for the contracted care, we
don't have vouchers, they are going into our

3 contracted feeds. If they have questions, they are
4 about the New York City, NYC Promise, excuse me.
5 They are then able to support them in understanding
6 how to make that transition.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you. Early this
8 year, the Mayor opened the Office of Child Care and
9 Early Education. I just wanted to understand, what
10 has been the collaboration and contact with the local
11 CBOs within the communities?

12 MICHELLE PAIGE: So, our office is really happy
13 to be a connector on many different levels. In terms
14 of working with New York City Public School Systems,
15 right now, we are collaborating to make sure that the
16 children who are coming into this city residing in
17 the HERCs part of promise NYC, any other programs, we
18 are acting as connectors. We're putting
19 operationalizing systems in these welcome centers, so
20 that families have an understanding on how to
21 navigate not just New York City Public Schools but
22 have access to other childhood programs in the
23 continuum, so that's Early Head Start. That's Head
24 Start. That's voucher if they're eligible. So, our
25 office -

3 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: How are you guys operating
4 childcare deserts? Because there's a lot of areas
5 within the communities and New York City that have
6 child care, so how are you guys operating those
7 areas?

8 MICHELLE PAIGE: So, Office of Child Care doesn't
9 operate - we don't do any direct service. What we do
10 is we are working in partnership with New York City
11 Public Schools. We get their enrollment reports.
12 We're identifying community districts and school
13 districts that look like they have x-amount of
14 children versus x-amount of seats. I know New York
15 City Public School System has done a really reliant
16 job in reallocating seats to accommodate some of
17 those deserts, so that's what we're doing in
18 partnership.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you. Thank you
20 Chairs.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I'd like to just
22 build on Council Member Riley's questions to better
23 understand the Office of Child Care and how Office of
24 Child Care and thank you so much Dr. Michelle for
25 being here and how you all are working with the DOE,
thank you for being here. How has the coordination

3 of Promise NYC looked across our agency partners?
4 Could you describe that?

5 MICHELLE PAIGE: Yeah, sure, happy to talk about
6 our collaborations as a whole. The objective for our
7 office is really to be the connector between
8 different city agencies and also external partners.
9 So, Promise NYC is just one example of a program that
10 we're making sure that ACS, New York City Public
11 Schools and external partners are really working
12 together to make sure that as many children and
13 families are connected to service, education and
14 care.

15 So, that's the general overall approach to this
16 office. In terms of Promise NYC, I would you know
17 defer to ACS and New York City Public Schools in
18 particular because of those very specific
19 relationships but overall, the idea of this office is
20 really to ensure that everyone is getting connected
21 in a way that serves the same purpose, which is
22 access and equity for our child care for families and
23 children. So, in particular with the families that
24 are seeking asylum, our office is really happy to
25 partner with those staff at those programs really
creating an operations guide, so that the staff also

3 understand how to connect those families to the
4 different eligibilities of programs throughout the
5 city. So, our office is taking the lead in creating
6 a resource guide for the staff, so they know how to
7 go into the communities and connect families to those
8 services and to support that professional development
9 and training for the staff, we're also putting
10 together a resource guide for the families. So, now
11 that they're in the city, we don't want them to feel
12 like they don't have access and always have to go
13 through. So, we're also looking at creating a space
14 where families have some autonomy in creating their
15 own experiences in the city, not just early childhood
16 but some activities especially for the summer.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it, that gives me some
18 clarity, so essentially Office of Child Care is like
19 an umbrella and hosts the various partners and
20 convenes them to be streamlined in communication, you
21 also all are putting out the materials and various
22 development for staff and/or families so that the
23 providers can hand over materials to families or are
24 providers creating separate materials that are
25 reviewed by you all? Could you share about more of
the curriculum building and resources?

3 MICHELLE PAIGE: Yeah, so we're definitely the
4 connectors and the communicators, I like the way you
5 put that. In particular, for the asylum-seeking
6 welcome centers in particular, the operations,
7 materials that we're putting together is specifically
8 for the staff that are working there and they know
9 how to and where to connect different CBOs. So,
10 whether it's Early Head Start, Head Start programs,
11 New York City public schools, they will now have a
12 guide with information to make really informed
13 decisions. We don't want to add to the level of
14 families having to seek out information in a place
15 where they're not familiar and we're really trying to
16 make sure that this information is readily available
17 and correct. We don't want to direct families to a
18 program that doesn't have any vacancies or they're
19 not eligible for that type of program.

20 So, the Office of Child Care is working with all
21 of the systems to make sure the information is
22 correct to guide and assist families to connect them
23 to the correct programs.

24 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood, okay, so that
25 sounds like a very vital role that the Office of
Child Care is playing in this moment, particularly

3 given the need and the coming out of COVID and still
4 living with COVID, the need for child care and
5 bringing in all of the existing initiatives and
6 programs, city agencies and all of the partner
7 organizations together. So, that sounds very, very
8 meaningful.

9 Melissa, could you share how the DOE is
10 incorporated into the convening of the Office of
11 Child Care? How you all have intimately worked with
12 ACS and the providers around the referrals? Or
13 please share how the DOE has liaised to ensure
14 families have access to Promise NYC?

15 MELISSA AVILES-RAMOS: Thank you for the question
16 Chair. I'm actually joined by my colleague Jodina
17 who knows a lot more than I do, so I'm happy to pass
18 the mic to Jodina.

19 JODINA CLANTON: Yes, thank you for the question.
20 So, our agency works very closely with ACS. As the
21 initiative came out, we wanted to learn more about
22 how it was going to work and how we could best
23 support. And so, we used our communication methods
24 to share with our providers this particular
25 initiative in case they had questions. And so, any
time we had questions, we were fielding them or

3 letting them know what the opportunity was for
4 Promise NYC since those children may not have been,
5 or families may not have been eligible for the
6 services that are operated in New York City Public
7 Schools.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, was there a flyer sent
9 out to the public school system?

10 JODINA CLANTON: It wasn't a flyer; we have a
11 bulletin or outgoing communication that we just send
12 out to our providers to say these are options that
13 are available. I want you to understand that this is
14 information for you and if you have additional
15 questions, we directed them back to the website of
16 ACS or our contact information.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: The providers, as I in child
18 care providers?

19 JODINA CLANTON: Correct, because we've had child
20 care providers that are interested in understanding
21 more about the initiative and so, they would ask us
22 if we had that information and we would direct them
23 into ACS so that they could ensure that they could be
24 supported with that.
25

3 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, in schools when families
4 would contact school leaders about child care access,
5 how are those conversations rerouted?

6 JODINA CLANTON: So, we have site support
7 individuals at our programs and at our district
8 schools and if they have questions, if families are
9 coming in and have questions about programs that they
10 might be eligible for, we would first try to identify
11 if they might be eligible for our programming. As
12 has been mentioned, Early Head Start or Head Start or
13 School Day and year, 3K and PreK. If those options
14 were not something that the family wanted or they
15 weren't, they were looking for more robust services,
16 then we could direct them to places such as Promise
17 NYC.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood, coming back to
19 the Deputy Commissioner at ACS. Could you share
20 reasons that a family would not be eligible for a
21 Promise NYC?

22 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: Really, only if a family
23 didn't live in New York City, because residency is a
24 requirement. If a child was out of the age bound, so
25 over 13-years-old. If a family were prescreened to
be eligible for federally or state funded child care

3 assistance, they would be directed there first and if
4 a family was over income. So, Promise NYC serves
5 families up to 300 percent of the federal poverty
6 level on parity with our voucher and contracted care
7 continuum.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood. So, from this
9 afternoon from my colleagues, all of us represent
10 shelters and school communities that have welcomed
11 asylum seekers and of course represent the vibrant
12 diverse immigrant communities including many, many
13 undocumented families. We've heard over and over
14 just how critical this Promise NYC program is and
15 discontinuing this program would really be
16 threatening to the dignified welcome that we want to
17 continue to demonstrate to everybody coming into our
18 city at any point that they decide to be here. And
19 so, you know I would love to get just on the record,
20 do you agree with the need to continue the program at
21 \$20 million in Fiscal 2024?

22 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: Again, I'm going to have to
23 say that we are in discussions with both OMB and City
24 Hall and so, we can't preempt such discussions that
25 are ongoing and not yet concluded.

3 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: But will you agree that
4 Promise NYC has been successful and we need to ensure
5 that our undocumented families are accounted for
6 through child care access?

7 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: I will certainly agree that
8 it's been successful and we are very proud of the
9 program.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I will pass it to
11 Council Member Cabàn.

12 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you. I'm actually
13 going to go ahead and pass it to Council Member
14 Gutiérrez for her second round and then I'll finish
15 mine.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: So much respect.
17 Thank you. My next questions was about the My City
18 Portal app. I'm super curious. I think we all are.
19 I Chair the Council's Tech Committee, so my interests
20 are twofold. Can you all share how many successful
21 applications; and by success I would get into how
22 many people applied and there were enrollment into
23 child care through, specifically through the app. Do
24 you have that data available?
25

3 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: I don't have it with me, we
4 can certainly come back to you with that information
5 but I don't have that with me today.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. That's okay, I
7 got one more, is there any data you can share?
8 Because I know it launched in March, if I'm not
9 mistaken.

10 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: I mean, I can tell you that
11 we are receiving applications daily, both DOE and ACS
12 and so, we have many families applying and I think
13 within an hour after the launch, we received our
14 first application, so just to say that it does seem
15 certainly to be resonating as a valuable tool for
16 families which we're excited about.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Wonderful and is there
18 and this is a - I'm not sure. Is there a Promise
19 NYC, for example, an undocumented family looking for
20 child care, are they able to utilize at least the
21 initial landing page? Which I know kind of
22 determines what they qualify for? Is Promise NYC
23 included in the My City Portal?

24 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: It isn't currently. As I
25 explained, the reason is that the touch is so warm
with families in the current iteration of Promise NYC

3 and so really workers are walking families through
4 question by question. So, it's also not a situation
5 where a family is getting a Promise NYC application
6 packet and having to go it alone.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, I mean I guess
8 with a little bit more time, there will be more
9 follow up questions about the My City Portal but do
10 you also anticipate having data related to just
11 demographic information of people that are utilizing
12 the app to apply?

13 ELIZAETH WOLKOMIR: I know that we, I mean we
14 certainly have ages and we have zip code information
15 or should be able to pose information, none of which
16 I have unfortunately today. I apologize but those
17 will be available. I'd have to talk with our IT
18 counterparts to go deeper on exactly what other
19 demographic information is in there.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Alright, wonderful,
21 that was it. Thank you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Girl, I was going to ask
23 My City Portal, but I'm going to ask for some follow-
24 up, see. I'm glad I turned it over to you. Uhm, so
25 I know that you know you all talk about [INAUDIBLE
01:05:02] being a good way to apply for that

3 subsidized child care. Uhm, I think some questions I
4 have is we really don't have any idea if those
5 applications were all filled out correctly if they
6 are getting kicked back to families for things like
7 standing documents incorrectly whether this has sped
8 up the processing time for a child care application,
9 like all of those different points and then you know
10 I know that you didn't have the numbers for the
11 applications that have been successfully processed
12 and resulted and in children starting the program,
13 which was Council Member Gutiérrez's question, so I'm
14 assuming that you also today don't have these
15 particular data points that I would just request.
16 Specifically, how many applications the receive via
17 the portal today? And if you have them then please
18 today, then please do share them. And then also, a
19 disaggregated demographic data on who is using the
20 portal, particularly the zip codes or districts over
21 or under represented because I think that that
22 information would be really useful.

23 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: I don't have them
24 unfortunately but we can certainly come back with
25 that.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: And then to follow-up on
4 one of Chair Hanif's questions. You gave an answer
5 about you know when you are found ineligible, right?
6 Reaching that 13-year-old threshold and above. You
7 have to you know being a resident, what happens if a
8 child is 12 years old receiving the service turns 13,
9 does the subsidy stop? Does it finish out for the
10 rest of the fiscal year? Are they booted from the
11 program? And then how do you define or prove
12 residency under those requirements?

13 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: Sure. Currently children
14 have continued so long as that the program that
15 they're enrolled in is licensed for that age. So, if
16 a child has turned 13 in the months that they have
17 been enrolled, they have continued.

18 If residency is based on a New York City address,
19 location and we because we understand that
20 documentation is much more difficult for this
21 population, that is through self-attestation. We
22 have seen you know several families, just a handful
23 that were participating in Promise NYC move out of
24 New York City and therefore unenroll in their child
25 care.

3 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Okay, my last question has to
4 do with language access and DLL programs. We're
5 hearing about instances where asylum seekers or you
6 know other immigrants with one language are being
7 placed into language learning programs for the wrong
8 language. So, for example, a student who only speaks
9 Haitian Creole is being placed in a Spanish DLL
10 program. Obviously that's something that's troubling
11 and concerning to hear because the student is then
12 expected to learn two entirely new languages with no
13 support in their of origin. And so, what's being
14 done to prevent and address those occurrences?

15 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: In Promise NYC or in the -

16 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: In the broader.

17 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: Sure, I'll turn it to New
18 York City Public Schools because ACS as you know
19 issues vouchers and so families are selecting their
20 care.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you.

22 MELISSA AVILES-RAMOS: Thank you for your
23 question. If I'm understanding correctly, you're
24 asking about placement for multilingual learners in
25 the broader sense across New York City Public
Schools?

3 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Yes, because we have heard
4 from folks that there are instances where children
5 are being placed in programs that don't include their
6 language of origin. So, again, as an example a child
7 who speaks Haitian Creole being placed in a Spanish
8 DLL program and then kind of being left to navigate
9 two new languages, rather than being able to get the
10 support that they need in their language of origin.

11 MELISSA AVILES-RAMOS: Thank you for the
12 additional clarification. So, when a student – first
13 and foremost, the way that we identify our migrant
14 families is by looking at the number of students in
15 temporary housing within the 18 New York City Schools
16 since July 1st. We for obvious reasons don't ask
17 status.

18 And so, there is an identification process that
19 happens through an exam to identify students as
20 multilingual learners. And so, if a student is in
21 fact a multilingual learner, then the family is
22 walked through the different instructional models
23 that exist.

24 So, for example, in English is a new language
25 program, that is an English instruction model in
which case, children from across multiple languages

1
2 can all be in the same class receiving support as
3 they navigate English instruction. There's also dual
4 language and transitional bilingual. And so, we, I
5 am certainly not aware of any instances where a child
6 is placed in a transitional bilingual or dual
7 language program with a language that is other than
8 their own native language but certainly, that's
9 troubling to hear and if those escalations come to
10 any of your offices, then we would absolutely love to
11 explore them further. But if the family is saying we
12 want to be a dual language program for Spanish
13 speaking or for Haitian Creole speaking then
14 obviously that's their right and they should be
15 placed appropriately.

16 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Okay.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I just want to acknowledge
18 Council Member Pierina Sanchez.

19 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Do you have any questions?
20 Okay, one moment please. Oh, okay, just trickling
21 back to My City just very, very briefly, are there
22 any like implementation for improved functionality
23 related to the use of the app?

24 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: You're asking if my city is
25 under – if there are improvements being made?

3 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Yeah.

4 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: Yes. So we are actively
5 monitoring feedback from families and also seeing you
6 know places where in applications, we continue to
7 have families not provide all of the required
8 documentation and so, we are making actively working
9 with city partners to make tweaks to My City to try
10 and make it a stronger tool.

11 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: We would love to hear what
12 those changes in the process are being -

13 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: Sure, I can't speak in
14 detail about them but we're happy to follow-up with
15 those.

16 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: That would be great, thank
17 you. And then just I want to speak for the record
18 that we did invite CGE the Commission on Gender
19 Equity and MOE, Mayor's Office of Equity to come and
20 testify at this hearing. They declined to come. I
21 think it would have been useful for them to be here.
22 You may not be able to answer this but if you have
23 any sense of what the role of CGE and/or MOE is in
24 Promise NYC or in relation to the Promise NYC
25 program?

3 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: CGE and MOE weren't deeply
4 involved in the start-up of Promise NYC. Though
5 we've had discussions with them about it and
6 certainly could explore that. If there were a future
7 opportunity, you know I know you also mentioned MOIA
8 who was a deep partner in the start-up and planning
9 of this program, as well as providing technical
10 assistance all the way through.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Okay, and then the one
12 thing that I want to state; I'm out of questions I
13 think but the one thing that I would like to note at
14 the very least is that I know that you mentioned at
15 some point that there wasn't a waitlist perse but I
16 do want to point out that a waitlist wasn't really
17 kept because the CBOs that have been partnered with
18 were told to stop outreach once they enrolled 200
19 families.

20 So, I believe other providers were told the same.
21 Like, I know that one provider was told that. Other
22 providers were told, stop the outreach and I think
23 that that would account for not being able to like
24 point to a waitlist, when those CBOs know first-hand
25 and I'm sure that they will be able to testify to
this that the need far, far, far outpaced the number

3 of families that they were able to serve and those
4 were instructions that they receive from your
5 agencies. So, I just want to make that that's on the
6 record as well and Chair if there's anything else you
7 want to add.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I have some questions but
9 want to pass to Council Member Sanchez.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank you so
11 much Chairs and first and foremost, I just want to
12 thank you both for your advocacy for this important
13 program. I'm a little concerned that my question may
14 have been answered earlier but I'm going to ask it
15 anyway and if anything, I can follow-up and get the
16 data afterwards. But asking this question from the
17 perspective of having a 10th month old. When I gave
18 birth, I was very concerned about my ability to you
19 know identify a place where I would be able to leave
20 my own child. And I called around to providers
21 including some who are listed in the reports and
22 testimony that has been shared today and it's just
23 extremely difficult, so from my own anecdotal
24 experience. It's extremely difficult to find a spot
25 for a child, for a newborn and so I know that there
are capacity issues.

3 So, you know from that blends my question is, do
4 you have a breakdown of the children that have access
5 to the Promise NYC program, what ages have they been?
6 And then in particular with the providers that we
7 have, the Center for Family Life, Northern Manhattan
8 Improvement Corporation, La Colmena and others, do
9 you have a breakdown of what the number of applicants
10 that they received and how many folks that they are
11 serving?

12 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: Sure, so on the first
13 question, there are over, about 70 percent of the
14 children enrolled in Promise NYC are zero through
15 four years old to zero to five years old. So, the
16 vast majority of -

17 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: I'm sorry, I'm
18 interested in like infant versus toddler. So, within
19 that zero to four.

20 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: I don't have with me and we
21 can certainly bring that back. And remind me of your
22 second question.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: The breakdown of how
24 many children each provider has served and compared
25 to the number of applications they received.

3 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: Got it. I don't have the
4 number of applications that they've received. I do
5 know that there are 664 enrolled as of the beginning
6 of June. In the Bronx and they're our partners,
7 there are 125 children enrolled in Brooklyn with CFL
8 198, Chinese American Planning Council in Queens 208,
9 NYMIC in Manhattan 113 and La Colmena in Staten
10 Island 20.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank you so
12 much. That's really helpful and I'd love to follow-
13 up and again, just thank you to our Chairs for
14 following up on this issue so intensely and
15 prioritizing this important program.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much Council
17 Member Sanchez and bringing your own experience into
18 this site. We deeply appreciate that in this work.
19 Does the City have any outstanding payments to
20 Promise NYC providers?

21 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: Only for invoices not yet
22 submitted.

23 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay and then will then will
24 the Administration staff remain present for the
25 entirety of this hearing to listen to the testimony

3 providers, families, and advocates, anyone staying
4 behind?

5 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: I know that ACS will have
6 representation staying, yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you, we see you. And
8 then you mentioned in your testimony that there are
9 staff, the CBO staff were trained. Could you share
10 who trains these staff? And are you collecting
11 reporting from our providers and can share with the
12 Council?

13 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: We, ACS and DOE's enrollment
14 team jointed trained the community-based
15 organizations on the full continuum of care in New
16 York City. When you say are we keeping?

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Any reporting or any
18 evaluations?

19 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: We don't have an evaluation
20 associated with this program. We do have program
21 level data and we are going through a process now
22 with the community-based organizations to collect
23 learnings from the program. Certainly we can share
24 data and much of which I've shared with you today.
25

3 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That would be great and so,
4 going back to the funding and payment question. How
5 much of the \$10 million has been reimbursed so far?

6 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: I don't have that. I don't
7 have that information with me.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Would you have that at some
9 point?

10 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: Yeah, I can certainly get
11 it.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: We would like that
13 information.

14 ELIZABETH WOLKOMIR: I will note that often
15 invoices lag a month or two coming in, so what we
16 give you will be through a certain period of time and
17 we can certainly give that to you.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Sure, and then like Council
19 Member Cabàn mentioned, it would have been great for
20 MOIA to have joined but it was great to hear from you
21 all that MOIA has been engaged as a partner, as a
22 thought partner from the very beginning. And we
23 recognize just the ways in which countless agencies,
24 offices are involved and contributing to this work
25 and this fight.

3 That is all from us. Thank you all so much for
4 joining. This was extremely elucidating and we will
5 continue to call for the \$20 million for Promise NYC.

6 PANEL: Thank you. Thank you very much.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will take a
8 couple of minutes for the Administration to wrap up
9 and in the meantime for public witnesses, we are
10 going to move to public testimony. Once your name is
11 called, if you're joining us via Zoom a member of the
12 staff will unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms will
13 give you the go ahead to begin after setting the
14 timer, so please listen for that queue.

15 For fairness of everyone testifying today, all
16 public testimony will be limited to three minutes per
17 person. When the Sergeant announces that your three
18 minutes is up, we ask that you please wrap up and we
19 can move to the next person. I will also note for
20 the purposes of this hearing, we do have Spanish
21 language interpretation available, so please let us
22 know if you require that.

23 If you can give us a few minutes, we will move on
24 to public testimony shortly. [01:19:41- 01:25:05]

25 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you everyone for your
patience. We will now get started with public

3 testimony. At this time, I'd like to call on Hella
4 A(SP?), Vianey Romero Mendez followed by Josena
5 Ponse(SP?) and then Yosinia Mata(SP?).

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And I'd like to acknowledge
7 that we've been joined by Shekar Krishnan.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: If you are here in person,
9 you can come up to the table and have a seat. You
10 can start when you are ready. And again, if anyone
11 requires Spanish Language interpretation, please let
12 us know and we will set that up for you.

13 HELLA A.: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:25:47]

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Uhm, so we do have a Spanish
15 Language interpreter here at the table. If you could
16 please convey to her what is happening in terms of
17 interpretation. Sorry, I'm not equipped to do that.

18 HELLA A.: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:27:05-
19 [01:27:20].

20 INTERPRETER: Hello, good afternoon. First of
21 all, I want to thank you all for hearing me today and
22 I want to thank everyone that's going to be part of
23 this program.

24 HELLA A.: SPEAKING IN SPANISH: [01:27:37]-
25 [01:28:17].

3 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could the person to Hella's
4 left share your mic, so that we could have
5 simultaneous microphone access?

6 INTERPRETER: I'm very grateful about this
7 because thanks to this program, my daughter is able
8 to participate in it because it exists.

9 HELLA A.: SPEAKING IN SPANISH: [01:28:08]-
10 [01:28:18]

11 INTERPRETER: I am a Hispanic mother and as many
12 others as myself, we don't count within our
13 resources.

14 HELLA A.: SPEAKING IN SPANISH: [01:28:30]-
15 [01:28:33].

16 INTERPRETER: To be at day care.

17 HELLA A.: SPEAKING IN SPANISH: [01:28:35]-
18 [01:28:43].

19 INTERPRETER: And thanks to you and the program
20 my son has the opportunity to study.

21 HELLA A.: SPEAKING IN SPANISH: [01:28:53]-
22 [01:29:03].

23 INTERPRETER: I know that it's not only myself
24 and my baby that are advocating the help for this
25 program, it's a lot of many other mothers and their

3 children that are getting the benefits for this
4 program.

5 HELLA A.: SPEAKING IN SPANISH: [01:29:21]-
6 [01:29:32].

7 INTERPRETER: Because thanks to them, I have the
8 ability or the capacity to be able to work, maybe not
9 as steadily but I'm still able to work informally.

10 HELLA A.: SPEAKING IN SPANISH: [01:29:46]-
11 [01:29:50].

12 INTERPRETER: So, we can help to sustain
13 ourselves economically as a family.

14 HELLA A.: SPEAKING IN SPANISH: [01:29:57]-
15 [01:30:08].

16 INTERPRETER: The program has helped us a lot
17 both myself and my baby because the change that he
18 has had, it has been an intellectual change and
19 emotionally as well.

20 HELLA A.: SPEAKING IN SPANISH: [01:30:22]-
21 [01:30:35].

22 INTERPRETER: Okay, he has changed a lot ever
23 since he has started at the day care and it has been
24 both in the aspect of education and actually
25 nutrition as well in his diet.

1 COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION JOINTLY WITH THE
2 COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY

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3 HELLA A.: SPEAKING IN SPANISH: [01:30:53]-
4 [01:31:03].

5 INTERPRETER: I also want to thank you for the
6 opportunity that you are giving to us and I mean like
7 that to me and all of the mothers that are being
8 helped day to day or day by day through the program
9 and its benefits.

10 HELLA A.: SPEAKING IN SPANISH: [01:31:20]-
11 [01:31:27].

12 INTERPRETER: Because it is not the same
13 education that we are able to provide at home as
14 mothers than the education that you are able to
15 provide at school.

16 HELLA A.: SPEAKING IN SPANISH: [01:31:39]-
17 [01:31:48].

18 INTERPRETER: Thank you very much and I want to
19 say thank you again for the opportunity that you are
20 providing to the Latin mothers, meaning Hispanic
21 mothers for the program, so they can study and
22 everyone can get the benefits through the program.

23 VIANEY ROMERO: Good afternoon, my name is Vianey
24 Romero. I'm representing Mixteca Organization and
25 Community We Serve. Thank you Honorable Chairperson
Shahana Hanif and Honorable Chairperson Tiffany Cabàn

3 and committee members present. I am here to testify
4 on the vital importance of affordable child care for
5 immigrant families including asylum seekers.

6 As an advocate for immigrant and indigenous
7 communities, I have witnessed firsthand the
8 significant challenges they face in accessing
9 affordable child care services. Mixteca provides
10 services to Latinx and indigenous communities in
11 Sunset Park and Greater New York City. As the
12 community-based organization that has been at the
13 forefront responding to the humanitarian crisis of
14 newly arrived asylum seekers, we are well aware of
15 the challenges our immigrant and indigenous
16 communities face. Among which is the issue of access
17 to affordable child care. Immigrant families often
18 encounter new challenges in their daily lives. In
19 the absence of affordable child care options, parents
20 are confronted with the difficult choice such as
21 leaving the children unattended or sacrificing their
22 economic profits by remaining at home to care for the
23 children.

24 Asylum seekers who reside in shelters have shared
25 the challenges they face in seeking employment due to
the lack of child care. Several asylum seekers have

3 expressed the need to restrict their job search or
4 employment hours to coincide with the children's
5 school schedule. This poses an additional barrier to
6 a community that is striving to attain job
7 opportunities. Access to child care services not
8 only empowers parents to pursue education, stable
9 employment and job training but it allows them to
10 reach sustainable [01:34:42] and thrive in New York
11 City.

12 Just in the last three months Mixteca has
13 provided OSHA training to approximately 360 asylum
14 seekers, many of whom had to bring the children
15 along. This situation poses difficulties for both
16 parents who need to focus on the training and their
17 infants who have to remain in the location for an
18 extended period of time. Therefore, we respectfully
19 ask that Promise New York City and other child care
20 service providers continue the commitment to serving
21 immigrant families including asylum seekers, ensuring
22 that these vital services remain available and
23 accessible to those who need it. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you and SPEAKING IN
25 SPANISH [01:35:27]- [01:35:39].

HELLA A: Thank you.

3 VIANEY ROMERO MENDEZ: Thank you very much to you
4 and for your testimony. So, I have this question.
5 [01:35:50] if this program will get terminated or if
6 it ends?

7 HELLA A: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:35:57]-
8 [01:36:08].

9 INTERPRETER: It would affect my baby emotionally
10 and as a family, it would affect us economically.

11 HELLA A: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:36:18] -
12 [01:36:22].

13 INTERPRETER: Since we don't count with the
14 necessary resources to pay the day care.

15 HELLA A: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:36:28] -
16 [01:36:39].

17 INTERPRETER: Because of the high cost and as my
18 peers said previously, we don't have the money to pay
19 for this service.

20 HELLA A: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:36:56] -
21 [01:37:01].

22 INTERPRETER: We don't have enough resources to
23 get a steady job, so we will have to work informally
24 and also, we couldn't pay for the services provided
25 at the day care.

CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you. Gracias.

3 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: We do have two more folks on
4 the panel, so if you could just stick around and then
5 we might have some other questions.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we'll go to
7 Josena Ponsey. You can begin when the Sergeants call
8 time.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 JOSENA PONSEY: Hi, thank you. Good afternoon
11 Council Members. Thank you for the option to provide
12 testimony on behalf of Northern Manhattan Improvement
13 Corporation. Again, my name is Josena Ponsey.
14 Pronouns she, her. I'm a Coordinating Attorney for
15 Policy and Advocacy at Northern Manhattan Improvement
16 Corporation. We are a settlement house that provides
17 a wide range of service for migrant communities.

18 I don't need to further amplify how difficult it
19 is in finding and maintaining child care for a
20 working parent. Child care in New York City can cost
21 up to \$3,300, \$3,500 a month in Manhattan with an
22 average of \$412 per week. This is just not
23 sustainable for our immigrant communities, especially
24 because there are ineligible subsidized benefits
25 elsewhere. This population has very limited
resources.

3 Just as a personal example, my husband and I have
4 full time employment and we wonder even as two
5 working professionals how will we do it? How can
6 anyone pay the exorbitant cost of child care and
7 afford cost of living? Afford land, afford utilities
8 and then be able to see for a future? It really does
9 seem nearly impossible for us. But for our immigrant
10 communities, our new Americans, it may as well be
11 impossible for them to do this without any act of
12 subsidized benefits, how can they do it and
13 thankfully some can't and then it then becomes a
14 choice, right? Between going to work and staying at
15 home due to inability to afford child care. We have
16 seen in our housing practice several immigrant
17 clients in the past where child care is literally the
18 sole reason why they cannot contribute to the
19 household income and as we all know with the rising
20 costs of rent; it can well become the difference
21 between homelessness and paying for child care. I
22 don't think that we're exaggerating when we say the
23 lack of affordable child care is contributing to
24 housing crisis for immigrant families in New York
25 City.

3 So, this is why Promise NYC has become a critical
4 component for immigrant working families. Since
5 Promise NYC launched in January of 2023, our office
6 has enrolled 238 children in Manhattan and the Bronx
7 and we currently have over 200 children on our
8 waiting list to be screened. So, that is over 100
9 families that are able to join the workforce and
10 contribute to our city directly because of this
11 program. A quick example is Romina, a single mother
12 from Ecuador who migrated with her two children under
13 the age of four and lives in one of the city's
14 migrant shelters. Here two children have actually
15 enrolled with a Promise NYC child care provider since
16 February 2023 through our office and as a result, she
17 has had the opportunity to maintain stability for her
18 children by seeking work.

19 Same with Angie, a mother of a daughter with a
20 speech delay who has seen her daughters
21 communications skills significantly improve since
22 starting day care through Promise NYC.

23 So really, it's undeniable that mothers such as
24 Romina and Angie would be able to join the workforce
25 and unable to contribute toward their upward mobility
in this country without Promise NYC.

3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

4 JOSENA PONSEY: The \$20 million investment, the
5 \$20 million ask is an investment for the return that
6 we will see by providing this population the
7 opportunity to contribute to our city and we believe
8 that this funding is crucial to meet current and
9 future challenges for future immigrants of New York
10 City.

11 Thank you so much Council Members and I welcome
12 any questions should you have any.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. It looks like
14 Yosinia Mata is not on the Zoom. Oh, sorry, you can
15 go ahead with any questions Council Members.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I just want to thank Hella
17 for joining and Vianey and Josena for just
18 contributing to the conversation on the importance of
19 why we need Promise NYC to be reinstated and double
20 to the \$20 million. It is especially just critical
21 for us to hear for legislators to hear from Hella, so
22 I just want to thank you for taking time out of your
23 day today. This must have been a work day for you
24 and you took time to come visit us. You were at the
25 rally and I just commend for you contributing your
voice to this vital, vital program. It shouldn't

3 take you to keep coming back at our rallies and in
4 front of City Hall, in City Hall Park to be fighting
5 for this. So, we want to extend just gratitude to
6 you for being a part of this initial year that this
7 was created and in the fight to ensure that we not
8 only keep the program but we double the program so
9 that it meets the needs of many more families and
10 that it ensures your success and the success of other
11 families here. So, thank you for that and sending
12 your child our deepest love. No questions from me,
13 we can move onto the next panel.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Oh -

15 HELLA A: SPEAKING IN SPANISH: [01:42:56] -
16 [01:43:03].

17 INTERPRETER: Thank you very much because without
18 you this wouldn't be possible. Thank you for
19 thinking about us as immigrant mothers.

20 HELLA A: SPEAKING IN SPANISH: [01:43:13] -
21 [01:43:17].

22 INTERPRETER: Because without you, none of this
23 would ever be possible. Thank you very much.

24 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.
25

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2 COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY 85

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now call
4 the next panel. We have Sonia Nieto, Sonia Oquendo,
5 Julia Na, and Mohammed Amen.

6 You all can get started whenever you're ready.

7 SONIA NIETO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:45:17]-
8 [01:45:26].

9 INTERPRETER: Hello, good afternoon. My name is
10 Sonia Nieto.

11 SONIA NIETO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:45:30] -
12 [01:45:38].

13 INTERPRETER: I am the mother of two children who
14 benefitted from Promise New York City program.

15 SONIA NIETO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:45:52]-
16 [01:45:56].

17 INTERPRETER: With the help of the Center for
18 Family Unite in Sunset Park.

19 SONIA NIETO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:46:00]-
20 [01:46:04].

21 INTERPRETER: I manifest or express my gratitude
22 to the program and to the day care.

23 SONIA NIETO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:46:10]-
24 [01:46:14].

25 INTERPRETER: That gave us the opportunity to
apply for the benefit of caring for our children.

2 SONIA NIETO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:46:22]-
3 [01:46:27].

4 INTERPRETER: I arrive with my family to New York
5 City and at the time of my arrival -

6 SONIA NIETO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:46:33]-
7 [01:46:38].

8 INTERPRETER: I had to apply to get the housing
9 at the shelter, to be able to be at the shelter.

10 SONIA NIETO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:46:45]-
11 [01:46:51].

12 INTERPRETER: Thanks to the Promise New York City
13 program, my children obtain child care.

14 SONIA NIETO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:46:58]-
15 [01:47:04].

16 INTERPRETER: In a day care that offers them
17 food, academic, and emotional support as well.

18 SONIA NIETO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:47:11]-
19 [01:47:23].

20 INTERPRETER: Thanks to them, my children attend
21 until 7 p.m. to the day care. Uhm, and I'm able to
22 find a job and my husband as well.

23 SONIA NIETO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:47:42]-
24 [01:47:50].

3 INTERPRETER: And thanks to that, we were both
4 able to get a job, rent an apartment and leave the
5 shelter.

6 SONIA NIETO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:47:58]-
7 [01:48:03].

8 INTERPRETER: Thanks to this program, we are able
9 to give my children a better quality of life.

10 SONIA NIETO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:48:11]-
11 [01:48:20].

12 INTERPRETER: And a better environment. I will
13 be eternally grateful for the help that you are
14 giving us, both to me and my children.

15 SONIA NIETO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:48:30].

16 INTERPRETER: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you, we can move on to
18 Sonia Oquendo.

19 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:49:01].

20 INTERPRETER: I hope you're having a very good
21 afternoon.

22 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:49:07]-
23 [01:49:20].

24 INTERPRETER: In the midst of a tense situation
25 of migrants to the United States, the City of New

3 York has led a historic humanitarian support for
4 these families.

5 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:49:36]-
6 [01:49:42].

7 INTERPRETER: Who have managed to enter the
8 country in search of a dream and a better quality of
9 life.

10 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:49:49]-
11 [01:49:55].

12 INTERPRETER: Promise New York City is one of
13 those programs that from my point of view -

14 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:50:01]-
15 [01:50:08].

16 INTERPRETER: Has been fundamental in supporting
17 these families who have gone through extreme
18 challenges to get here.

19 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:50:16]-
20 [01:50:31].

21 INTERPRETER: Sunset Park Group Family Day Care
22 opened the door for them and has owner that
23 philosophy of the City of New York to support the
24 migrants with the same rights as an American citizen.

25 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:50:45]-
[01:50:56].

3 INTERPRETER: Thanks to the Promise New York City
4 program, we have provided a location, food and the
5 best emotional support so that these families do not
6 give up on their goals.

7 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:51:10]-
8 [01:51:20].

9 INTERPRETER: I am Sonia Oquendo, Child Care
10 Provider for Sunset Park Group Family Day Care. I
11 was a migrant and I walked the same path that those
12 little ones walk.

13 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:51:32]-
14 [01:51:39].

15 INTERPRETER: I see myself reflected in them. I
16 fulfilled my dreams and I want them to achieve it
17 too.

18 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:51:46]-
19 [01:52:00].

20 INTERPRETER: I am moved and I am grateful that
21 this New York City Program continues. We stress to
22 the entire world that the greatest value of the human
23 being will always be to help those who need it
24 because we're one humanity. Thank you.

25 JULIA NA: Good afternoon. Can you hear me? I
would like to express my sincere gratitude to Speaker

1 COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION JOINTLY WITH THE
2 COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY

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3 Adrienne Adams, Co-Chair Amanda Farias, Co-Chair
4 Farah Louis, and the Chair of the Committee on
5 Immigration Council Member Shahana Hanif and its
6 members, as well as Chair of Committee on Women and
7 Gender Equity Tiffany Cabàn and its members for
8 providing me this opportunity to testify today.

9 My name is Julia Na and I'm the Director of
10 Strategy at the Korean American Family Service
11 Center, KAFC. For over 34 years, KAFC has been
12 providing effective services to Asian Americans,
13 primarily immigrant survivors who have been effected
14 by gender-based violence, including domestic
15 violence, sexual assaults and child abuse. All our
16 programs and services are offered in a culturally
17 affirming and linguistically competent setting. We
18 operate year-round and our 24-hour bilingual hotline
19 and emergency shelter are available seven days a
20 week.

21 At KAFC, 98 percent of our clients are
22 immigrants. 98 percent are women and 100 percent of
23 our staff members are immigrants themselves or
24 children of immigrant parents. Additionally, over 95
25 percent of our clients, first language is not English
and they come from low-income backgrounds. We are

3 proud to be an onsite partner at the Queens Family
4 Justice Center and a [01:53:41] Family Justice Center
5 as on sites and offsites partners.

6 We are also grateful for our partnership with the
7 Mayor's Office to end gender-based violence and
8 Commissioner Noel. Our Executive Director Jiha
9 Fisher is an appointed member of the Mayor's Domestic
10 Violence Palliative View Committee and she recently
11 joined the NGBV Committee Meeting.

12 In 2022, KAFC receive 4,958 hot line calls
13 related to domestic violence, sexual assaults, child
14 abuse and trafficking cases to provide a 2,739 bed
15 nights at the Rainbow House Shelter and serve 32
16 women and 14 children through their transitional
17 housing program.

18 KAFC also taught 213 women at the job training
19 classes on the economic empowerment program, served
20 119 elementary and middle school students at the
21 after-school program, trained 50 high school students
22 as advocates and their youth community project team
23 and opened a new office space, expand their economic
24 empowerment classes, volunteering program and Youth
25 Committee Project team.

3 Despite the critical work that culturally and
4 linguistically specific organizations like KAFC,
5 immigrant survivors, gender-based violence are often
6 left behind in terms of inclusion in the New York
7 City Budget. Mainstream and large organizations
8 often take a larger cut of the budget while smaller
9 organizations like KAFC are left to do the work on
10 the ground with limited resources.

11 It is important that the New York City Council
12 recognize the unique needs and challenges faced by
13 immigrant survivors of gender-based violence and
14 prioritize funding for organizations like KAFC that
15 have a proven track record of serving this community.
16 By investing in culturally and linguistic
17 organizations like us, we can ensure that all
18 survivors of gender-based violence have access to the
19 support of resources they need to lead safe and
20 healthy lives.

21 As we all know, immigrant survivors of gender-
22 based violence have been proportionally effected by
23 the COVID-19 pandemic. From job losses to increased
24 care giving responsibilities that they have faced
25 immense challenges over the last past years.

3 As we begin to recover from the pandemic, it is
4 critical that we prioritize the needs of immigrant
5 survivors, gender-based violence in our budget.
6 We're calling for increased funding for programs that
7 support their economic security, such as job training
8 and placement programs, access to affordable child
9 care and small business support. We also urge the
10 Immigrant and Gender Equity Committee to projects
11 that expand funding for programs that address the
12 rise in domestic violence and sexual assaults during
13 the pandemic, including increased supports for
14 shelters and legal services.

15 Given the time, thank you for your attention and
16 your commitment to support the needs of immigrant
17 survivors of gender-based violence in the city.
18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Thank you. SPEAKING IN
21 SPANISH [01:56:19]- [01:56:24].

22 INTERPRETER: Thank you. This is a question for
23 Ms. Oquendo.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: SPEAKING IN SPANISH
25 [01:56:28]- [01:56:44].

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3 INTERPRETER: Thank you for your testimony. So,
4 the question is, what does the program for you and
5 your business and what would it mean for you if the
6 program ends on the 1st of June?

7 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:57:10]-
8 [01:57:31].

9 INTERPRETER: I'm telling her to say in Spanish
10 and then I'll translate.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Okay. Uhm, SPEAKING IN
12 SPANISH [01:57:35]- [01:57:48].

13 INTERPRETER: The ones that are going to be
14 effected the most are going to be the children.

15 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:58:00]-
16 [01:58:04].

17 INTERPRETER: Because most of the children that
18 attend my program live in shelters.

19 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:58:11]-
20 [01:58:20].

21 INTERPRETER: The children have been [01:58:22]
22 by nutrition, meaning their diet and emotionally as
23 well through the program, as well as in the education
24 sector.

25 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:59:00]-
[01:59:04].

3 INTERPRETER: And at the shelter, they don't have
4 those benefits that they could have at the day care.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: SPEAKING IN SPANISH
6 [01:59:14]- [01:59:18].

7 INTERPRETER: Thank you very much and thank you
8 for your work.

9 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: [01:59:24]- [01:59:34].

10 INTERPRETER: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:59:36]-
11 [01:59:39]. Mrs. Nieto, it is the same question for
12 you. What does it mean to you if the program ends on
13 the affirmation date?

14 SONIA NIETO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [01:59:59]-
15 [02:00:04].

16 INTERPRETER: It benefits myself and the other
17 families and the other mothers and my kids.

18 SONIA NIETO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [02:00:18]-
19 [02:00:27].

20 INTERPRETER: So, the benefit that you provide to
21 us to leave our children in the day care, it is well
22 appreciated because sometimes you cannot find someone
23 that you trust to leave your children with them.

24 SONIA NIETO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [02:00:44]-
25 [02:00:56].

3 INTERPRETER: Both the program and the day care
4 provide us the opportunity to not leave our children
5 with someone or people that we don't really know and
6 that they're going to be at a good place at the same
7 time.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I have a few follow-up
10 questions, so I'll start with Sonia Nieto. Can you
11 share what feedback you have in terms of what you
12 want to see more of through this program beyond the
13 monetary?

14 INTERPRETER: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [02:01:32]-
15 [02:01:48].

16 SONIA NIETO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [02:01:49]-
17 [02:02:01].

18 INTERPRETER: At this moment, my children have
19 been getting a lot of benefits because of that
20 program in a lot of different fields or aspects after
21 school.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, you don't have any
23 feedback in terms of what additional activities you
24 might want your children to participate in or for the
25 specific provider in terms of information that you'd

3 like to learn, is there any feedback both positive
4 and of course improve areas of improvement.

5 INTERPRETER: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [02:02:44]-
6 [02:03:04].

7 SONIA NIETO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [02:03:06]-
8 [02:03:23].

9 INTERPRETER: Well, at the moment, I feel
10 satisfied because you have provided for us and the
11 children help economically and in more aspects as
12 well.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, thank you and then for
14 our second Sonia Oquendo, can you talk about the
15 activities of specific programming that exists that
16 you've been providing and that the children have
17 access to? What growth have you seen over the course
18 of the last six months of this programs existence of
19 the development of the children.

20 INTERPRETER: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [02:04:00]-
21 [02:04:14]. Can you repeat please the last part of
22 the question?

23 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: What growth has she seen as a
24 provider of the children in the last six months of
25 this programs existence?

3 INTERPRETER: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [02:04:25]-
4 [02:04:33].

5 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [02:04:45]-
6 [02:04:53].

7 INTERPRETER: First, their diet on that aspect, a
8 lot of the children that were coming to a program
9 will not nutrition, their nutrition was lacking.

10 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [02:05:08]-
11 [02:05:20].

12 INTERPRETER: A lot of them were also emotionally
13 effected in a great manner because a lot of their
14 mothers had been at the brink of death and we're
15 talking about five-year-old children and so on.

16 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [02:05:44]-
17 [02:05:56].

18 INTERPRETER: And to all of the activities that I
19 provided at the day care; they have been able to more
20 stable in face of everything that may come up on this
21 life.

22 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [02:06:14]-
23 [02:06:21].

24 INTERPRETER: Most of them I have had them since
25 January until now, so I will get about five months.

3 SPEAKING IN SPANISH [02:06:30]- [02:06:35]. A lot of
4 them have been recently started to speak English.

5 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [02:06:42]-
6 [02:06:50].

7 INTERPRETER: They're adjusting very well to this
8 new life and they love to be at the day care.

9 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [02:06:57]-
10 [02:07:08].

11 INTERPRETER: Because they have a more ample
12 space where they are now that is not the shelter and
13 they're able to have recreational activities while
14 they're not at the shelter.

15 SONIA OQUENDO: SPEAKING IN SPANISH [02:07:22]-
16 [02:07:32].

17 INTERPRETER: Personally, I try to take them to
18 trips so they can leave behind some of the sorrow
19 that they have because of the adversities that they
20 may suffering on this life.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you Sonia. Very
22 touching to know that you have been just so
23 compassionately approaching every single youth that
24 has come in through this program and to know
25 specifically the tremendous benefits. She's got
simultaneous in her ears, so you're good for now.

3 So, the tremendous benefits which I think you
4 know what we heard from the Admin, we didn't get a
5 clearer picture of that. The nutritional value, the
6 recreational opportunities, the emotional support and
7 particularly as young people who come through a
8 traumatic journey, a traumatic migration journey, for
9 them to have had the last five months, according to
10 you as a provider, this level of growth that is
11 really addressing the healing that is so monumental
12 and must be a priority, so thank you so much for the
13 work that you're doing, for your continued commitment
14 to this program and for sharing just like the wide
15 array of what a safety net this has been for our
16 youngest New Yorkers, so thank you so much. And
17 Julie, thank you so much for being here with us and
18 for your testimony and I know KACF does this
19 incredibly important work in the gender justice work
20 and we really welcome you here and for your
21 testimony. Thank you.

22 JULIE NA: Thank you so much.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

24 INTERPRETER: Thanks to you because we are
25 grateful about all the help that you have provided to
us. Thank you.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now call
4 the next panel. We have Ronice Bryant, Gregory
5 Brender, Liza Schwartzwald, and Nora Moran.

6 You all can get started whenever you're ready.

7 LIZA SCHWARTZWALD: Great, I'm happy to start.
8 Hi, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to
9 testify. My name is Liza Schwartzwald at the New
10 York Immigration Coalition. First, I just want to
11 echo everybody else's call for \$20 million at the
12 very least for the Promise New York City program in
13 the coming year. We want to give a lot of credit to
14 all of you and to ACS for really listening to
15 advocates and families on the right way to do this
16 and it would be a huge waste to let that go.

17 Second, we want to ask the city to invest \$4
18 million to expand the New York Immigration Coalitions
19 life project to support 20 community-based
20 organizations across the five boroughs to provide
21 culturally responsive and linguistically diverse
22 outreach application and enrollment support, referral
23 services and early intervention supports to immigrant
24 families of three- and four-year-olds.

25 The majority of the 165,000 parents in New York
City of 0-4-year-olds who are limited English

3 proficient in New York City also lack access to a
4 computer. There's about 100,000 that lack access to
5 a computer so my city's great but it's not helping
6 those families and they need a lot more robust
7 community-based engagement and supports to learn
8 about and enroll in 3K and PreK programs.

9 Our life project has successfully helped over 650
10 immigrant families enroll in 3K and PreK by providing
11 that outreach as well as counseling and referral
12 services for other programs that they need. And most
13 critically, four out of five of those families said
14 they could not have applied without that existence.
15 So, when we're looking at under enrollment in PreK
16 and 3K programs, we really cannot think about any of
17 that without considering how much outreach and
18 enrollment has actually been done for limited English
19 proficient and digitally disconnected families.

20 I also want to talk a little bit about the Child
21 Care Block Grant Funding since they mentioned it at
22 ACS earlier. That funding is also blended and
23 breaded into 3K and PreK extended day and extended
24 year programs, which means those programs often also
25 have immigration status requirement. However, they
do not need to. Within that Block Grant Funding,

3 there is an exception called the public education
4 exception or public education exemption. That
5 exemption means that for any program, including
6 public and private Pre-K and 3K program and Pre-K and
7 3K programs in private child care settings. If those
8 are subject to the same educational standards as your
9 regular 3K, Pre-K program, you're actually not
10 required to use an immigration status question. The
11 lack of using that exemption which the state, New
12 York State can do pretty much tomorrow if they
13 wanted, really means that a lot of the children who
14 could be getting full day and extended year care
15 through those programs are not getting them right now
16 and it's something that we could do pretty quickly
17 that would open the door for more care for those
18 families. So, you know we really need to push both
19 CFS to actually utilize that public education
20 exemption. Because when they don't, we are right now
21 I think I last heard something like 50 percent
22 vacancy for those extended day, extended year
23 programs and we don't need to be. We know that our
24 kids need those services and we know that they really
25 want them. And then, uhm, finally I'm just going to
say we also want to ask that all families get you

3 know that extended day, extended year option. The
4 public exemption standard is one way that we can
5 expand access to that and that we make sure that we
6 consider that infants and toddlers still need
7 programming and that our early childhood educators do
8 deserve pay parity. Thank you.

9 RONICE BRYANT: It is my honor and duty to stand
10 before you on behalf of all restaurant workers
11 predominantly immigrants, parents and care givers.
12 The Mission of Restaurant Opportunities Center ROC
13 New York is to improve wages and working conditions
14 for the nation's restaurant workforce. We are
15 thousands of restaurant workers, hundreds of great
16 employers and thousands of engaged consumers united
17 to raise restaurant industry standards at such.

18 My name is Ronice. I am a mother of a 12-year-
19 old young lady. I worked in the hospitality industry
20 as this service since 2013. I recently became the
21 president of the Members Board for ROC New York. As
22 a member since 2018, it is common for many of us
23 parents to encounter where we must choose between
24 attending work to keep a shelter over our families
25 heads or in other words staying home, being unable to
pay bills and still being able to afford child care

3 for our children. I make \$2 over the income to
4 qualify for affordable child care and housing
5 assistance. Just for \$2, I am penalized in providing
6 no federal or state assistance. Child Care support
7 would really mean the world to so many parents like
8 myself. Child Care is essential to me and plenty
9 other parents out here today, so we can return to
10 school and get better paying careers, feed our
11 children, provide better housing and pay for child
12 care. I ask that you pass the child care package to
13 ensure all parents, regardless of immigration status
14 or income can afford child care to provide for our
15 families.

16 As a member of ROC New York, the right to thrive
17 on life on the rest of my workers bill of rights
18 policy agenda and to ensure workers have access to
19 quality affordable federally funded child care, that
20 includes untraditional hourly and night care
21 conversely. As an immigrant and restaurant worker,
22 child care is critical for my family. I must work to
23 make ends meet but I need access to affordable health
24 care to engage in New York workforce fully.

25 Thankfully our historic women, Majority Council
continues to demonstrate that when women lead and

3 prioritize solutions, our families and communities
4 can positively benefit from it. Promise New York
5 provides access to child care services for
6 undocumented children and their families. The
7 program has partnered with community-based
8 organizations to connect families like mine to those
9 services. It will also help families who previously
10 didn't qualify for other state or federal programs
11 due to the immigration status in addition to the
12 program will help newly arrived asylum seekers. The
13 legislation not only addresses symptomatic issues
14 with child care but also establishes a provider
15 directory. A pilot grant program and planning
16 processes to advance access across the city.

17 One of the biggest obstacles for my family can
18 often be access to child care because many parents
19 have to sacrifice jobs because of lack of child care
20 for their family. Many restaurant workers face the
21 consequences at work for their child care
22 responsibilities due to the precarious nature of
23 their child care arrangements.

24 Additionally, we're seeking child care with being
25 a considerable gesture. The COVID-19 pandemic also
exacerbated the negative impacts on my family.

3 Promise New York steps up and helps more New Yorkers
4 undocumented families, and asylum seekers who wants
5 to have a good paying job to ensure their children
6 are cared for safely.

7 I believe the program is critical and necessary
8 for the New York workforce, as we should not be
9 forced to pull or quit jobs due to inaccessibility
10 and unaffordability of child care. On behalf of all
11 restaurant workers, mothers and caregivers, we
12 appreciate the committees strives towards immigration
13 reform and universal child care. Thank you.

14 GREGORY BRENDER: Thanks so much for the
15 opportunity to testify and really for all of your
16 fighting for high quality early childhood education.
17 I'm Gregory Brender from the Day Care Council of New
18 York. We're the membership organization of New York
19 City's early childhood provider organizations and we
20 believe for and fight for a future where all children
21 have access to high quality early care and education
22 and where the providers are paid a fair wage.

23 And that really also means that no child is
24 discriminated against in receiving an education but
25 it's based on their parents income or their own
immigration status. So, we have a few

3 recommendations. Like everyone else we echo the call
4 to restore Promise NYC at \$20 million. We also
5 recommend that DOE allow community-based
6 organizations to directly enroll families. A lot of
7 families who do qualify for child care, are none the
8 less concerned about working through DOE's
9 centralized enrollment system, engaging with the big
10 government bureaucracy, even if the government
11 bureaucracy were to do the right thing, they have a
12 strong relationship with local community-based
13 organizations so we want parents and families to be
14 able to go to CBOs and enroll directly.

15 We also urge that there be an intensive and
16 multicultural and multilinguistic campaign to enroll
17 families in the early childhood programs, so that all
18 families know what is available to them, including
19 extended day programs, Pre-K, 3K programs, Head
20 Start, Early Head Start, the Promise NYC, all the
21 options that are available to them.

22 We are also suggesting a series of immediate
23 actions to save lives New York City early childhood
24 education providers, including ensuring that they are
25 paid on time, fully funding the 3K expansion,
converting some 3K seats to extended day, extended

3 year and funding a new labor contract that finally
4 achieve salary parity for the early childhood
5 workforce.

6 Aside from our testimony, we're submitting
7 testimony from the Empire State Campaign for Child
8 Care, which is a broad grassroots coalition at which
9 Day Care Council is a part. The statewide coalition
10 strongly supports the asks that many have talked
11 about to increase, to fund Promise 22755NYC at \$20
12 million but also has recommendations for New York
13 State to utilize the public education exemption,
14 which Liza talked about. I hope our friends at OCFS
15 are listening to this hearing and will take the
16 action to ensure that New York City as well as social
17 service districts throughout the state can ensure
18 that families can access, can use child care programs
19 that are funded through state child care assistance
20 without regard to their immigration status.

21 Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you. Is there somebody
23 on Zoom or no? Okay, thank you. I just want to say
24 thank you everybody for your testimony. I just want
25 to say very briefly to Ronice, thank you again for
your testimony and I think that the bills that you're

3 referencing Council Member Gutiérrez holds that
4 universal child care bill, which I just want to let
5 you know that I am very much looking forward to
6 holding a hearing in my Committee devoted to just
7 that bill and we have a date for it already. It's
8 September 21st. So, proud to cosponsor it and
9 continue to support Council Member Gutiérrez in
10 championing it. It's a really important bill, so
11 thank you for speaking about it.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: No additional questions for
13 me but I just want to thank you all for your
14 testimony.

15 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Oh, I have a quick question,
16 it's actually, I'm so sorry, for Gregory, I know that
17 you sit on the taskforce that came out of a previous
18 package of legislation that was passed right.

19 GREGORY BRENDER: Yeah, I've been appointed to
20 it, it hasn't met yet.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: That was going to be my
22 question. Okay, great thank you.

23 GREGORY BRENDER: And that was Council's
24 appointment, so thank you to the City Council for
25 that.

CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: No worries at all. Yeah,
4 intimately, just immensely grateful for the intimate
5 partnership that we have between the NYC and the Day
6 Care Council of New York. Just deeply appreciative
7 of the expertise that you bring and the ways in which
8 you're collaborating with our families and providers
9 on the ground. And I just want to thank Ronice for
10 joining us. I don't think you've testified at any one
11 of my hearings but it's just really an honor to hear
12 your voice on this and like particularly on the fact
13 that just by the \$2.00 and what that cost means for
14 families and so, that is an analysis that throughout
15 today, we had a rally, we've had this hearing. We
16 have not gotten that perspective and so, we know that
17 despite there being programs available and then
18 Promise NYC that the eligibility criteria still is so
19 nuance and complex that it continues to leave out
20 families just by a margin and so, we really thank you
21 for bringing that to our attention. Thank you all so
22 much.

23 PANEL: Thank you.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I would like to
25 acknowledge that we previously had Council Member
Gennaro here in attendance. The next panel is Steven

3 Morales followed by Rebecca Charles, then we will
4 have two witnesses via Zoom Betty Baez Melo and
5 Musfika Moshahid. You call can start whenever you're
6 ready.

7 STEVEN MORALES: Chairs Hanif and Cabàn, thank
8 you so much for holding this important hearing today.
9 My name is Steven Morales, I am the New York Policy
10 Director at All Our Kin. All our Kin is a nonprofit
11 organization that trains, supports and sustains home-
12 based family child care educators in New York City
13 and most of the educators that we serve are in the
14 Bronx where we work with nearly 300 family child care
15 educators who care for over 4,000 children. Family
16 Child Care, which is licensed child care programs
17 that operate out of an educators home, plays an
18 essential role in caring for our city's youngest
19 children. And many parents choose family child care
20 because of its unique ability to offer flexible
21 hours, mixed age group care and culturally responsive
22 care in a family's home language, characteristics
23 that are particularly important for supporting
24 immigrant children and families.

25 And those are some of the many reasons why we're
testifying today in favor of the \$20 million for

3 Promise NYC in this city budget and for ongoing
4 support for immigrant families in need of child care.
5 The calculus is quite simple, all children need
6 access to high quality early care and education.
7 Period. We know how important child care is for
8 young children's developing brains, and we know how
9 important it is for families who need a safe place
10 for their children while they go to work and
11 immigrant families are no exception.

12 And from the provider perspective, I've spoken to
13 family child care educators who have been forced to
14 decide between providing child care for free or at a
15 steep discount, which they can't afford to do or
16 turning away children because they don't qualify for
17 a child care voucher. And no one frankly should ever
18 be forced to turn away a child due to their
19 immigration status, not in New York City, not
20 anywhere.

21 So, last year, we were really thrilled when the
22 Council and the Mayor agreed to include the \$10
23 million and we were part of that fight and appreciate
24 all of your work on that as well for Promise NYC in
25 last year's budget and we were glad and we heard a
little bit earlier from ACS. We were glad that they

3 took our input and input from other advocacy
4 organizations, so that they really thoughtfully
5 implemented this program with the collaboration of
6 other community-based organizations, really meant to
7 protect immigrant families. And what's kind of
8 surprising and bewildering is that all signs show
9 that the Promise NYC program has been a resounding
10 success. Serving over 600 families since January.
11 There's more on waitlists. It's a no brainer. It's
12 a baseline \$20 million for Promise NYC in this
13 budget. You know this, we know this. \$10 million
14 was enough for a six-month pilot, so let's make it a
15 full year and ensure that immigrant children continue
16 to have access to the child care they need.

17 And finally and Council Member Cabàn mentioned
18 this, in addition to the \$20 million for Promise NYC
19 in this budget, we also must reiterate our support
20 for Intro. 941 by Council Members Gutiérrez and Riley
21 which would ensure that child care was permanently
22 accessible to all families in our city and all
23 educators were compensated fairly for their important
24 work.

25 And so, we're urging the Mayor and the Council to
keep the promise that was made last year to our

3 immigrant communities and let's fulfill that promise
4 with \$20 million for Promise NYC. Thank you.

5 REBECCA CHARLES: And thank you Chair Hanif and
6 Cabàn for hosting this hearing. My name is Rebecca
7 Charles and I'm a Policy and Advocacy Associate with
8 the Citizens Committee for Children. We are an
9 independent nonprofit advocacy organization that
10 focuses on ensuring that all New York children are
11 healthy, housed, educated and safe.

12 Both Promise NYC and the linking immigrant
13 families to ECE or Life Project have been pivotal in
14 initiatives for New York City's immigrant
15 communities. Ensuring access to subsidized child
16 care for families who would otherwise not qualify due
17 to federal regulations. For our city to remain a
18 trailblazer in child care access, these programs must
19 be baselined and adequately funded in this year's
20 budget, as mentioned many times today.

21 We urge you to baseline funding for Promise NYC
22 at \$20 million and funding for the LIFE Project at \$4
23 million to ensure that hundreds of undocumented
24 families maintain access to care.

25 We also echo the priorities for the Campaign for
Children, which would further improve the ECE system

3 for immigrant families who now qualify. Most
4 importantly, we want to stress the importance of
5 restoring the Preliminary Budget cuts to 3K and
6 keeping the city on track for reaching universality,
7 as well as prioritizing as well as prioritizing
8 converting unfilled school day, school year seats to
9 full day, year-round seats for 3K as well as infant
10 and toddler care.

11 It is also critical that the city fund a new
12 labor contract that puts early care and education
13 teachers and support staff, and CBOs on a path toward
14 parity with their DOE counterparts. This includes
15 factoring in longevity when determining salary
16 increases and setting a wage floor of \$25 an hour for
17 all support staff.

18 We must not only expand ECE options for immigrant
19 households but also sustain and strengthen our
20 existing ECE system so immigrant families can find
21 the care that is right for them. We will be
22 submitting written testimony with a full and
23 elaborate list of our city budget priorities. Thank
24 you again for this opportunity to testify.

25 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now call
Betty Baez Melo followed Musfika Moshahid.

3 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: You all should stick around.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, please stick around if
5 you are on this panel. Betty, you can go ahead when
6 the Sergeants call time.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

8 BETTY BAEZ MELO: Great, thank you. Thank you
9 for the opportunity to discuss early childhood care
10 and education for children who are undocumented. My
11 name is Betty Baez Melo, and I am an attorney and the
12 Director of the Early Childhood Education Project at
13 Advocates for Children of New York.

14 I apologize for having technical difficulty, so
15 I'm not appearing on video. Hopefully you can all
16 hear me. We believe that every child should have
17 access to high-quality early childhood care and
18 education programs. As such, we were pleased when
19 the city launched Promise NYC to increase access to
20 early childhood programs to children who are
21 undocumented.

22 Unfortunately, the Mayor's Executive Budget does
23 not include funding for this crucial initiative and
24 hundreds of children risk being turned away from
25 their program after June. Many child care and
preschool programs, including the Department of

3 Education extended day and year 3-K and Pre-K
4 programs, require families to qualify for child care
5 assistance in order to enroll. These programs have
6 historically excluded children who are undocumented,
7 citing state and federal restrictions on their
8 eligibility for subsidized care.

9 Since its launch in January, hundreds of families
10 of children who are undocumented have been able to
11 secure child care funding through Promise NYC to
12 attend a variety of early childhood programs.

13 Several hundred other families are currently on
14 waitlists seeking care for young children.

15 Unfortunately, this funding is set to expire at the
16 end of the month, meaning that children risk losing a
17 seat in their program and new families will be unable
18 to apply.

19 At a time when New York City has seen an increase
20 in immigrant families, we ask for continued funding
21 of this initiative so that children are not excluded
22 from programs based on their immigration status.

23 About 40 percent of the thousands of newly arrived
24 immigrant children are ages zero to five; access to
25 early care and education is critical to helping them
prepare them for success in elementary school and

3 beyond, while also enabling their parents to work,
4 connect with resources, find permanent housing, and
5 settle in their new communities.

6 In Fiscal Year 2023, the City allocated \$10
7 million to serve approximately 600 children from
8 January to June 2023. To maintain capacity for the
9 full year, we are calling on the City to baseline \$20
10 million in the Fiscal Year 2024 for the
11 Administration of Children Services budget for
12 Promise NYC.

13 Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you
14 today. I'm happy to answer any questions.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now have
16 Musfika Moshahid. You can go ahead when the
17 Sergeants call time.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

19 MUSFIKA MOSHAHID: Good afternoon honorable
20 Chairwoman Shahana Hanif and Tiffany Cabàn and
21 everybody else that is present. Thank you so much
22 for the opportunity to testify today on such an
23 important issue. So, my name is Musfika Moshahid.
24 My pronouns are she, her and I am representing the
25 Muslim Community Network, a nonprofit organization
here in New York City working to empower the Muslim

3 community through community service and civic
4 engagement. I'm the Muslim Women's Program
5 Coordinator at MCN.

6 Having access to childcare is something that has
7 been an incredibly empowering experience for women
8 and individuals with children, and it's something
9 that we've seen firsthand at MCN, through our Muslim
10 Women's Program and our other programming. So, our
11 Women's Program essentially serves older Muslim
12 women, who usually tend to be mothers, and so it was
13 a priority for us to make sure that we provided child
14 care for our participants. As result, not only have
15 we been able to support our participants and their
16 participation in the program, we've also been able to
17 provide work opportunities for undocumented women and
18 other immigrant women we have hired to do the child
19 care work.

20 As of now, we have seven plus child care workers
21 that we regularly work with across our programming.
22 Thanks to the child care that was available to them,
23 our women were able to engage in our program and
24 participate in educational workshops around city
25 engagement, registering to vote, many had to reach
out to their City Council Members and

3 representatives. They also were able to engage in
4 workshops regarding ICE, regarding hate crime
5 prevention, self-defense and so much more.

6 Not only that, but women were able to relax and
7 simply enjoy being in community with other. They
8 were able to form friendships with each other and
9 explore their identities outside of being mothers and
10 homemakers, while also knowing that their children
11 were still being cared for and taken care of.

12 We have now as a result, made it a priority as an
13 organization to provide child care wherever possible
14 across our programming because we've seen the
15 positive impacts it can have firsthand. Having
16 access to childcare allows women, especially
17 undocumented women, to explore their education
18 opportunities, to explore job opportunities and just
19 you know explore any opportunity that allows them to
20 develop themselves personally. We believe every
21 women and parent deserves the opportunity to explore
22 their potential, explore their interests, and do this
23 while knowing that their children are still being
24 taken care of.

25 Not only do parents deserve this relief but
children deserve this care too. We have to begin to

1 understand that children are in a press group and so
2 they don't often have a voice within our society.

3 And so, it's up to us as adults to advocate for them
4 and to support them. I believe it's the collective
5 responsibility of all of us within a shared community
6 to care for the safety and wellbeing of all children,
7 regardless of whether or not we are parents
8 ourselves.

9
10 And so, it's up to us to ensure that every child
11 regardless of immigration status of their own or
12 their parents immigration status gets the same
13 opportunity, same care and same priority as any other
14 child.

15 In general, I think child care, parent taking,
16 homemaking and other forms of domestic labor have
17 long been underappreciated and undervalued within our
18 society and it's time we prioritize this work and
19 look towards a future where we live in a society
20 where these forms of labor are seen as just as
21 important, necessary, and deserving of as much
22 compensation.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

24 MUSFIKA MOSHAHID: Compensation, investment and
25 care as any other job. I highly encourage the City

3 Council and the Mayor to prioritize this program and
4 include it within the budget. Thank you so much
5 again for the opportunity to testify.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I just want to
7 thank Musfika for your testimony and it's really
8 heartwarming to know that the Muslim Community
9 Network is going through an organizational cultural
10 shift and ensuring that child care opportunities are
11 available for every program and for greater
12 participation. And I also appreciated the emphasis
13 on just women's joy and like, the you know we've tied
14 so much of today's conversations around work and the
15 need to be able to work and the other part of that is
16 also just child care also means that women get to and
17 other parents get to just grow and be able to focus
18 on their own development.

19 And so, Musfika, thank you so much and commend
20 the Muslim Community Networks work in ensuring child
21 care access.

22 I have a question for Steven. Could you walk us
23 through the training process that you mentioned in
24 your testimony? What does that look like for child
25 care educators? What's the leadership pipeline? Are
we seeing a need for more – for folks within that

3 expertise as we roll out an expansion of various
4 child care programs?

5 STEVEN MORALES: Absolutely, so for home-based
6 family child care, which are the educators that we
7 support, there is really limited infrastructure that
8 the State and the City provides. There is you know,
9 if an educator wants to become a licensed child care
10 professional, they have to take a series of
11 trainings. They have to fill out applications. They
12 have to make sure that their program meets, that
13 their home space meets safety requirements. Our
14 organization kind of fills in a lot of those gaps.
15 We have a person on staff who walks people through
16 the licensing process, so that they have an actual
17 you know liaison and someone that can work with them
18 to navigate the process, otherwise for the most part,
19 they're on their own. And so, so that's what our
20 work is really about and then giving them an
21 additional educational training, that business
22 training that really supports them holistically as
23 childhood, early childhood professionals and business
24 owners. And I think you know, the city provides some
25 of that through some DOE family child care networks
and those organizations do good work but I think

3 broadly speaking, we need to do more to invest in the
4 pipeline like you said of family child care providers
5 because they're a crucial component of our child care
6 system.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. No more questions
8 for this panel.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now call
10 the next panel. We have Ingrid Chungata and Pedro
11 Suarez. Ingrid, you can go ahead when the Sergeants
12 call time.

13 INGRID: Thank you.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

15 INGRID CHUNGATA: Thank you to Chairs Hanif and
16 Cabàn and the Committee on Immigration and Women and
17 Gender Equity for holding today's hearing. For the
18 opportunity to testify. The Committee for Hispanic
19 Children and Families, better known as CHCF is a
20 citywide agency with community contacts throughout
21 the five boroughs. Like so many organizations in the
22 communities that are receiving the recent arriving
23 immigrants, our school-based program and our newly
24 opened Bronx office that [02:38:53] Spanish speaking
25 migrants reaching our office support and settling to
New York City. Our community empowerment team has

3 been working to offer one on one needs assessment in
4 connection to resources included but not limited to
5 school, child care access, housing, food and mental
6 health support to immigration.

7 We just recently additionally grown our services
8 and support for the asylum seeker family through a
9 new partnership with Housing Works, where our team is
10 coordinating the services of family housed in a
11 hotel, assisting a linguistically responsive
12 navigation of available resources and benefits.

13 While families are navigating housing employment
14 immigration process, so many more intersecting needs,
15 it is crucial that we are supported in accessing care
16 and education for their children.

17 We know the impact of having access to high
18 quality education, affordable care and early
19 learning, as well as access to high quality,
20 culturally responsible and sustaining PreK through
21 12th grade opportunities, our children development,
22 academic growth and lifelong success.

23 At CHCF, we continue to hold concerns about our
24 administrations shift and position for Universal 3K
25 even before the influence of newly arriving
immigrants, many advocates argue that many receive

3 lack for 3K is inaccurate. We continue to see high
4 demand for full day year care and early learn for
5 ages zero to three years old. If the issue of
6 insufficient of inability of these extended day year
7 slots to meet the need citywide.

8 With the migrants coming in, it's a further worth
9 uplifting that while undocumented families can access
10 to 3K day year services, they have historically not
11 have been accessed to zero to two- and extended-day
12 year around care. Because of its reliance on federal
13 Child Care Development Block Grant. Funding as we
14 know the Council for and \$10 million in Fiscal Year
15 2023 budget for undocumented child access to the
16 child care.

17 Promise New York has successfully been able to
18 support hundreds of families and children in
19 accessing care for a six-month period. We must not -

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

21 INGRID CHUNGATA: We must not stop there. For
22 those already enrolled, we must maintain those
23 services.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we have
25 Pedro Suarez.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

3 PEDRO SUAREZ: Good morning Chairperson Shekar,
4 Krishnan and Tiffany Cabàn and members of the
5 Committees on Immigration and Women and Gender
6 Equity. My name is Pedro Suarez, pronouns he, him,
7 and I am the Program Director at LIFT-New York.

8 LIFT-New York is a chapter of LIFT, a nonprofit
9 organization on a mission to break the cycle of
10 poverty by investing in parents. We operate a one-
11 on-one coaching program that empowers parents to set
12 and achieve goals that put families on the path
13 toward economic mobility, such as going back to
14 school, improving credit, eliminating debt, or
15 securing a living wage. In addition to coaching,
16 LIFT parents also receive direct cash infusions to
17 reinvest in their families and goals. Thank you for
18 the opportunity to testify on the important issue of
19 child care for immigrant parents and the millions of
20 men and women ineligible for federally funded child
21 care.

22 Our perspective on childcare and the needs of
23 immigrant communities comes from our own program
24 experience. For the past twenty-three years, our
25 organization has been effective at supporting low-
income families with children who are seeking basic

1 needs such as housing, employment and food
2 assistance. Participants are referred to LIFT
3 through partnerships with community colleges, health
4 care systems and early child care providers. Our
5 immigrant parents face unique challenges in achieving
6 their career and education goals, in addition to the
7 systemic barriers faced by parents living in poverty
8 across the country. A significant number of LIFT
9 families are undocumented, and we partner with
10 immigrant families to find stability and move toward
11 economic mobility.
12

13 Data as of 2022 show that between 2021 and 2023
14 LIFT enrolled over 300 women into our program, 75
15 percent have completed the program. The average
16 length of stay in our program is 12-24 months. With
17 the average age being 35 years of age and the average
18 child 8 years old and 99 percent of members identify
19 as part of a racial or ethnic minority group with 54
20 percent of members speaking English as their primary
21 language.

22 Promise NYC will indeed be a game changer for the
23 600 children who will benefit from the program. As
24 part of LIFT New York, I would like to applaud the
25 City's efforts in working with CBOs and ACS to launch

3 this initiative. As you all are aware, undocumented
4 immigrants are integral to the city.

5 Just over one million New Yorker's live in a
6 household with at least one undocumented immigrant
7 and 88 percent of the 276,000 children in these
8 households are lawful residents.

9 The city has already identified the need to leave
10 no child behind, we look forward to continuing to
11 work with the City Council and receive support on how
12 to improve the delivery and coordination of child
13 care services for this vulnerable population.

14 Thank you for the opportunity to testify here
15 today.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you to Pedro and
18 Ingrid. Pedro, you missed Shekar Krishnan. I'm
19 actually Council Member Shahana Hanif.

20 PEDRO SUAREZ: Oh, I'm so sorry.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: No worries at all. No
22 worries at all. Thank you both for your work and for
23 testifying.

24 INGRID CHUNGATA: You're welcome.

25 PEDRO SUAREZ: Thank you.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Thank you. At
4 this time, we do not have any other witnesses signed
5 up to testify. If we have inadvertently missed
6 anyone, please see the Sergeants if you are in the
7 room or use the raise hand function on Zoom if you
8 have not been called.

9 Seeing no additional hands or witnesses, Council
10 Members, would you care to say a few words?

11 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Uhm, I mean I don't think
12 that it needs to be said. The testimony was
13 incredibly, incredibly clear. This city and our
14 communities, particularly our undocumented immigrant
15 neighbors have been falling through the cracks.
16 Child care should be something that is accessible by
17 every single New Yorker. We know the impacts and we
18 heard it today of having child care versus not having
19 access to that care. We know specifically that
20 promise NYC filled a gap that was not being filled by
21 any other agency or program across the city and that
22 it was a literal lifeline for some 600 plus families
23 and we also were able to know without question that
24 the demand far, far, far, outpace the capacity. And
25 so, while there's a lot to commend about the program,
it's also really clear that it needs to be scaled,

3 not defunded down to zero dollars. And so, I hope
4 that you know the Administration takes that to heart
5 and that we see the \$20 million allocated to Promise
6 NYC in the ultimate budget. It's really, really
7 clear just how essential that funding was and would
8 continue to be going forward. And thank you very
9 much to everybody who came and testified.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much Chair Cabàn
11 and to everyone who joined us from the Administration
12 and our agency partners to everyone who testified to
13 our interpreter on site and to everyone who made this
14 afternoon's hearing super successful and informative.
15 I just want to echo my colleagues sentiments here.
16 We know just how critical and integral the Promise
17 NYC program has been and discontinuing it, divesting
18 from it, is really life threatening. And so, I was
19 especially moved to hear from some of the
20 organizational partners, who are also equipping their
21 organizations to be forward and ensure that they have
22 child care access for their programmatic initiatives
23 and the value that has added to the lives of the
24 parents, to all of the children is really so many.
25 And so, I will continue to work with Council Member
Cabàn. We know that the Comptroller Brad Lander has

1 COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION JOINTLY WITH THE
2 COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY

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3 also been intimately involved. We've got allied
4 Council Members here and as Council body, we will
5 continue to push for the \$20 million investment.
6 Thank you all so much for joining us. More soon.
7 [GAVEL].
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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date June 30, 2023