

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON AGING

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September 7, 2022
Start: 10:11 a.m.
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HELD AT: 250 Broadway-Committee Room-16th
Floor

B E F O R E: Crystal Hudson,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Eric Dinowitz
Linda Lee
Christopher Marte
Darlene Mealy
Kristin Richardson Jordan
Lynn C. Schulman

A P P E A R A N C E S

Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez
Commissioner of New York City Department for the
Aging

Brianna Paden-Williams
Communications and Policy Associate at Live On
New York

Kevin Jones
Associate State Director of Advocacy at AARP New
York

James Fenton
Senior Staff Attorney at Volunteers of Legal
Service or VOLS

Jeannine Cahill Jackson
Supervising Attorney at the Legal Aid Society

Christian Gonzalez-Rivera
Policy Director at the Brookdale Center for
Healthy Aging

Jack Kupferman
President of Gray Panthers NYC

Dara Adams
Director for Strategic Policy Initiatives at Met
Council

Tanya Krupat
Vice President of Policy and Advocacy at the
Osborne Association

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Diane Rose
Center for Economic and Enterprise Development

Shehila Stephens
Senior Director of Programs at Encore Community
Services

MJ Okma
Sage

Lisha Luo Cai
Advocacy Coordinator at the Asian American
Federation

Nicole Brown
Director of Greenwich Houses

Jose Vega
Disabled, Wheelchair Bound, Level T-3 Paraplegic,
Paralyzed from chest down

Vik Bensen
Policy Analyst at Citymeals on Wheels

Kimberly George
President and CEO of Project Guardianship

1 COMMITTEE ON AGING

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Check one, two. Check one,
3 two. This is a pre-recorded sound test for the
4 Committee on Aging. Today's date is September 7,
5 2022. It's being recorded by Michael Leonardo in the
6 16th Floor Committee Room.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and welcome to
8 today's Hybrid meeting on Aging. At this time, could
9 you please place electronic devices on vibrate and
10 silent mode. If you wish to come up and testify,
11 please come to the desk and fill out one of these
12 slips. And online, if you want to submit your
13 testimony, you may do so at
14 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again, it is at
15 testimony@council.nyc.gov and thank you. Chair, you
16 may begin.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Good morning.
18 My name is Crystal Hudson and I'm the Chair of the
19 Committee on Aging. I'd like to thank the Members of
20 the Aging Committee for joining me at this morning's
21 hearing on Improving Older New Yorkers' Access to
22 City Services and actually, they will be right over.

23 According to city reports, older New Yorkers
24 generally prefer to age in their homes and
25 neighborhoods, rather than transitioning to more

3 institutional settings that are both less personal
4 and more expensive.

5 A recent AARP survey found that 77 percent of
6 adults 50 and older want to remain in their homes for
7 the long-term. This desire to age in place combined
8 with increasing rates of poverty, social isolation,
9 limited access to high-speed internet and limited
10 English proficiency leave many older adults
11 disconnected from city services. This is especially
12 true for immigrant communities and older adults of
13 color who comprise a steadily growing proportion of
14 the city's older adult population.

15 At least 49 percent of the city's older adults
16 are immigrants. The highest proportion in the city's
17 history since World War II. At least 23 out of the
18 55 census defined neighborhoods citywide have a
19 majority immigrant older adult population. The city
20 must meet older New Yorkers who access city services
21 at a higher rate than other populations where they
22 are in order to address their needs.

23 Today, the Committee is interested in reviewing
24 the landscape of city services available to older
25 adults in New York City. This includes the rate at
which older New Yorkers access such services and how.

3 The Committee is also interested in learning how DFTA
4 in partnership with other agencies and organizations
5 educates and assists older New Yorkers in accessing
6 available services.

7 Lastly, the Committee is interested in continuing
8 to discuss how the city is preparing to adapt to its
9 aging population. This includes understanding the
10 city's plan to respond to changing demographics on a
11 neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis. Especially as it
12 relates to creating safe and affordable housing,
13 developing livable communities, ensuring equitable
14 access to services and supporting the wellbeing of
15 older New Yorkers.

16 In the spirit of expanding older adults access to
17 city services, the Committee is considering three
18 pieces of legislation. The first Proposal would
19 require DFTA to create and maintain a know your
20 rights pamphlet for older adults to inform them of
21 their rights on various topics.

22 The second bill would require DFTA to have OAC's
23 expand their programming to include linguistic and
24 cultural programs relevant to the local communities
25 in which they reside.

3 Finally, the third bill does three critical
4 things. First, it would entitle any person 60 years
5 of age or older facing eviction or termination of
6 tenancy in housing court to full legal representation
7 at no cost.

8 Second, it would provide financial assistance to
9 persons 60-years of age or older for the purpose of
10 paying rental arrears when such persons are not
11 eligible to receive other forms of rental arrears
12 assistance.

13 Finally, it would require DFTA to establish a
14 housing support program for the purpose of providing
15 tailored advice and support through case management
16 services to persons 60-years of age or older who are
17 at risk of eviction or foreclosure.

18 One in three NYC renter households with at least
19 one adult 62-years of age or older are rent burdened.
20 With record rents and increasing costs, we have a
21 responsibility to ensure that older adults can remain
22 in their homes and live with dignity.

23 I look forward to discussing these proposals and
24 other ways that we can work together to ensure that
25 older adults are aware of the full scope of services

3 that are available to them, and that it is as easy as
4 possible for them to access such services.

5 Thank you to the advocates and members of the
6 public who are joining us today and thank you to
7 representatives from the Administration for joining
8 us. I would also like to thank my staff, Casey
9 Addison and Andrew Wright and Aging Committee Staff
10 Christopher Pepe, Chloë Rivera and Daniel Kroop. I
11 will now turn it over to the Counsel to administer
12 the oath.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning everyone. My
14 name is Chris Pepe. I am Counsel to the Committee on
15 Aging. So, just before I administer the oath, I do
16 want to note that hearing participants may submit
17 written testimony for the record up to 72 hours after
18 the hearing. And now, I will administer the oath.

19 Commissioner, good morning. Please raise your
20 right hand. I will read the oath. Do you affirm to
21 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
22 truth before this Committee and to respond honestly
23 to Council Member Questions? Thank you Commissioner.
24 You may begin your testimony.
25

3 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I'm going to take my
4 mask off and then I'm going to give my back to this
5 group, sorry.

6 Good morning, Chair Hudson and members of the
7 Aging Committee. It's great to be here. As you know
8 for the record, I am Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez,
9 Commissioner of New York City Department for the
10 Aging and I want to wish everyone a happy National
11 Senior Center Month. You know that we're trying to
12 advocate to change that to Older Adult Center Month
13 just to keep up with the times.

14 This month is the opportunity to highlight the
15 impact that older adult centers have on improving the
16 lives of older adults, and to show the importance
17 that Older Adult Centers have in the community. And
18 also, to promote a positive image of aging. Hence,
19 why we want the name changed.

20 There are many planned celebrations throughout
21 the month and to help us do just that. There were
22 many of them already and began on September 1st with
23 the Encore Community Services, who hosted a
24 celebration for the community at Freedom Plaza in the
25 Time Square area. And later this month, on September
29th, we will be holding a National Senior Center

3 Month celebration co-hosted by the Mayor at Gracie
4 Mansion.

5 As you well know, the Department – good morning.
6 As you well know, the Department for the Aging
7 administers a wide range of programs that enhance the
8 independence and quality of life for the city's older
9 population, as you well stated in your opening
10 remarks Chair Hudson, that people prefer to age in
11 place. A key component of DFTA's mission is to
12 ensure that all older New Yorkers have access to city
13 services and programs, including our own, and
14 barriers to services are reduced or eliminated. And
15 that we do with many groups. I also want to say that
16 DFTA does this exclusively in partnership with over
17 300 nonprofit agencies in the community.

18 Every day, we work to connect critical services,
19 benefits, and entitlements to the older adults in
20 need, including those who are neither members of an
21 Older Adult Club nor clients of other DFTA programs.
22 This yeoman's task cannot be accomplished alone. As
23 I said, DFTA partners with hundreds of deeply
24 committed community-based organizations, sister
25 agencies, as well as other counterparts in State

3 government in order to ensure critical services are
4 accessed and accessible.

5 DFTA's in-house contact center, Aging Connect,
6 also allows New Yorkers to speak with an Aging
7 Specialist to learn about programs, supports, and
8 opportunities available to older adults and their
9 caregivers. Aging Connect was fortuitously founded
10 in February of 2020, just a month before the COVID
11 pandemic shut down our city, and all of our aging
12 operations and quickly became a valuable lifeline for
13 one of the most impacted populations during the
14 pandemic, the older population.

15 In reality, we all will need to fully understand
16 the benefits and entitlements that are available and
17 how to navigate accessing those services provided by
18 the government. Even knowledgeable people can find
19 this daunting. This is made even more complicated by
20 the differences in eligibility requirements between
21 state, city and federal benefits, especially around
22 income restrictions.

23 Through Aging Connect, older New Yorkers are
24 connected with a friendly, welcoming, trained Aging
25 Specialist, not an avatar, to find the answers to
their questions and to be connected to DFTA's suite

3 of critical programs, community partners, or other
4 government agencies for assistance and support.
5 Aging Connect staff are multicultural, multilingual
6 and can speak directly with older adults in Spanish,
7 Chinese, and English. Other language needs are
8 supported through Language Line, which can provide
9 translation services in more than 240 languages.

10 Since its inception, (PHONE RINGING), sorry about
11 that. Since its inception, okay, Aging Connect has
12 received more than 142,000 calls from older New
13 Yorkers, caregivers, and other aging service
14 providers who have been connected to DFTA and city
15 services. In addition to Aging Connect, DFTA's
16 network of more than 300 older adult centers located
17 across the five boroughs is another major access
18 point to critical city services and other benefits
19 and entitlements. The community partners, who
20 operate OACs, provide screenings for Medicare,
21 Medicaid, SNAP, which is the Supplemental Nutrition
22 Assistance Program, nutritional guidance, the Senior
23 Center, Rent Increase Exemption, SCRIE, and Home
24 Energy Assistance Program, HEAP. In the Fall, to
25 increase public outreach, DFTA is launching a public
service campaign reminding older New Yorkers of the

3 many services and activities available to them and
4 encouraging them to return to the OACs, which is a
5 topic I will touch on later.

6 Additionally, DFTA's case management program is
7 yet another important entry point for services. Case
8 management clients undergo a comprehensive screening
9 and needs assessment which identifies the specific
10 needs of a client and, in turn, connects them to
11 appropriate in-home services, such as home delivered
12 meals, home care services, as well as our Friendly
13 Visiting and Pay Biller programs. Each of these are
14 themselves access points to important resources and
15 referrals. Ultimately, for the benefit and
16 convenience of older New Yorkers, a DFTA-funded
17 program can serve as a resource and referral to other
18 DFTA's services and programs. From the Health
19 Insurance Information Counseling and Assistance
20 Program, commonly known as HIICAP, which helps folks
21 navigate the complex Medicare benefits system, to New
22 York Connects, which allows a "no wrong door" model
23 for long term care.

24 We are fortunate that this Mayor's commitment to
25 an age inclusive city and interagency collaborations
and promoting government efficiency has led to the

3 creation of the New York City Cabinet for Older New
4 Yorkers, which will launch in September. This body
5 will prioritize formal connections between agencies
6 as it relates to services for older New Yorkers.
7 Specifically, the Cabinet will review city policies
8 and operations to eliminate age-related barriers or
9 discrimination, to create joint action and innovation
10 among city agencies in relation to aging services,
11 and to develop cross-agency solutions to address
12 challenges facing older New Yorkers today and well
13 into the future.

14 DFTA will serve as the lead organizing and
15 convening agency and we anticipate that many
16 partnerships will be forged as a result of this
17 Cabinet. I look forward to providing updates to this
18 Committee and to the Chair on the progress of the
19 Cabinet, specifically around housing and benefits.
20 We will hold the inaugural convening later this
21 month. In the meantime, I want to offer a sampling
22 of some of the collaborations that already exist
23 among our sister agencies. For instance, DFTA is
24 working with the New York City Department of
25 Education to develop and include an anti-ageism
content as part of their inclusion curriculum and

1 resource guides. The intention is to promote
2 positive, diverse, inclusive views on older adults to
3 school age youth and to re-shape views on aging and
4 older adults. This is the first of its kind, so we
5 think that imprinting aging as a way of life and the
6 benefits of it and the respect that we should have
7 for it are important.
8

9 We are firm believers that ageism can be
10 eradicated. Well, not for the short term but we
11 definitely can tackle it and tackle it bit by bit.
12 We acknowledge that young people have an important
13 role in our efforts to achieve this goal. DFTA also
14 recently worked with the Mayor's Office of Chief
15 Technology to help bridge the digital divide. In
16 addition to 10,000 tablets distributed in partnership
17 with the CTO and NYCHA to disconnected older New York
18 public housing residents, we also distributed 10,000
19 Wi-Fi-equipped tablets to non-NYCHA older adults
20 living in TRIE communities.

21 While the COVID-19 pandemic made us all feel
22 isolated and cut off from our support networks, it
23 was particularly hard for older adults who
24 experienced higher rates of social isolation over the
25 past three years. These tablets have provided a

1
2 needed resource for older adults and underscored the
3 benefits of collaboration across sister agencies to
4 address this critical need. We're also working with
5 the CTO on the Affordable Accessibility to the
6 internet. The thing that's important about this is
7 that we know that this program is important, and we
8 will continue to distribute tablets. We have about
9 300,000 more to distribute in the coming months.

10 Additionally, DFTA recently formalized an MOU
11 with the New York Police Department that will
12 establish a pilot around sharing crime victim data,
13 beginning in September, so that DFTA can provide
14 counseling, crisis intervention services, and support
15 for cases, identified by NYPD, who are not known to
16 the DFTA's Elder Justice Program and now who can be
17 integrated into the Aging Support Serve Network.

18 With hopes to eventually expand citywide, this
19 pilot program will focus on victims in Manhattan
20 north of 59th Street as well as in Chinatown. This
21 expansion of the Elder Justice Program and the newly
22 formalized MOU with the NYPD will expand across these
23 critically important supports for older adults who
24 are victims of abuse. We are working closely with
25 the New York Department of Health & Mental Hygiene

3 and Health and Hospitals Corporations to educate
4 geriatricians and primary care physicians on the
5 range of DFTA services. We have an ongoing training
6 program with them. The intent is to help address the
7 social and economic determinants of health of the
8 older adult, connecting them to social and health
9 services that are necessary to remain well and active
10 in their communities.

11 Ongoing sister-agency partnerships include the
12 Department of Housing Preservation & Development, the
13 Human Resources Administration, HRA, the Department
14 of Youth and Community Development, which we have
15 just engaged in some every interesting
16 intergenerational efforts, and the Department of
17 Citywide Administrative Services, DCAS, which has
18 launched with us a program for all its human resource
19 workers to train them on ageism and all their – its
20 DEI officers to ensure that they include ageism as
21 part of the DEI work, which is a major step.

22 Among key tenants of these collaborations, the
23 Cabinet for Older New Yorkers, and DFTA in general
24 help to ensure aging services evolve with the needs
25 of older adults and they are as previously stated,
not just accessed but are accessible. I believe that

3 this is consistent with the intent of today's hearing
4 as well as with the Introductions on today's agenda.

5 The three pre-considered bills being introduced
6 today include T2022-1650, which would give older
7 adults access to free legal representation in the
8 instances of eviction, expand rental arrears support,
9 and establish a housing program at DFTA; T2022-1538
10 which would create a "know-your-rights" pamphlet; and
11 T2022-1696 which would expand culturally competent
12 programming at OACs. While we are generally in
13 support of the intent of these bills, we look forward
14 to working with you and your team to identify best
15 paths forward to achieving their stated goals.

16 DFTA does extensive work to ensure older adults
17 have access to programs, as well as other city
18 services. We recognize, however, that there is much
19 more to be done in order to increase outreach efforts
20 and to further the utilization of our services.

21 Hundreds of older adults and their families do not
22 understand the full extent of government or non-
23 profit services available to them, because they never
24 engaged with them throughout their lives. We will
25 continue to engage our network of aging-service
providers, and the many advocates we work with, and

3 sister agencies, to help in the much-needed outreach
4 efforts which support access to government services.

5 Many of you in the Council have already
6 disseminate information through your channels,
7 through all your franking privileges, do they call
8 that at the city level? No, didn't call it that.
9 It's only those at the state, okay. Your newsletters
10 and your monthly newsletters and ask to come up with
11 a structured way that we can provide information to
12 your constituents through those newsletters from the
13 Department for the Aging, either on current topics of
14 interest but also the regular information because we
15 need as many entry points and informational outreach
16 points as possible. So, we look forward to you and
17 we welcome working with you to include this
18 information in our current older adult bill of
19 rights.

20 As always, we are grateful to the Chairs and the
21 Committees for your advocacy and continued
22 partnership to support older New Yorkers. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much
24 Commissioner. Before we jump into questions, I'd
25 just like to acknowledge that we've been joined by

3 Council Member Linda Lee, Lynn Schulman, Kristin
4 Richardson Jordan, Eric Dinowitz, and Chris Marte.

5 For those who are here with us in person, please
6 complete an appearance card, if you'd like to testify
7 if you haven't done so already and you can find them
8 at the desk here with the Sergeant at Arms.

9 Okay, wonderful. I will start with some
10 questions and then I'll turn it over to my
11 colleagues.

12 At what rate are older New Yorkers accessing city
13 services Commissioner?

14 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uhm, DFTA evaluates the
15 way in which older New Yorkers access services
16 provided by the agencies, and these include a variety
17 of things. One of them is our home delivered meals
18 programs. The other one's is the referrals to case
19 management agencies and then the access to older
20 adult clubs and the responses of inquiries to Aging
21 Connect. So, we collect data on all of those systems
22 and then we are pleased to state that older New
23 Yorkers who need home delivered meals uhm, begin
24 receiving them quickly as once it is identified by
25 the case worker.

3 And Aging Connect has a high response rate from
4 the time a call is received till the time the action
5 is taken. We also monitor that. And the other thing
6 that we monitor is complaints from 311. Any
7 complaints or inquiries from 311. We give ourselves;
8 I believe it's a 14-day period by which to respond
9 and take action on that complaint or issue.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Do you have any statistics
11 for how older New Yorkers are accessing city services
12 over the past five years?

13 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We can get that to you.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. And what
15 would you say are the most in-demand services among
16 older adults?

17 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The most in-demand
18 services are older adult programs. Right now, the
19 demand has dwindled because we're still in this COVID
20 process and that's an issue that I would hope that we
21 both can address, so that we could increase the
22 participation at older adult clubs but it's the older
23 adult programs, it's the services, the activities,
24 the trips, everything that's centered around the
25 older adult club.

3 The other one is home delivered meals, as a
4 matter of fact, if we looked at pre-pandemic
5 participation, home delivered meals participation and
6 older adult club participations ranged around the
7 same 22,000-25,000 older adults and case management
8 services is another highly utilized program.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, I have a fairly simple
10 question for you. Several DFTA vital initiatives and
11 services, including Aging Connect have lengthy URLs.
12 Would it be possible to shorten those URLs, similar
13 to access.nyc.gov?

14 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, yes, of course.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you.

16 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And one of the things
17 that the agency knows is that I'm the best test case.
18 If I can navigate it, then it is simple enough for
19 anyone to navigate it, so it is the kind of thing
20 that we're constantly improving and it's the stuff
21 that we overlook because it's been in existence for
22 so long.

23 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right, exactly.

24 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So, we welcome feedback
25 and thank you for the one on the senior employment.
And you know, we do a continuous improvement.

3 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, great, thank you.

4 Does DFTA actively engage, coordinate and partner
5 with all city agencies on at least an annual basis?

6 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and where do you see
8 gaps in the delivery of city services to older
9 adults?

10 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uhm —

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You can be honest.

12 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, I'm always honest
13 with you. I think some of the gaps we have are in
14 transportation. I think another gap in service which
15 I think you know, it's what we're talking about
16 lately, in the last hearing, which is access and
17 entry points and outreach. I think that is a concern
18 and I don't think of it as a gap, but which is why I
19 really welcome this Cabinet because when we start
20 looking at the growth and we're projecting the
21 growth, you know that it'll be over \$1.8 million. I
22 think or \$1.9 million in 2030, that we need to start
23 preparing for that.

24 So, I think those are the things that are ever,
25 ever present on our mind.

3 CHAIPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Just going into
4 case management, according to DFTA's website, older
5 adults may work with a case manager or a social
6 worker who can perform a phone assessment and visit
7 to coordinate services. And while such case managers
8 do not charge for their time depending on income,
9 some older adults may be asked to pay a fee or to
10 make a suggested contribution for some services. Can
11 you please describe such income ranges? The cost of
12 such a fee and/or suggested contribution and for
13 which services?

14 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, I want to make a
15 real distinction for the record that it's not a fee,
16 it's a contribution alright and it's a suggested
17 contribution and it is determined basically on the
18 income scale of the individual and the case manager
19 will review the income levels and the contribution to
20 that. And it's a gradual income scale but that's
21 determined by the New York State Office on Aging.

22 And you know, it also is income based but it also
23 takes into effect housing cost, which are very
24 different in New York City than in across the state.
25 So, it is based on a sliding scale, based on their
income.

3 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. And then,
4 I'll pause here for a second, I want to allow Council
5 Member Dinowitz to ask a few questions. I know he's
6 got to run for an event in his district.

7 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Hi, how are you?

9 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I'm fine.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Good, glad to hear it.
11 I have two simple, easy questions.

12 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Go ahead.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: The first is I'm
14 interested in the Cabinet for older New Yorkers. Who
15 is on the Cabinet?

16 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We have identified 17
17 key agencies that interact with aging service, with
18 older adults in New York. So, for example, it's
19 NYPD, Department of Education, DYCD. Uhm, Department
20 of Transportation because of all the pedestrian
21 safety issues. Uh, uh, did I just say HPD? Did I
22 say that already?

23 Yeah, okay, so uhm, it's transportation -

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay, yeah, city
25 agencies-

3 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: There's 17 of them but
4 there's key agencies that really effect the life of
5 the older adult and it's to look at their services
6 and it has two purposes, as I said earlier. First is
7 to see if the policies and practices have any
8 barriers in them, right? So, eliminate those and
9 then to start looking at, how do we facilitate you
10 know the services, the access to it? How do we
11 impact policy? What if the - you know like with HPD,
12 we had the universal design. It took us years to get
13 there but universal design is not part of every new
14 development and then we are looking at - and the
15 pedestrian safety came out. You know, so it's
16 looking at expanding things like that. Impacting
17 policy and basically, looking for vision for the
18 future.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay, and when did that
20 Cabinet begin?

21 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The Mayor launched -
22 the mayor gave the authority to launch that Cabinet
23 in July.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay, so it's new,
25 okay.

3 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, no, no, it's brand
4 new. It's brand new.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay, alright, cool.

6 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It's brand new and it
7 is so brand new that it hasn't launched its inaugural
8 meeting. That'll happen later on this month.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Got it, and I'm
10 wondering what direct feedback, you, if at all, or
11 you plan to with the Cabinet, directly from older
12 adults and directly from the centers, because there's
13 - excuse me.

14 I would be concerned. I know you haven't met
15 yet, but I want to make sure that there aren't too
16 many degrees of separation between the bureaucracy
17 and the actually direct needs of the people, of the
18 older adults that we're all supposed to serve. And
19 I'm wondering how the Cabinet seeks to address, you
20 know having a little, be humbling themselves a little
21 knowing that you know we here in the room like this
22 don't always know directly -

23 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Absolutely.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: What are older adults
25 even without actually talking to them. So, how do
26 you plan to include directly their voices?

3 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you for that
4 question and I thank you for the thoughtfulness of
5 that question. We can't plan without knowing what's
6 necessary from the most people effected by it. I've
7 been in a community that did that for too long in
8 East Harlem to its residents, alright. And so, uhm,
9 what I will say to is we have two vehicles for doing
10 that. One of them is the Department for the Aging's
11 Advisory Council. So that they will constantly give
12 us feedback on that. And by the way, you have some
13 vacancies that we want you to fill on that Council.

14 The other thing that we also will do is we will
15 are developing now a client survey, client
16 information and that - we'll use those kinds of
17 instruments regularly to get input from people on
18 what the directions are. And you know what? You
19 just gave me an idea, that we may come up with a way
20 of including for some of the work groups, how to
21 include older adults in those work groups, okay.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Yes, good. And my
23 second question. You sort of alluded to this uhm,
24 toward the end when you mentioned youth program. I'm
25 excited about you know, training, education,

3 intergenerational you know, things – the DEI training
4 for including that in the curriculum. Here it is.

5 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: For the HRA?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: And the DOE, well, and
7 the DOE and you said to develop and include anti
8 ageism content as part of the inclusion curriculum
9 and resource guides, which I think is great, a great
10 step for our children and the DOE.

11 I'm wondering, so, teaching things to children is
12 one thing and then doing things with children is
13 another thing. So, I'm wondering if – what sort of
14 guidance you give to older adult centers or
15 programming you, DFTA engages in directly, if at all?
16 Or what plan do you have to do it, I don't know, to
17 engage directly with the youth? So, that not just
18 learning about it and being aware of ageism but
19 experiencing activities with older adults to address
20 ageism but also like you know, it's good for
21 everyone.

22 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, right, so and
23 that's the best way of debunking misinformation
24 right? Is if you have first hand experience or if
25 you acknowledge it right.

3 So, there's two ways that we do that, first of
4 all, our foster grandparent program is one of the
5 most exciting, I would say, and impactful
6 intergenerational programs. Where we connect older
7 adult who act as grandparents to children at risk and
8 so many children who are hospitalized. So, I think
9 that's a connection.

10 I think the other way that we've done that is
11 through a regular program with the Summer Youth
12 Employment Program. At all of the older adult
13 centers were offered youth employment. You know,
14 youngsters this summer and that is something that we
15 continue. We had 37 of them at the Department for
16 the Aging and I have to tell you, it was exactly
17 that. We did a survey. Well, it was a session with
18 them, and we said, what were your attitudes about
19 aging before you came here? And they were like
20 everything that we've - all of the disparaging
21 remarks that we've all experienced. Some of us have
22 experienced and many of you have heard.

23 And yet, that experience of being at the
24 Department for the Aging. Not so much of being with
25 older people but with just hearing about the need and
hearing about the services altered their perspective

3 and some of them were dramatic alterations because
4 one youngster said, I have my grandmother, I never
5 speak to her because she bores me kind of thing. And
6 we're sort of like, well, you're the boring one.

7 But anyway, you know it was like, you know if
8 you're bored, it's about you, not about the other
9 person. But we had this whole conversation, and it
10 was to me, it's one step at a time and if we could do
11 that over and over and over again, it's those kind of
12 things that we have to do.

13 So, we're currently looking at DYCD, working with
14 them very actively on coming up with
15 intergenerational programs, particularly in those
16 places where we're collocated. Because many of our
17 facilities are located in the same building and so,
18 we're looking at ways of partnering and creating
19 intergenerational programming as an ongoing,
20 sustainable, not worn off little sweet projects but
21 an ongoing sustainable effort.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: And I would just add, I
23 know my time is up, if I may, I had just one more
24 idea Chair?

25 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Go for it.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Is I have heard from
4 many – as you're in your Council, your interagency
5 Council Cabinet, Cabal whatever you want to call it.

6 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Not a Cabal.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: With that voice, it
8 might be, I don't know. Is I've spoken to a number
9 of older adults who have expressed interest to me
10 that they want to volunteer in our public schools and
11 we're at a time when class sizes are very high and
12 our older adults, probably, they're past high school,
13 so they probably you know, know their stuff. They
14 want to volunteer, they want to help in their
15 communities and our students need a lot more human
16 support and our schools need a lot more human support
17 and there doesn't appear to be enough central support
18 for whether you want to call it a program or just
19 support in making sure that if background checks are
20 needed, whatever it is, and I think it would be a
21 really great opportunity both for our children and
22 our older adults, not just to address ageism but to
23 address mental health for our older adults being with
24 younger kids and to address academia and
25 social/emotional support for our younger children as
well, if DFTA can collaborate with the Department of

3 Education to provide that support or to create a
4 program that does allow older adults to easily say
5 they want to volunteer to help our kids in our public
6 schools.

7 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So, you would be
8 pleased to know that we had this conversation with
9 David Banks.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I'm very pleased.

11 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And uh, one of the
12 things that David Banks and I, Chancellor David Banks
13 and I agreed to, was that we were going to do this on
14 real time, not on bureaucratic time. And so, there
15 are three initiatives that we started. The first is
16 looking at curriculum and if you know curriculum, it
17 takes a long time at DOE to develop. I was very
18 pleased that this is now at an accelerated pace. And
19 so, that we're able to do this with junior high
20 school students.

21 The other thing that I'm very pleased to say is
22 that we're looking at as part of the substitute
23 teacher pool is looking at older adults to serve as
24 substitute teachers. We have many people who are
25 trained and able to do some of those work, some of
that work. And then, the other thing that we're

3 looking at is exactly what you are talking about
4 Council Member. Is to look at where can we put older
5 adults in relationship with children, either to help
6 with reading, to help with you know just after school
7 activities or whatever. It's just to come up with a
8 structured way. I think that one is going to be a
9 little longer term because of what you talked about,
10 all the clearance and the requirements, but we're
11 seriously looking at how do we structure that because
12 we have a model, we have the foster grandparent
13 model. And so, how is it that we build on that and
14 change that to a school setting? And so, it's
15 something that we're looking at and we want it to be
16 sustainable.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you
18 Chair.

19 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you Council Member
21 Dinowitz. I'm going to jump back into some questions
22 and then we'll give my colleagues an opportunity to
23 ask a few more.

24 Uhm, can you describe any trainings that OAC
25 staff are required to take to ensure culturally
responsive and competent services?

3 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Sure. Uhm, there is
4 the mandated state and city required training such as
5 EEO and sexual harassment training. In addition,
6 uhm, the - I'm going to go back a little bit. I'm
7 going to answer your question but also make a
8 statement that in our RFP, uhm, culturally competent
9 services and language provision was part of the RFP.
10 So, it's now a contractual obligation in our older
11 adult clubs, so I just want to put that in context.

12 But the other thing that I would want to say is
13 that uhm, and we're required you know if you have ten
14 percent population or more, that speaks a particular
15 language, then those services have to be provided in
16 that language or attentive to that language and the
17 cultural needs, as well as the religious needs.

18 But we also have training that any older adult
19 club that serves food, the staff have to be a
20 licensed food handler by New York State Department of
21 Health and Hygiene. We also had the emergency
22 prepare and response that requires two staff members
23 at every OAC to be trained to use CPR and
24 defibrillators. We also have training on the COOP,
25 which is the Emergency Preparedness Plan that each
agency has to develop of what to do in case of an

3 emergency and that's is reviewed annually by us and
4 then give it back to them, but they have to put that
5 in place. We also require Local Law 23 that all of
6 older adults having contact with older - staff having
7 contact with older adults have a sexual abuse
8 training. I mean, I'm sorry. Elder abuse training,
9 so that they could identify you know the symptoms of
10 an older adult who might be experiencing elder abuse.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Well, both are relevant.

12 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Huh?

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Both are relevant.

14 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Both are relevant and
15 sexual harassment is part of the training. And then,
16 there are also - staff is trained just for cultural
17 competence is to also learn how to use an
18 interpreter. You know, not to the common era is,
19 they are saying what they mean you know as if the
20 person is not there. So, how do you use an
21 interpreter with sensitivity and also, how to use the
22 language access instruments.

23 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. Can you
24 describe the culturally responsive incompetent
25 program that's offered at older adult clubs? Like,
how does DFTA determine what type of programming to

3 offer? Where? Do older adults have any involvement
4 in the decision-making process around what type of
5 programs are offered?

6 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So, great. I'm going
7 to take the service provision first and then I'll
8 talk about how those are designed and developed and
9 then the older adult alright.

10 So, first of all, as I said earlier, the RFP now
11 puts that in – the RFP put that in contractual
12 language. So, if you have a contract, that's a
13 requirement now. Uhm, but you know the services have
14 evolved over time. When older adult centers started
15 originally, the main service was to address food
16 insecurity, so it was meals. And with time then the
17 Older Adult Act then added recreational and
18 educational services. And so, that was added and
19 then with time, they've added transportation
20 services. So, it always has evolved with time, right
21 and it continues to evolve. You know whether it is
22 you know what was it in 2009 was when the Department
23 started the geriatric mental health services.

24 And so, you know, you started seeing as needs
25 came up and as issues rose, that is how it was
determined what services should be included. How

3 should we expand those services? And the same thing
4 with art classes and the one thing that I can tell
5 you is technology, you know, we've always had
6 computer classes and we've always had some technology
7 classes. It wasn't until COVID that we saw the need
8 for virtual programming and the need for digital
9 training for older adults, so that expanded
10 exponentially, alright.

11 And so, and also, to make sure that those
12 language are - the programs are in the preferred
13 language of the individuals participating.

14 And so, the other way that we build in cultural
15 sensitivity, which is from my multicultural
16 leadership hand is the observance, which I don't
17 believe it to be the most effective and I'm saying
18 that for the record and maybe I shouldn't but is the
19 observers of the holidays. So, I think that there
20 should be acknowledgment of that, and I think that is
21 a wonderful way to highlight those, but it should not
22 be the only way and the only time that you
23 acknowledge differences. That should be something
24 that's done throughout the year, which is why we
25 built it in as part of the contractual obligations,

1
2 but it is a time to celebrate the art, the
3 difference, the dance of a particular group.

4 We are also offering language classes for ESL
5 classes for the non-English speaker and all of those
6 things have evolved with time. In terms of the LGBTQ
7 A+ community, I think I forgot the I.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That's okay.

9 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you for the
10 correction. In terms of the community, one of the
11 things that we've done is we've established five
12 centers throughout the city, but we've also included
13 training. And one of the things you know that was
14 spurred by one of the hearings we had a few months
15 ago I think, was to encourage again and resurface the
16 training, the Sage Care training. And although I
17 can't make it mandatory, I've been informed. I am
18 strongly encouraging everyone to participate and so
19 much so that Sage did a presentation to our
20 providers. Talking about the training, the benefits
21 of the training and encouraging people to
22 participate. So, we have a plan for the next two
23 years on how we're going to develop that training and
24 ensure that every older adult club participates in
25 that.

3 And so, those are the ways we address that. In
4 terms of the older adult participation and decision-
5 making process, every older adult club is mandated to
6 have an advisory council, and that advisory council
7 is made up obviously of participants in the program.
8 That advisory council also helps inform and educate
9 and shape the programming and frankly, I believe that
10 they also help them shape some of the nutrition, the
11 food service program, alright.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and then just lastly,
13 what's the budget for that programming? For all the
14 culturally responsive and competent programming?

15 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, it's the entire
16 budget that we have for OAC's, which I can get you
17 that number.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So, nothing specifically
19 designated for -

20 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No, because if it's
21 part of your contract to do it - if we segregate it
22 out, then that would be what you would do. The idea
23 is to make sure that all of the programming is all
24 inclusive.

25 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you.

LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Uhm, alright, I'm just going
4 to ask a couple more questions and then I'm going to
5 jump to my colleagues. We touched on this earlier.
6 The voluntary contributions that you mentioned.

7 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uh, huh, yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So, clients made \$1.3
9 million in those voluntary contributions to DFTA's
10 free home delivered meals program in 2020 and \$1.5
11 million in 2018 and 2019 per the State Comptrollers
12 recent audit. And while DFTA contracted case
13 managers, social workers, okay sorry, I already said
14 that. So, I just want to find out, all together, how
15 much money does DFTA collect from voluntary or
16 suggested contributions or fees? And how much do
17 DFTA contracted organizations collect? What other
18 services or programs does DFTA, or its contracted
19 partners collect fees or voluntary or suggested
20 contributions for? And then how is the collected
21 money then spent by DFTA?

22 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay, the money goes
23 right back. I'll get you the full amount of
24 volunteer contributions because we do track that,
25 right and we track that by program, and we track that

3 by service so that we can have a clear accounting of
4 that.

5 The other thing that's important to let you know
6 is that that money goes right back to the agency for
7 programming. You know, it doesn't come back to DFTA,
8 you know, nor does it reduce the budget. In practice
9 in the past was that if you raise \$100 your budget
10 was reduced by \$100. This is added in to the
11 contract.

12 Uhm, and so that, so we can give you an actual
13 amount by pro- I can give you an aggregate and then I
14 can disaggregate it by programs.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, that would be great.

16 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Alright.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. I want to pause
18 just for a second and allow my colleagues an
19 opportunity to ask some questions and just as a
20 reminder, Council Members have five minutes for
21 questions and answers. So, Council Member Schulman.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you very much
23 Chair for this important hearing and good morning
24 Commissioner.

25 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Good morning.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: So uhm, a few things.

4 One, I just want to mention very quickly is that the
5 LGBTQIA older adult center in Jackson Heights was at
6 the press conference we had this morning. They came
7 up to me and said that DFTA has been extraordinarily
8 responsive to them, so I want to thank you for that.
9 I thank you and your staff for that.

10 So, I have some questions. One -

11 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: By the way, I mean I'm
12 sure you have but that is a fabulous facility you
13 know that they're in, so.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: So uhm, one, is the
15 Cabinet for older New Yorkers. You said you would
16 share the list with us of who's on that right?

17 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The agencies.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Yeah, the agencies.
19 Uhm, what I wanted to ask, I don't know of the DA
20 Offices are on that because they deal with a lot of
21 elder scams and I know we've in Queens, we work with
22 the DA's Office on making sure that older adults know
23 about those things. I just, I wanted to mention
24 that.

25 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: You want an answer to
that right now?

3 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Yeah, are they part of
4 the --

5 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No, they're not but
6 they are part, they are not because they are not city
7 agencies, so that's you know, so that's a clear
8 distinction. This is about city government being
9 responsive and age inclusive. But what I can tell
10 you is that in our Elder Justice Program, we have
11 monthly meetings with NYPD and the DA's and everybody
12 else and that's where their input has been very
13 instrumental to us, particularly you know, it was how
14 we got a crime against the older person rates to a
15 felony, and it was through that work and that
16 relationship.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you. I
18 appreciate that. So, here's a question that I have
19 about the Cabinet. You say here that it's basically
20 to eliminate age related barriers, how agencies can
21 work together for older adults and all of that. In
22 light of the fact that we're facing the possibility
23 of a great deal of budget deficits in the coming
24 years, will that be part of the conversation to make
25 sure that the programs and services that we have that
there is some efficiency of scale and that planning

3 in relation to the potential to have budget deficits
4 that effect older adults?

5 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I believe that we will
6 be very mindful and respectful of each other's
7 limited financial capacity, but our work continues as
8 the Mayor says, you know, we are face— we're going to
9 be facing maybe austere times but at the same time,
10 our work continues and the work of this is to make
11 sure that we do not have barriers to services and so,
12 I don't know that all of those have a cost associated
13 with it.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you. I'm going
15 to ask some health, since I'm Chair of the Health
16 Committee. I wanted to ask some health-related
17 questions, so we have — now we have a new booster
18 shot through COVID. We have flu season. It's
19 supposedly, the predictions are that it's going to be
20 a bad flu season, so what is DFTA doing to ensure
21 that our older adults, a. know about what they're
22 eligible for and how they can receive those and who
23 are you working with to make sure that information
24 gets out there?

25 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So, we have a very
strong relationship with the Department of Health as

3 you know. We were very, very intimately involved
4 with the Department of Health in the vaccine rollout.
5 During the early very difficult challenging stages,
6 all through its successful work to make sure that
7 neighborhoods were addressed at the same level as
8 everybody else and that was really important to us.
9 So, that work will continue you know in terms of this
10 booster shot. We are currently working around
11 getting people boosted with the regular booster
12 shot, not the new booster shot. So that is all part
13 of our constant information and as I said earlier
14 it's Aging Connect as well as entire network of aging
15 services, all of us will be a cacophony of sound
16 around the importance of that. And we have not
17 stopped that drum beat you know since first getting
18 vaccinated, to them not getting the boosters. I do
19 not think the pattern or behavior will change. If
20 anything, I think it will be amplified.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: So, is there any plan
22 to do any advertising? Cause for example, somebody
23 like me, I don't know what I'm supposed to get, how,
24 when I'm supposed to get it. There isn't anything in
25 terms of like some advertising that's out there or
anything else. I know you're doing it individually

3 with other adult centers and all that and I just, I
4 just want to know if there's going to be any kind of
5 campaign for that?

6 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We have a vaccine
7 campaign, and we will continue that vaccine public
8 service announcements and educate but they're
9 educational and outreach. They are not education as
10 to giving you information as to the three vaccines
11 and all of that.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: No, got that.

13 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Alright, but it is
14 about the importance of vaccination, and you know,
15 where and what makes you eligible for it.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay and just, just one
17 last thing is that I'm going to ask if you can
18 partner with DOHMH around that piece of it, along
19 with where people can actually get the vaccines.

20 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Absolutely.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Because I think that's
22 really important. I know DOHMH wants to do that
23 because what we don't want is a season where people
24 are sick and then we have the issue in terms
25 hospitals and all of that, so.

3 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, that's a common
4 goal that we both have and a common interest.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay, thank you very
6 much.

7 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you Council Member
9 Schulman and I'll allow Council Member Richardson
10 Jordan to ask some questions as well.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Hi.

12 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Hi.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: So, I know you
14 touched on it already because they are part of the
15 Cabinet but what is the connection like with HPD and
16 what sort of collaborations are happening around
17 older adults and housing and that connection between
18 DFTA and HPD?

19 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, we've had a long
20 relationship with HPD around affordability, around
21 design, you know around the original plan for the
22 30,000 affordable housing units. And so, it's
23 working with them, monitoring that. The other
24 relationship that we have with HPD is as new
25 developers are coming in, you know, and they have an
interest in housing for older adults, like what would

3 that require? What would be some of the social
4 supports that they would need in that particular
5 community. Asking them to make sure that they build
6 it in, rather than build and then expect us to pay
7 for it. You know, it's like build it in and it's
8 that kind of relationship that we have with HPD on an
9 ongoing basis.

10 I think that one of the other things that we have
11 a very good relationship with HPD around, it's uhm,
12 it is current housing stock that the city owns, and
13 you know how we're making that more accessible for
14 older adults because the goal is to keep older adults
15 in the community as the Chair talked earlier in her
16 opening remarks. It's about staying in place. And
17 culturally, we're not accustomed to you know, you
18 know other approaches. It's about staying in place
19 and stay in your community.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Are there
21 meetings outside of the Cabinet?

22 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, no, these were all
23 pre-Cabinet. So, we expect this to accelerate, and
24 you know to go even deeper with the Cabinet. These
25 are all relationships and projects that we work on
all pre the existence of the Cabinet. It was that

3 that launched us to say, you know we need something
4 more and more structure going on, you know.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay, and do
6 you have any data in terms of the older adult centers
7 or the social clubs as to how often seniors are
8 requesting support around housing?

9 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We have some of that
10 data. We do have that data.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Uhm, this is
12 something I'm personally interested in. We did a
13 listening tour after I was elected. We did a
14 District 9 listening tour and for the older adults,
15 the number one thing was technology and learning how
16 to use technology. But the number two thing was
17 housing security.

18 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Yeah.

20 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I can get you the
21 number of what we've done. I can tell you how many
22 people ask for assistance in our support service
23 around evictions and I can get you those kind of
24 discreet numbers in terms of housing assistance
25 requests, alright.

COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay.

3 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: But yeah, housing is
4 one of the most pressing issues for many New Yorkers,
5 including older adults.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Actually,
7 sorry, one more. And then do you know how much – it
8 may be hard to know off hand but how much budget-wise
9 is going towards the casework piece?

10 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I will get you – I will
11 get you the number of the budget. Remember that we
12 don't handle in the eviction conversation, we handle
13 the social services of people who are already in
14 eviction proceeding alright. The legal services and
15 all of that is handled by our sister agency at HRA
16 and we again, have a very good seamless relationship
17 around the legal side.

18 So, but I can get you how much we support for the
19 social service for that alright.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay, thank
21 you.

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you Council Member.
23 Since we're on housing, I would like to continue in
24 that line of questioning. Does DFTA track the
25 housing status of older adults in New York City,
including the rate of homelessness among older New

3 Yorkers, older adult home ownership? How many older
4 adults in New York City face the threat of eviction
5 or termination of tenancy over the past five years?

6 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So, it's one of
7 questions, series of questions that we ask that older
8 adults as part of our star system, that's it's a
9 voluntary question. And so, to the extent that we
10 have it, it is on a volunteer basis. But
11 nonetheless, we know that housing you know, including
12 physical supports and stability remain you know one
13 of the most pressing issues. But I can get you what
14 the numbers show now in terms of voluntary
15 information that we have.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, that would be helpful
17 but just in terms of I guess, general like research
18 that the agency does, you don't have access to any of
19 those statistics?

20 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: You know what? To be
21 honest with you Chair Hudson, I believe that we may,
22 and I can get you what we do have, alright. But I
23 don't have it with me right now.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, okay, thank you. Uhm,
25 you don't know -

3 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: In terms of evictions
4 though, we can get that from our sister agency also.
5 I can get you that.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and what about the
7 response rate to the voluntary information?

8 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, that's what I was
9 saying earlier I can get you, alright.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Alright. Uhm, what type of
11 case management services are offered to older adults
12 in need of housing support? I know you mentioned
13 case management, once they are already in
14 proceedings.

15 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right, so -

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Is there any other type of
17 support provided?

18 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So, there's that, which
19 is the eviction support services, right. Uhm, and
20 it's called TSS Tenant Eviction Support Services.
21 Uhm, the other way that we do is access information
22 around SCRIE and DRIE, alright.

23 So, and that comes from Aging Connect but that
24 also comes from every older adult program, you know
25 can facilitate and access that or have access to that
for older adults. Uhm, and those are the ways that

3 you know, in our outreach efforts that we provide
4 information on housing.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, can you describe any
6 work DFTA does with the New York City Department of
7 Housing Preservation and Development or HPD, as
8 Council Member Richardson Jordan mentioned to address
9 affordable housing and tenant protection issues that
10 impact older New Yorkers?

11 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: With the tenant
12 protection is working with HRA very closely on some
13 of those services. And you know whether it's that
14 one time availability to give you some money and it's
15 things of that nature. Uhm, with the HPD, as I
16 alluded to, there are many projects that we work with
17 HPD on. In terms of housing security or housing
18 physical ability, you know physical shape, but we
19 will look at ways - and also with the housing plan
20 that we have and with new developers and so, all of
21 that work continues with HPD. Uhm, and we'll see
22 what we can come up with in terms of we have a vision
23 of what we would like to ensure when we look at the
24 housing czar, you know we were very instrumental in
25 giving an entire outline of what was needed for older
adults as part of the housing czars, housing plan and

3 so, that's the way we continue those kind of
4 conversations and input and also, try to influence
5 the policies and the direction.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Uhm, according to a
7 March 7, 2022, community service society study of New
8 York City Office of Civil Justice data and who uses
9 right to counsel services, the share of tenants above
10 the 200 percent federal poverty line income
11 restriction served by the program increased from
12 eight to fourteen percent between July 2018 and June
13 30, 2020. Do you know what share of those tenants
14 were older adults?

15 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I can get you that, but
16 I can tell you that you know like older adults like
17 all others are dealing with the same challenges and
18 the same rent challenges you know as all of our other
19 residents. But you know we continue to work with our
20 agencies to make sure that we address the older
21 adults housing to the extent possible and to the
22 availability of housing.

23 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Does DFTA engage with the
24 New York City Department of Investigation and/or the
25 City Court System in a carrying out of eviction or
foreclosure proceedings against older adult tenants?

3 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: What we do is we work
4 with HPD and HRA on those kind of issues, not with
5 DOI.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: But in carrying out eviction
7 or foreclosure proceedings.

8 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: With uh -

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Or preventing. You said you
10 work with them in the - once they're already in
11 proceedings.

12 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: For eviction, so you're
14 providing services and aiding them?

15 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: In terms of prevention.
16 Uhm, the program that we have is you have to be in an
17 eviction state before in order to provide services.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

19 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That is not to say that
20 through all of the advocacy and the case management
21 agencies, there is not prevention work being done.

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

23 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I want to make it clear
24 that distinction.
25

3 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Do you think it would be
4 possible for DFTA to provide resources to prevent
5 eviction or foreclosure proceedings?

6 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I think that we would,
7 we would work closely with our assigned Council
8 program at HRA to make sure that the aging services
9 and the aging needs are looked at in terms of
10 prevention.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and you just pre-
12 empted my next question.

13 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Which was to describe the
15 assigned council project.

16 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So, assigned project
17 offers legal assistance you know, to individuals
18 citywide and due to staffing and you know, uhm,
19 DFTA's supports are limited to Brooklyn and
20 Manhattan. These have been the highest areas with
21 the greatest needs. And then we continue ways to
22 expand other - to other boroughs. But legal services
23 are offered also through our referrals through the
24 Department for the Aging's contracted legal services
25 in each of the boroughs.

3 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you and where can
4 older adults access ACP. What options do older
5 adults in Staten Island have?

6 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uh, it's a joint
7 program between HRA and OCJ, Department for the
8 Aging. The HRA provides the legal services, as I
9 said earlier, and DFTA provides the social services
10 in case assistance. As of last year, the program
11 served roughly, and that's the social service piece,
12 415 clients in a year.

13 You know, the needs always outpace the demand and
14 we're proud to be able to assist older adults through
15 this program. It's labor intensive and very costly
16 to operate, and so the – and the legal services does
17 not have a social service component. So, we're kind
18 of like always looking at uhm, at that relationship
19 but I can say that the assigned council program, has
20 a 95-success rate in preventing evictions and that is
21 a tribute to that program because they focus
22 primarily on the eviction piece and that's why they
23 have such a high success rate. So, uhm, we continue
24 to partner with HRA on that.

25 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, so you mentioned 415
clients a year, do you have a number for how many

3 older adults who are served by ACP over the past five
4 years and how many were turned away?

5 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No, I can get you that
6 information.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and is ACP available
8 to older adults in Staten Island?

9 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: ACP is a citywide
10 operation, so I would have to assume that it has
11 services in Staten Island and the Department for the
12 Aging also have legal services that serve the borough
13 of Staten Island.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and approximately how
15 many attorney's, social workers, and social work
16 interns work with the Assigned Council Project?

17 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, I can get you
18 that.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

20 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That's an HRA program,
21 I don't have that information.

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And at what rate is ACP
23 funded? Federally? From the State?

24 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The Assigned Council
25 Project is funded primarily with tax levy dollars. I
believe it started as a Council initiative if I'm not

3 mistaking. We can look into the record for that, but
4 I believe it was.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and are you aware of
6 any programs that provide public assistance to pay
7 rent arrears, specifically for older adults?

8 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uh, yes, the uh, HRA
9 has an Emergency Rental Assistance program and then
10 it also has a one-time shot deal you know to help
11 people financially.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So, those, those are
13 available to every one but there's no specific
14 program for older adults?

15 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That is an age
16 inclusive program. So, we could get HRA to probably
17 disaggregate that by age and we can get you that
18 information.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That'd be helpful.

20 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I'm sure that they have
21 it by age.

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

23 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And if not, we can do
24 an estimate based on population.

25 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, okay, yeah, that would
be helpful because we're also trying to figure out if

3 there are any older adult populations that are not
4 currently covered by one-shot deal eligibility or
5 other forms of rental arrears assistance, which is
6 essentially what we're trying to do with this
7 legislation is to ensure that all older adults,
8 regardless of income level have access to support and
9 resources.

10 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I'll see what the
11 specifications are and get back to you on that.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and do you have any
13 specific feedback on the preconsidered Introductions?

14 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, so, I can address
15 two of them.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

17 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: For you. One, is the
18 Bill of Rights one. We do have a Bill of Rights. We
19 have a pretty robust Bill of Rights that is mandated
20 to be posted at every center and it's one of the
21 standards.

22 Uhm, uhm, so funny, I was going to show it to you
23 but uhm and it's pretty inclusive.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah.

25 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Some of the language
probably needs to be updated you know because it has

3 broad language like, sexual harassment, orientation
4 and you know, so it probably needs to be more
5 specific, but it is very, very robust in terms of
6 letting older adults know what their rights are.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I think what we're trying to
8 solve for with this piece of legislation is the fact
9 that, that Bill of Rights is posted in places that
10 not every older adult may be you know visiting or
11 seeing. And so, with a know your rights pamphlet or
12 you know package of information that's actually sent
13 out to folks, shared with folks through other
14 agencies, it's a means to reach every older adult,
15 rather than just the ones that might be attending
16 Older Adult Clubs.

17 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And that's a point well
18 taken. So, that we agree with you conceptually in
19 terms of let's get it out to as many people as
20 possible. And we have a very, as you know, a very,
21 rich pamphlet and how to make sure that - and to make
22 sure that we include that as part of our pamphlet.

23 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So, conceptually you agree
24 but in practice, is there a caveat or no.

25 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: In practice, we will
obviously keep working with you to make sure that

3 this gets known and widely seen as extensively as we
4 possibly can.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

6 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I think, I think uh, I
7 believe you know so conceptually yes, absolutely. I
8 think some of the reporting requirements is one of
9 the things that I think we should have a continuous
10 conversation because of the labor-intensive nature of
11 some of those reporting requirements. And so, we
12 would love to continue that conversation.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, happy to continue that
14 conversation.

15 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, and then the
16 other one was on cultural competency.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yes.

18 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And cultural
19 competency, it's part of our standards now and so,
20 uhm, we would continue to work with you to make sure
21 that that is as extensive, but it is, it is so
22 engrained in who we are and where we're going. You
23 know, and you've heard some of the push back because
24 of our desire to move it further in terms of cultural
25 competency. And the goal eventually is to make sure
that as all of the Council Members got a map of where

3 their services are, and we also mapped where the
4 service deserts exist and to make sure that we have
5 services in TRIE communities. That is our goal. Our
6 goal is to go there and the ultimate, and the long-
7 term goal is to have equity and inclusion as to who
8 the service providers are also. So, those are the
9 kind of things that we're moving towards but cultural
10 competency, a commitment to equity and inclusion is
11 part of our DNA and we continue to work with you on
12 how to make sure that that structured and how that's
13 monitored and where the gaps exist.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And I think some of the
15 concerns at least that I have are just you know as
16 we've all noted, the increase in population that
17 we're going to experience over the next you know
18 several years and just making sure that we're all
19 prepared to handle that and that we have the
20 programming and the resources. I know you know, it's
21 part of the contracts now but those diverse
22 populations will only increase.

23 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And so—

25 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And so, one of the
things I will say for you on the record is that it's

3 part of the contract and what we need to do is also
4 address the culture, right? Because you know culture
5 will eat strategy for lunch every day.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

7 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So, we need to really
8 introduce a culture of inclusion and diversity in
9 almost everything that we do, and our contractors
10 have to know that that is a good thing and that we're
11 moving forward with that. And I think that we're
12 moving in that direction, and I'm pleased to say that
13 there is a recognition that this growing population
14 has to address, and status quo is not going to be
15 able to help us address that growing diverse
16 population, so that we all have to adapt in change
17 and learn new things and that's where we're moving.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Absolutely, thank you. Uhm,
19 just bear with me one second. Okay, uhm, we're just
20 barely coming out of the summer and so, I just want
21 to ask a few questions around summer heat relief.
22 The city's emergency cooling centers, which are
23 primarily located in community and older adult
24 centers, public libraries and NYCHA facilities are
25 not located equitably across neighborhoods. What is
the city doing to address this inequity?

3 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: You know, the
4 Department for the Aging is a strong – I can almost
5 do that one by my head, but I don't want to say
6 things out of score. The Department for the Aging is
7 a strong partner with your Office of Emergency
8 Management. Office of Emergency Management is the
9 one that dictates when we have a heat emergency, and
10 they are also the one's that – and we are there to
11 support them.

12 Again, when I first came to the department, one
13 of the things we had – I was in the department maybe
14 a week and we had a heat emergency, and it was an
15 arduous task to get cooling centers up and operating.
16 And one of things that we did, and it was mostly
17 because people said it wasn't contractually obligated
18 and one of the things that we did in the subsequent
19 RFP, which followed that fall, was to make it part of
20 the contract. So, every older adult club is required
21 to be a cooling center.

22 So, we had about 180 of them opened this year and
23 so, and during all of the heat emergencies that
24 occurred and several of them you know operated for
25 13-days this summer in terms of heat emergencies and
two of those days included additional hours than the

3 program normally operates. And we were able to serve
4 about 154,248 individuals.

5 So, uhm, and some of the programs -

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I'm sorry, can you repeat
7 that number?

8 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Sure. 154,248 total
9 attendance for those days.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

11 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: At cooling centers.
12 And remember that most of them were operating uhm,
13 during regular work hours, regular service hours. In
14 addition, we had some weekend services and the only
15 limitation we have for weekend services at cooling
16 centers is obviously for religious observance. So,
17 you could either take Saturday or Sunday off, but you
18 have to be open one of those - one of those is
19 designated.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Is that only in communities
21 that have a population that -

22 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No, this is cooling
23 centers-

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Everywhere?

25 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Department for the
Aging cooling centers.

3 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So, one of the uhm, some
4 feedback that we received from advocates is that the
5 centers that are open on the weekends have far more
6 people visiting because obviously a lot more people
7 are home during the weekends maybe and need those
8 services but not all cooling centers seem to be open
9 during the weekend.

10 So, are you saying that all DFTA cooling centers
11 or all OAC cooling centers are open every weekend at
12 least one day?

13 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I just want to make sure I'm
15 following.

16 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay, so what I'm
17 saying is that all centers, if the emergency is on a
18 weekend, have to be responsive. The caveat or the
19 distinction where they cannot, would not be one, is
20 if there's landlord or physical space restrictions
21 that don't allow them to open. That's one. The
22 other is if there's religious observance. If it
23 happens to be on a weekend, you know but we say that
24 you can take one of the days for religious
25 observance. You cannot do both days for religious
observance.

3 So, those are the things that will prevent a
4 center from being open on a weekend. Of course,
5 they're you know, the universe conspires and there
6 might be you know an HVAC issue that happens on that
7 particular weekend but by and large, it's a
8 contractual obligation that they are open in the
9 hours that OEM determines that are heat hours, heat
10 periods.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and you mentioned that
12 for two days out of the thirteen days that these
13 cooling centers were operated, they were open for two
14 additional hours.

15 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: For extended hours.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right, there's a report from
17 August 4th of this year by the City Comptroller that
18 says that hundreds of emergency cooling centers were
19 closed for two days during July's heat wave. Half of
20 the facilities listed in the city's cooling center
21 finder were listed as closed on Saturday, which I'm
22 sure probably is attributed to what you were just
23 talking about but while more than 80 percent were
24 closed on Sunday's, nearly half of the city's
25 activated cooling centers were OAC's for New Yorkers
aged 60 plus. Of those cooling centers, nearly 60

1
2 percent did not offer extended hours and 22 percent
3 were not wheelchair accessible. What were the rates
4 of cooling center utilization during this time?

5 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I can give you a chart
6 by day of the hours and the attendance of each one of
7 those.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, great.

9 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The other thing I want
10 to before the record, is that every center is
11 wheelchair accessible. And as we operate as an older
12 adult club during the week or non-heat emergencies.
13 And so, being wheelchair or handicap accessible is a
14 requirement.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, well, I'm just sharing
16 what the City Comptroller found. Uhm, do you have
17 any - go ahead.

18 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uhm, I was just told
19 that report is about the entire network, not only
20 DFTA, alright?

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right, okay.

22 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And we represent half
23 of uh probably those cooling centers. Thank you for
24 that.

3 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yup. Uhm, can you provide
4 any metrics that show the impacts that show the
5 impact that being closed for two of the days during
6 the July heat wave had on older New Yorkers? And do
7 you know what DFTA has done to be better prepared for
8 another potential heat wave this year. I mean
9 obviously, you know as we experience climate change,
10 it's getting hotter and hotter.

11 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So, with all due
12 respect, we are prepared for heat emergencies. We're
13 well prepared for heat emergencies and unless there
14 is a mitigating circumstance, I would say that our
15 providers are extremely responsive. So, I can give
16 you all of the details as to what days programs were
17 open, which one of those was heat emergency day. I
18 mean, all of the heat emergency days and what was the
19 census for each one of those.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, great and then
21 specifically, I'm also interested in older New
22 Yorkers who live in East Flatbush, which only had two
23 open cooling centers available to its 162,400
24 residents for example. And so, just curious to know
25 about heat relief. I understand that you don't
operate all of the cooling centers, but I'm concerned

1
2 with the older adults who need access to those
3 cooling centers. And so, I think you know, it should
4 be a mutual interest that the older, older New
5 Yorkers wherever they may be, whether it's an OAC
6 DFTA provided cooling center or not, that all of
7 those cooling centers are accessible to older New
8 Yorkers.

9 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And that's a totally
10 appropriate expectation. Uhm, for the Flatbush, the
11 East Flatbush area, we can look at who are the
12 designated cooling centers in that area.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah.

14 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And I can identify
15 those that are older adult clubs. Don't forget we do
16 it by community district, so the lines might be a
17 little different, but we can provide that information
18 for you, and we can also work with OEM to see what
19 other services they have in that community.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, I mean Brooklyn has
21 the largest number of older adults in the city and
22 so, to know that in East Flatbush, there are only two
23 cooling centers for over 150,000 residents, you know
24 is concerning. And it's also concerning that some of
25 those cooling centers, although they may not be DFTA

3 operated were not accessible to older adults. You
4 know for anybody who might be experiencing mobility
5 impairment.

6 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So, point noted.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Do you coordinate? Does
8 DFTA coordinate with non-DFTA cooling centers at all?

9 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uh, we collaborate with
10 OEM, but we do not coordinate you know coordinate
11 with non-DFTA cooling centers in the middle of a heat
12 emergency. We focus on the older adult clubs that
13 serve as cooling centers and make sure that they have
14 the support and the supplies that they may need for
15 that period and the staffing requirements for those
16 heat emergencies.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

18 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That's where our focus
19 is.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, uhm, I just want to
21 share this. Does OEM oversee all of the cooling
22 centers?

23 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, okay, thank you. Uhm,
25 heat mortality rates are twice as high among Black
New Yorkers as compared to White New Yorkers. And

3 average annual rates of heat stress are nine times
4 higher for New Yorkers in their 70's and 16 times
5 higher for those over 80, compared to younger people
6 under 20 years old.

7 While DOHMH is required to report on heat
8 mortality rates, including among older adults, does
9 DFTA do any work related to the impact of heat on
10 older New Yorkers specifically and is any of that
11 disaggregated by race and ethnicity?

12 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We do not look at the
13 mortality rates. I do not believe that we collect
14 that data but what we do do is with every older adult
15 club, they have what we call the COOP plan.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Cool Plan?

17 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: COOP, COOP.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Oh, COOP.

19 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It's an emergency
20 preparedness plan and in that plan, it is also how to
21 distribute information to older adults during these
22 emergencies, heat being one of them.

23 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, so, are you aware of
24 any work that the city is doing to address the
25 disparity specifically in heat mortality rates?

3 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I believe that the
4 establishment of cooling centers is one of those
5 directions to prevent, to prevent it and I also
6 believe that uhm, the public education part of it and
7 the city had distributed 80,000 air conditioners in
8 previous years to ensure that particularly in low
9 income, in TRIE neighborhoods, to ensure that we
10 could get as many people as possible their own air
11 conditioning system. So, I think there have been
12 steps taken in that direction and I believe that you
13 know it's something that we've been very mindful of.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: How many cooling activation
15 days has the city budgeted for this year?

16 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We activated-

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You operated you said for
18 thirteen.

19 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We operated for
20 thirteen. In the budget, we usually use the year
21 before as a standard, so we had fifteen days
22 budgeted. But that being said, it's you know, within
23 your own, the programs budget you know requirements
24 are there you know. But we usually use the year
25 before experience to budget the subsequent years.

2 But you're right, you know, that's why we had
3 fifteen and we've only experienced thirteen so far,
4 so but be aware of these severe climate changes.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Well, and that's perfect
6 because I was just going to ask, how is that number
7 expected to be impacted by climate change over the
8 next ten years? Are you forecasting?

9 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uh, we're look - we
10 always - that's what we do with OEM and that is what
11 our emergency preparedness always look at. Not only
12 that but also hurricanes and flooding and rains and
13 things of that nature. So, yeah, we're looking at
14 that very seriously.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And then what happens if
16 there are more heat wave days than you budgeted for?

17 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We deal with that
18 constraint at the time.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Uhm, alright, jumping
20 to health and mental health and social isolation. 32
21 percent of older New Yorkers live alone and lack
22 family or a similar support system, which has been
23 associated with increased risk of mortality and
24 cognitive decline. What efforts does the city make
25

3 to ensure the wellbeing of older adults who live
4 alone?

5 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, I'm pleased to
6 say that we have been very fortunate that we have
7 been able to expand our 40 geriatric mental health
8 programs to 88 this year with the additional funds.
9 We're in that process right now and the focus is on
10 TRIE communities who have been the most impacted by
11 COVID and we're also looking at ways to expand you
12 know, we expanded for any visiting and now we have a
13 program called Friendly Voices, which is, expand the
14 number of ways that we can connect with older adults
15 who are isolated. We are very concerned, as I said
16 earlier, one of the issues that we want to address
17 collectively and hopefully all of advocates, Council,
18 and Department for the Aging, as well as all of the
19 contractors, is the concern that we have about the
20 low participation rates at older adult clubs.

21 I mean, people are thinking about it from -
22 there's one sector that thinks about it from a
23 funding perspective. There's other sectors that are
24 thinking about it from the long-term implications of
25 social isolation and uhm, so that it is an issue that

3 has, that is frocked with many, many concerns and we
4 have to address that all jointly.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Okay, DFTA runs
6 two volunteer programs in partnership with the
7 Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health, which are
8 designed to build friendships and limit social
9 isolation. What kind of advertising or outreach does
10 the city conduct with regard to friendly visiting and
11 friendly voices?

12 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We, again, through our
13 whole network of services is how we you know let
14 people know about these programs. Our CMA agencies,
15 our case management agencies are instrumental in the
16 friendly visiting conversation as well as some of our
17 home delivered meals providers, right? And we also
18 have - well we have established long, many, many
19 years ago at older adult clubs call telephone
20 reassurance, you know, which is something that we've
21 turned into friendly voices. Unexpanded but it's
22 been a long tradition to connect with fellow members
23 who are for some reason absent from a center. So,
24 it's something that we continuously do, and everyone
25 is part of that outreach conversation.

3 And that is something that you know continues,
4 particular in this interminable post-COVID existence.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You don't have any numbers
6 do you on the volunteers and older adults that
7 participate in those programs?

8 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh yeah, we have that.
9 I can get that for you.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

11 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I can get you,
12 telephone reassurance, friendly visiting and friendly
13 voices.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, great, thank you.
15 According to DFTA's website, due to the pandemic, as
16 you mentioned, volunteers with the friendly visiting
17 program are currently maintaining social distancing
18 guidelines and are connecting with their matches by
19 phone and video calls. Do you know the timeline for
20 reinstituting in person visits?

21 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We're doing that case
22 by case.

23 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

24 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And remember, you know
25 in all of this conversation is that the older adult
has choice in the matter, and we have to honor the

3 older adults choice of how they prefer to continue
4 those visits and relationship.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: What kind of assistance does
6 DFTA offer older adults who may require some
7 technical assistance in order to participate in video
8 calls and/or virtual groups?

9 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, that we continue.
10 I mean, I think – when I think of highlights during
11 COVID, I think of the advancements that the network
12 has done in terms of virtual programming, virtual
13 training, and how we've incorporated that into a way
14 of being and I don't think we'll ever go back from
15 that. Not only of its ingenuity but also because of
16 the kind of access and additional services that it
17 provides.

18 So, it's something that we continue, and we will
19 work with – and the other thing is, we keep working
20 with the advocates and everyone and anyone to make
21 sure that the affordable connectivity project is well
22 known because I may know how to use the service but
23 if it's unaffordable to me, if it's you know, if it's
24 out of my cost range, than it doesn't matter.

25 So, the affordable connectively project is
something that we all need to keep beating that drum

3 beat to make sure that everybody applies. So, we
4 count on the advocates and our network to elevate
5 that, the need for that.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Uhm, I want to
7 jump to home delivered meals and then we'll get into
8 some of the public testimony. At what rate does DFTA
9 fund home delivered meals annually and over the past
10 five years?

11 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I can tell you that in
12 two seconds. Just give me a - okay, it's funded for
13 \$60 million for FY23 and this includes the additional
14 \$2.3 million that was awarded in FY22 and the \$9.4
15 million in FY23 to raise the reimbursement rate for
16 home delivered meals.

17 Uhm, this home delivered meals program, you know
18 as you all well know, it has very specific criteria
19 for who is eligible and that criteria is regulated by
20 the state. So, it's a growing program. We know that
21 COVID has had an impact on that program, and we
22 anticipate -I don't want to get ahead of myself. I'm
23 sure you have questions around that.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That's okay. I'm like do go
25 on.

3 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And we anticipate that
4 you know, the demand that we've already seen is about
5 \$3,000 and we're getting the case management agencies
6 to work on that and now, it's also ensuring that we
7 the capacity with our home delivered meals to
8 continue to provide that service.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And that was exactly my
10 question, is how many older New Yorkers take
11 advantage of the program compared to demand?

12 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, right now, we're at
13 about 22,000 a day, right. Uhm, and we anticipate
14 that increasing by about 3,000 and we're trying to
15 also calibrate that with the capacity at the home
16 delivered meals program. And so, it's a constant
17 review and use of resources to meet both those
18 demands right?

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Do you have that data
20 disaggregated by zip code?

21 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Not by zip code but we
22 probably have it by borough. You know what, that's
23 not true. We do have it by zip code because of the
24 20 home delivered meals sites that we have which are
25 really consolidated to 14 contracts. We have that
information, so I can get that to you.

3 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Great, that would be
4 wonderful, thank you. And I think maybe you just
5 answered this. How many different community-based
6 organizations does DFTA currently contract with the
7 delivered meals anyways. Is that 14?

8 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We have 14 contracts at
9 the 20 sites because during the RFP, a lot of them
10 consolidated their budgets but – so, it's contracts
11 are less than the actual sites.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Oh, I, okay,
13 according to a January 2022 audit of the home
14 delivery meals program by the State Comptroller,
15 there have been repeated problems with food safety
16 and nutrition, inadequate complaint response and
17 contracts awarded despite poor performance, excuse
18 me. So, I'm wondering what options does DFTA have in
19 terms of not awarding contracts to repeat offenders?

20 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So, with all due
21 respect to the State Comptroller who is a dear friend
22 of mine, that audit was used, that finding based on
23 one organization and uhm, and –

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Is that one organization
25 still providing services?

3 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, it is, and I'll
4 tell you why.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

6 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Because our goal and
7 many of the recommendations we agreed to with the
8 audit findings that we had already put in place, but
9 you know the audit comes and the audit does a past
10 year, but our approach has been with that agency is
11 to provide the technical assistance and remediation,
12 rather than terminating contracts.

13 A lot of our programs are in physical locations
14 where the complexity of the facility exacerbates some
15 of these programs and we've had to work towards
16 mitigation. Uhm, and there is no way that we would
17 not terminate a program that was severely neglecting
18 its obligation. However, if there's circumstances
19 that we can work towards mitigating, the goal is to
20 mitigate those and continue working with that
21 provider.

22 The State Audit saw it quite differently and
23 we're working to balance those differences and
24 looking at some of our monitoring, escalating when we
25 find some problems, but I do not believe, we do not
believe, that termination is the -

3 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: The only recourse.

4 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The only point of view,
5 right?

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I understand. I guess, when
7 I think about issues that have been flagged, which
8 here it's referencing food safety and cleanliness,
9 including roaches or vermin in kitchen and food, not
10 protected against contamination, nutrition issues,
11 including high sodium levels and the failure to
12 submit Department of Health inspection reports within
13 24 hours. If that was happening in our school
14 system, people would be outraged. But the fact that
15 it's happening to older adults, perhaps not as many
16 people are outraged.

17 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That's not - I don't
18 agree with that statement at all.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Well, I'm not - this is not
20 an indictment on you and the agency, I'm saying
21 culturally, right.

22 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh yeah, no, no.

23 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: If something like that was
24 happening in schools -

25 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Absolutely.

3 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: People aren't even really
4 paying attention quite frankly to what's happening in
5 older adult centers. So, I just want to make sure
6 that whatever recourse and remediation is being done
7 is actually you know effective.

8 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So, I want to address
9 that two points, whether it's an indictment on me or
10 not it is ultimately my responsibility because I'm
11 sitting in the Chair, alright. So, thank you for
12 saying it's not an indictment on me but I'm
13 responsible because I'm sitting in the Chair, and we
14 have to make some decisions.

15 There is no way that we have a robust nutrition
16 team of incredibly talented nutritionists who review
17 these programs and who cite programs all the time.
18 As a matter of fact, just a month and a half ago, we
19 had a meeting with all of our providers about so many
20 of them are going to get poor performance evaluations
21 this year because of the relationship with the
22 caterers. That the caterers are not in compliance
23 and that reflects on the program.

24 And so, those conversations are constantly had.
25 The health and safety of older adults and the
nutritional standards of older adults is our upmost

3 responsibility. That being said, if a program is
4 facing severe challenges because of their physical
5 space, we have three alternatives, keep working with
6 them to mitigate those or relocate them but all of
7 that takes time. Closing them is not the only thing
8 that we should do and that is of great importance.
9 But if someone is in violation, we have no problem
10 shutting them and coming up with another plan of how
11 do we continue those services that they're providing,
12 because that's, that's the balancing of the competing
13 demands alright.

14 But one of the things is that you know, we have,
15 the Department of Health who does inspections of our
16 sites and we have our nutritionist who do inspections
17 of our sites and what we build in now with our
18 nutritionist is a process of escalating one, repeated
19 complaints, and problems that have become more
20 severe. And then coming up with strategies and
21 mitigations for each one of those levels.

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, alright, thank you for
23 that.

24 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you.
25

3 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: How many complaints about
4 meal quality and delivery is DFTA currently handling?
5 Do you know the median resolution rate?

6 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, we can give you
7 that. I don't have that with me.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Do you have a sense of like
9 the most common types of complaints regarding home
10 delivered meals?

11 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, for home
12 delivered meals, it's usually late delivery. Uhm, or
13 that's usually the most common complaint.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

15 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: You know, we no longer
16 have that many complaints around food and food
17 quality because older adults now have choice in the
18 kind of food that they're asking for and uhm, and
19 they are also, many of them are either chilled or
20 frozen, depending on whether the older adult has the
21 ability to heat food, so that they can have choice
22 when they eat that food.

23 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And do you have any policies
24 in place to determine if meals were actually
25 delivered to clients directly?

3 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, we have developed,
4 one, we have a very extensive tracking system between
5 each program has to have a very, very extensive
6 tracking system as to when meals are delivered and
7 that has been very effective.

8 Lately, we have, we're pilot testing an app where
9 the driver actually – and all of this was done by
10 paper, which was labor intensive, you know subject to
11 human error, one of the things that the State
12 Comptroller also cited. That is, you know, a subject
13 to human error and so, what we've done, we're pilot
14 testing now in app, where the driver can indicate
15 real time, when the food was delivered to whom and
16 then that goes straight to the program, which then
17 goes into the STAR system. You know but like
18 technology, it has bumps and lips.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. Uhm, since
20 2020, which non-English languages did older New
21 Yorkers use to respond to DFTA client surveys?

22 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uhm, the – I don't
23 know. Uhm, you know we've designed it so that it's
24 in multiple languages.

25 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Hmm, hmm, can you send us
then the –

3 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I sure will.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: The languages and break out
5 the number of client surveys completed by language?
6 That would be helpful.

7 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, we'll do that.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

9 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And one of the things
10 you should be aware of, and staff will probably tell
11 me – anyway, one of things that we're doing right now
12 is part of our efficiency study, which we're really
13 proud of is we're looking at creating a system where
14 older adults can give us automatic responses. And
15 that we can tabulate that.

16 You know how when you go into – in home delivered
17 meals, we are looking at how we would do that and
18 maybe putting it on the deliver app but we also,
19 we're looking at something – you know when you go to
20 airports or certain places, you have the three you
21 know happy, sad?

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Hmm, hmm.

23 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So, we're looking at
24 maybe not that but looking at some – a very simple
25 way of tabulating client satisfaction.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Like in real time.

3 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: In real time.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Would that be an app that
5 they have on their own device or is that being
6 provided by the -

7 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Those are the delivery
8 work at now. What makes more sense? Do we put it on
9 your device, or do we use that barcode that older
10 adults have you know who participate in senior
11 centers and use that as a scanning.

12 I mean, so we're just looking at all of those
13 possibilities but we're looking seriously, and this
14 came out of early planning meetings with providers on
15 getting you know customer service was an important
16 piece that we've always been missing. Real time
17 customer response. So, we're working on it and
18 that's a long time coming.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you
20 Commissioner. That concludes my questions for this
21 morning and then we'll move onto public testimony.

22 LORRAINE CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And we will provide you
23 this data as soon as possible, just some of it is
24 ours to collect but some of it we rely on our sister
25 agencies and thank you for that.

3 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Understood, thank you so
4 much. Just as a reminder for those testifying from
5 the public, everybody will have three minutes. So,
6 we'll now begin public testimony with the first panel
7 with Brianna Paden-Williams from Live On New York,
8 Kevin Jones from AARP New York and James Fenton from
9 Volunteers of Legal Service.

10 And just a quick note in terms of logistics, in-
11 person testimonies will be taken before those on
12 Zoom. You can begin when you're ready. Thank you.

13 BRIANNA PADEN-WILLIAMS: Hello, I'm Brianna
14 Paden-Williams, the Communications and Policy
15 Associate at Live On New York. Thank you for the
16 opportunity to testify today. Live On New York's
17 members include more than 110 community-based
18 nonprofits that provide core services, which allow
19 all New Yorkers to thrive in our community as we age.
20 First and foremost, Live On New York is appreciative
21 of city's investments for older adults and the aging
22 sector in the FY22 - '23 excuse me, adopted budget.

23 This budget moves the aging service sector in the
24 right direction from a significant human services
25 workforce investment to additional funding for home
delivered meals to keep older adults fed.

3 Nonetheless, we also recognize there is more work to
4 be done to better support older New Yorkers while the
5 aging population continues to be the fastest growing
6 demographic with one in five New Yorkers expected to
7 be 60 and older by 2040. The city must go further to
8 ensure all older New Yorker regardless of their
9 background have access to equitable aging services to
10 safely age in community. Therefore, we invite the
11 city to utilize our aging policy agenda, Aging is
12 Everyone's Business, released by Live On New York in
13 partnership with Hunter College Brookdale Center for
14 Healthy Aging, which is a bold policy agenda that
15 provides actionable policy solutions to make New York
16 a better place to age.

17 In addition, Live On New York recommends the
18 following: DFTA should access and allocate funding
19 for the significant inflation impacts on raw food,
20 gas prices, and other infrastructure needs. Many of
21 Live On New York's members have raised their concerns
22 of the impact inflation cost for raw food, gas prices
23 and other items. For example, one of our members saw
24 a 40 percent increase in raw food due to inflation
25 this year alone. The unavoidable financial strain
has created challenges for providers to continue to

3 meet the growing capacity for home delivered meals in
4 addition to providing congregate meals for older
5 adult centers. Nonetheless, Live On New York is
6 appreciative of City Council's recent announcement of
7 \$3 million in funding for the repair and replacement
8 of hot shot vans for the home delivered meals
9 program.

10 In addition, the city should support new models
11 of service including home delivered meals. New
12 models of service such as grab and go, including grab
13 and go were critical and unsuccessful in ensuring
14 that who may not be comfortable congregating due to
15 COVID risk or for any personal reasons, are less
16 willing to meet their nutritional needs by eating at
17 an older adult center, had the option to take their
18 meal home. A decision that ensures one's nutritional
19 needs can be met in the environment of their own
20 choosing.

21 We also recommend that the city allocates funding
22 to develop 1,000 units of affordable senior housing
23 per year and while the adopted budget included
24 investments to support affordable housing programs,
25 the city must go further to fully address the need
for affordable senior housing. In addition, we also

3 recommend the city increases the per unit
4 reimbursement rate for the SARA program from \$5,000
5 per unit to \$700 per unit.

6 In addition, Live On New York applauds Aging
7 Chair Hudson for introducing the legislative package
8 that's promoting critical services and supports for
9 all ages in our community. More information can be
10 found in our written testimony and thank you for the
11 opportunity to testify today.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Kevin.

13 KEVIN JONES: Oh, good morning, I'm not used to
14 doing this in person, so thanks. Good morning Chair
15 Hudson and members of the Aging Committee. My name
16 is Kevin Jones, the Associate State Director of
17 Advocacy at AARP New York, which has 750,000 members
18 of the 50 plus community in New York City. Thank you
19 for providing me the opportunity to testify at
20 today's hearing on Improved Access to Services for
21 Older Adults.

22 Older adults represent the fastest growing
23 demographic, the 65 plus age group is growing 12
24 times faster than the under 65. Given this reality,
25 the city should pay significant attention to the
needs of older individuals. New York City must work

3 to eliminate ageism and ensure the dignity and
4 quality of life of its diverse older adult
5 population, particularly when it comes to interacting
6 with their government and AARP is proud to support
7 Council Member Hudson's legislative package to ensure
8 more equitable and inclusive access for older New
9 Yorkers in housing, knowing their rights and
10 participating in programming.

11 AARP is long supported and pushed for the
12 availability of affordable housing options to support
13 widely held desire for older New Yorkers to remain in
14 their homes and communities as they age. We need
15 older New Yorkers without family ties with little
16 retirement savings, end up isolated in adult homes or
17 forced into the city's homeless shelter system.

18 The projected growth of the aging population and
19 increased demand for city living and a lack of
20 affordable housing for low income - low- and middle-
21 income aging adults points to a growing need to
22 preserve existing affordable housing.

23 The first bill on Chair Hudson's package would
24 address this by helping seniors avoid unwarranted
25 eviction or termination of tenancy and foreclosure.
Without adequate awareness, programs and services to

3 support older New Yorkers cannot help the communities
4 they were created to help. Therefore, AARP supports
5 the second bill as well, which would require the
6 creation and maintenance of a Know Your Rights
7 pamphlet for older adults.

8 The pamphlet would not only inform older adults
9 about their rights but also provide them with
10 information on how to contact relevant agencies and
11 community-based organizations to help them exercise
12 these rights. This bill would require dissemination
13 of these pamphlets as well as outreach efforts to
14 ensure widespread increased knowledge and usage.

15 Additionally, according to New York City
16 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, only 44
17 percent of the city's 1.1 million older adults
18 identify as White, while 22 percent identify as
19 Black, 21 percent as Latino, 12 percent as Asian
20 Pacific Islander and 2 percent as mixed-race
21 ethnicity or other. Many older adult New Yorkers
22 rely on older adult centers for programming and
23 access to services and most importantly, a sense of
24 community and belonging.

25 The third bill would require older adult centers
to expand their programming to include linguistic and

3 cultural programs relevant to local communities.
4 AARP promotes livable communities and cultural,
5 relevant and inclusive programming is vital to
6 preventing isolation in older adults. Which, as we
7 all know, isolation can cause a lot of other issues.
8 It's equal to smoking. Healthwise, about smoking 15
9 cigarettes a day.

10 So, our city seniors deserve to age with dignity
11 and to have their rights protected and these bills go
12 along way towards achieving that goal. So, thank you
13 for having me and I'm happy to answer any questions
14 but I'll submit a longer version online.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sounds good, thank you and
16 uhm, James Fenton, Volunteers of Legal Service.

17 JAMES FENTON: Thank you for the opportunity to
18 testify this morning. My name is James Fenton, I'm a
19 Senior Staff Attorney at Volunteers of Legal Service
20 or VOLS. VOLS was established in 1984 and our
21 purpose is to leverage private attorneys to provide
22 free legal services to low-income New Yorkers to help
23 fill the justice gap. Our Senior Law Project focuses
24 on services helping low-income older New Yorkers plan
25 for their future by obtaining wills and other advance
directives.

3 This planning ultimately allows seniors to make
4 their wishes clear, empower their chosen caregivers
5 and to allow them to age in place in their community
6 for as long as it's feasible. In addition to our
7 life planning services, we operate a Legal Advice
8 hotline for older New Yorkers and legal issues
9 related to the fear of eviction and homelessness top
10 the list of questions we receive.

11 While both New York State and New York City have
12 taken significant steps to protect their rights of
13 low-income tenants in recent years, landlords
14 continue to push forward with their efforts to force
15 out long term tenants in rent regulated housing, many
16 of whom are older adults.

17 The seniors who we speak to are acutely aware of
18 the length their landlords will go to push them out
19 of their apartments and are anxious of the
20 possibility that in the fight for their apartments
21 without the help of an attorney. Many of our clients
22 worry that their mobility issues will prevent them
23 from effectively participating in eviction cases
24 brought against them by their landlords.

25 Our homebound clients only receive a meal
periodically and worry that they will miss their time

3 to respond to notices from their landlords or the
4 court. Further, even when they are properly
5 notified, many cannot travel to the housing court and
6 cannot access the technology or navigate the
7 bureaucracy needed to avoid in person appearances.
8 Because of this expanding seniors access to
9 attorney's will not only help them effectively raise
10 legal defenses but will also allow them to overcome
11 potential practical hurdles to their participation in
12 the judicial process and elevate a great deal of
13 their stress and anxiety.

14 In our experience, older New Yorkers are also
15 exceptionally worried about having to enter the
16 shelter system. Not only can the shelters themselves
17 be difficult to navigate and endure but placement in
18 a shelter or other temporary housing accommodation
19 often requires a person to move away from the medical
20 and social services, which they become increasingly
21 reliant upon as they age. Due to our clients
22 aforementioned mobility issues, even a relocation,
23 which most people could consider small, can create an
24 impossible divide between an older adult and their
25 community.

2 Furthermore, many seniors that we speak with are
3 living on fixed incomes, which place them slightly
4 above 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.
5 Leaving them ineligible for a Right to Counsel while
6 still unable to afford a private attorney to
7 represent them.

8 Disabled older veterans in particular fall into
9 this category. Currently, if an older veteran
10 receives a service-connected disability at a 90
11 percent or 100 percent rating, they are over income
12 for the Right to Counsel program. Meaning, they are
13 effectively denied an attorney based on injuries
14 sustained during service. These are veterans who
15 sacrifice the most in service of our country and the
16 compensation they receive because of their sacrifice
17 currently shuts them out from receiving
18 representation in an eviction proceeding. Removing
19 this income cap would open access to a significant
20 portion of this vulnerable population. Allowing New
21 Yorkers to age in place and remain vibrant members of
22 their local communities is a goal that benefits
23 everyone in our city. The Council program has been a
24 great help, we support expanding it.

3 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much and we'll
4 take your longer written testimony.

5 JAMES FENTON: Sounds good.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Jeannine Cahill
7 Jackson from the Legal Aid Society. Okay, and sorry,
8 we can have Christian Gonzalez-Rivera, Jack
9 Kupferman, and Dara Adams all come up to the panel as
10 well. And Jeannine, you can begin when you are
11 ready. If you can just press the button at the
12 bottom of the mic, yeah.

13 JEANNINE CAHILL JACKSON: Good way to start.
14 Thank you so much. Good afternoon. Thank you
15 Council Member Hudson and Committee for the Aging for
16 proposing these sales and for holding this hearing.
17 My name is Jeannine Cahill Jackson, I'm a Supervising
18 Attorney at the Legal Aid Society. Specifically, the
19 Bronx neighborhood office and I supervise our
20 assigned Council projects, so the eviction prevention
21 for seniors.

22 So, uhm, the Legal Aid Society is in support of
23 this bill and has actually sent suggestions to make
24 it even perhaps more robust. First, addressing
25 increasing legal representation for seniors. We add
an emphatic yes to this with a but. However,

2 currently with the level of funding, I have three
3 attorney's and one paralegal. Two of whom are which
4 are here with me today and we're receiving court
5 referrals, meaningful court referrals of seniors that
6 have fallen through the cracks of many systems and
7 find themselves in eviction. When my paralegals as
8 the intake interview finding them without food,
9 without any support services often being you know
10 separated from their community and housing court is
11 the way the systems find them. We're not able to
12 take all of these cases under the current 200 percent
13 federal income poverty guidelines. So, while yes,
14 absolutely, we would like to see even more seniors
15 eligible at the current funding levels, it would be
16 more people deemed eligible without being able to
17 access services because the additional legal services
18 couldn't hold that additional capacity.

19 So, we would support also if the bill could
20 include more robust funding for right to counsel for
21 seniors under 200 percent of the federal income
22 poverty guideline. And perhaps an entire removal of
23 the subject to appropriation for legal services for
24 seniors.

3 Additionally, the multipronged approach looking
4 at also rent arrears and case management is hugely
5 valuable and uhm, currently in regards to the rent
6 arrears, it could benefit those that aren't otherwise
7 eligible for the one-shot deal from HRA, which is the
8 main source of rental arrears assistance. Could be
9 those without immigration status or possibly not able
10 to afford ongoing rent. But the larger problem here
11 is it's just a band aid. Another gap in funding for
12 keeping seniors financially in their homes is ongoing
13 rental subsidy. Currently there is City FHEPS, but
14 you must qualify for APS services and so, that's only
15 the most severely disabled adults that also need all
16 of the various APS criteria, leaving many seniors
17 that could afford their homes perhaps before their
18 partner died or circumstances change, now in need of
19 an ongoing rental subsidy to be able to maintain
20 their housing.

21 And then lastly, in regards to case management -

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You can continue.

23 JEANNINE CAHILL JACKSON: Thank you. Uhm, the
24 Assigned Council Project as Commissioner from DFTA
25 referenced, DFTA provides limited social work
services in the Brooklyn and Manhattan but not in the

3 Bronx, Queens or Staten Island. So, currently, we
4 have no social work support or any other case
5 management for our seniors and so, any increase of
6 this type of service would be very meaningful and to
7 just add to some of the – to add some suggestions to
8 that portion would be that this program that's being
9 proposed in the legislation, would be a partner with
10 the legal services provider. So, not simply referral
11 portal because right now, all of the agencies that do
12 provide help that we could refer to are overburdened
13 as well. So, we need additional resources of the
14 provision of assistance, not simply referrals. Some
15 identified areas and I'll be submitting longer
16 written testimony after this for your review but
17 could be helping seniors locate suitable housing when
18 they have to move. Whether it's on the private
19 market or applying for affordable housing. Document
20 collection, application and recertification to get
21 and maintain their subsidies for their particular
22 housing and in their cases.

23 None of these should be reasons why seniors get
24 evicted such as not being able to provide a timely
25 bank statement but in the reality, there are many
seniors facing eviction for just that and the

3 hardship to just get to the bank, to get the bank
4 statement can be insurmountable.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Absolutely.

6 JEANNINE CAHILL JACKSON: Thank you very much.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Thank you for
8 that feedback. I know my office has been in touch,
9 so we'll continue to discuss ways that we can improve
10 the legislation.

11 JEANNINE CAHILL JACKSON: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Christian.

13 CHRISTIAN GONZALEZ-RIVERA: Yup. Okay, uhm, good
14 afternoon now, actually good afternoon Chair Hudson
15 and everyone else.

16 So, my name is Christian Gonzalez-Rivera and I'm
17 the Policy Director at the Brookdale Center for
18 Healthy Aging. Let me just make this clear. I'm the
19 Policy Director at the Brookdale Center for Healthy
20 Aging at Hunter College. So, the Brookdale Center
21 supports the spirit of all of the pieces of
22 legislation introducing the package and we'd like to
23 direct our comments to Intro. 1650 and 1696 in
24 particular.

25 So, Intro. 1650 as you know, would entitle New
Yorkers aged 60 plus to full legal representation in

3 housing court, expand rental arrears assistance,
4 establish a housing support program. So, the need
5 for these services are pretty clear for many of the
6 reasons that have already been mentioned and I'd like
7 to add one more. And that is that almost half of New
8 Yorkers aged 60 plus have been living in their homes
9 for over a decade.

10 So, that's far beyond people who are younger.
11 So, it's been mentioned many times that of course, I
12 mean a housing crisis effects all of us as New
13 Yorkers but older adults in particular, have been
14 embedded in their communities for a long time and
15 depend on those social supports. So, anyway that's
16 just one more reason why this is critical, so thank
17 you for introducing that bill.

18 1696 would require older adult centers to expand
19 their culture linguistic programs. So, while we
20 support the spirit of the bill again, I mean, we have
21 some concerns about the process outlined about how to
22 get the information to support this. Having each
23 older adult centers administer a survey would be
24 pretty burdensome. A pretty burdensome way to get
25 that service information. I mean, creating and
disseminating a survey and compiling the results is a

3 great time-consuming process. And it's also largely
4 unnecessary because a census can give you all the
5 information that you need in order to make these
6 service determinations.

7 And moreover, you know older adult center
8 catchment areas really vary in size significantly, so
9 a one-mile radius won't catch everybody. So, there
10 are ways to do this. So, really the better way to be
11 able to get the information you need is actually use
12 DFTA's very capable research department, which has
13 this information or has access to all this
14 information.

15 They know the catchment areas. They know how to
16 run the numbers in all those catchment areas and that
17 would just be the easiest way to do it. So,
18 basically DFTA can focus on what they do best,
19 providing this planning information and the older
20 adults can focus on what they do best, which is
21 providing the services that are needed.

22 So, with DFTA support, older adult centers can
23 then make the necessary partnerships, and this is
24 really important. Can make the necessary
25 partnerships and the program adjustments that would

3 allow them to successfully reach these populations
4 and do outreach to these populations.

5 So, thank you Council Member Hudson for your
6 careful attention to these really important needs.
7 And we believe with the adjustments that we're
8 recommending that this legislation could really make
9 a positive difference. And thank you for the
10 opportunity to testify as well.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Dara.

12 DARA ADAMS: Thank you Chair Hudson and members
13 of the Committee for the opportunity to testify. My
14 name is Dara Adams, and I am the Director for
15 Strategic Policy Initiatives at Met Council. I'm
16 honored to be here today on behalf of my colleague
17 Susan Ritz, the Senior Director for Holocaust and
18 Geriatric Services at Met Council.

19 Met Council is America's largest Jewish nonprofit
20 organization dedicated to fighting poverty. We also
21 run the largest Kosher food distribution program in
22 the world. For 50 years, Met Council has provided
23 comprehensive social services to New Yorkers in need.
24 Last year, Met Council provided food and wrap around
25 services to more than 300,000 New Yorkers.

3 Met Council's Elder Abuse Prevention program
4 began in response to an increase in the number of
5 older adults requesting assistance after being
6 financially exploited. Models after Met Council
7 services to survivors of intimate partner violence,
8 we offer wrap around services that include education,
9 prevention screening, care planning, assistance in
10 order – in obtaining orders of protection, financial
11 assistance and supportive counseling. Working
12 closely with the family justice centers, DA's offices
13 and local law enforcement, our elder abuse prevention
14 works with survivors in all five boroughs in English,
15 Spanish, Russian, and Ukrainian.

16 Older adults are more vulnerable to exploitation
17 and abuse than the average adult. A trend that has
18 only worsened during the pandemic. In general, one
19 in ten older adults 60 plus experience abuse,
20 including financial exploitation every year.

21 Since the beginning of the COVID pandemic, the
22 prevalence of elder abuse has increased to at least
23 one in six, though exact numbers are difficult to
24 confirm because one in 24 cases of elder abuse are
25 not reported. A recent study found 83.6 percent

3 increase in one year abuse prevalence for adults aged
4 60 and older.

5 Given the rise in elder abuse, Met Council is
6 excited to see the New York City Council taking
7 significant steps to protect our seniors. Seniors
8 need to be empowered to make decisions and knowing
9 their rights is a meaningful first step towards that
10 goal. Many of our clients facing eviction will
11 greatly benefit from legal representation and
12 expanded rental arrears assistance for persons 60
13 years or older.

14 We're also extremely supportive of the
15 establishment of a housing support program for
16 persons 60 years of age or older who are at risk of
17 eviction or foreclosure. We believe this program
18 will help more seniors to be able to stay in their
19 homes. We would urge the Council to pass and fully
20 fund this legislation as it has the potential to be
21 life changing for a countless number of older adults.

22 We thank you for your commitment to addressing
23 elder abuse and look forward to partnering with you
24 to make the city safer for all seniors.

25 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Jack.

3 JACK KUPFERMAN: Thank you so much. Thank you so
4 much for the invitation to present the views of Gray
5 Panthers on the suite of bills under consideration.
6 I am Jack Kupferman, President of Gray Panthers NYC.

7 Since 1970, when Maggie Kuhn created the Gray
8 Panthers, the organization has stood firm to combat
9 ageism in the workplace and wherever it rears its
10 ugly head.

11 We are here today to continue in that tradition.
12 We believe that the expansion of access to legal
13 services for older persons 60 plus fills an important
14 gap in service for New Yorkers. It's no surprise
15 that the plague of COVID has resulted in a title wave
16 of death and destruction, as well as an avalanche of
17 rent arrears and potential evictions, acutely felt by
18 older New Yorkers.

19 Among the Intro.'s presented, the expansion of
20 the City's Right to Counsel program, as well as
21 expansion of a city funded one-shot deal peaks our
22 interest. It has the possibility of having the
23 greatest positive impact for older New Yorkers. Of
24 particular interest in this bill is the inclusion of
25 legal services or foreclosure issues, not only for
renters. This has always been a deficit in access to

3 justice for older New Yorkers of limited means. They
4 are unfamiliar with the intricacies of accessing
5 services. It's hard for anyone to deal with the
6 trauma of foreclosure let alone those who have never
7 had to navigate the intricacies of the legal and
8 mortgage systems. So often, foreclosure proceedings
9 begin when older home owners have inadvertently
10 failed to pay property taxes when missed mortgage
11 payments. This legislation gives an opportunity to
12 address the inequities of representation and access
13 to justice.

14 Mortgage companies have extensive legal services
15 struggling elder home owners do not. Legal services
16 for older New Yorkers have always been woefully
17 inadequate. It's about time that we seek to enhance
18 access to services and to better ensure that New
19 Yorkers can age in place. Equally important, is the
20 provision in the legislation is understanding that
21 case management is ignored yet essential service to
22 work towards resolving housing and other crisis.
23 Bravo for putting this important item into this
24 Intro. Let's refine this legislation to make it
25 fiscally sound and administratively doable.

3 We note that the key will be obtaining a secure
4 and long-term funding stream. We wanted to keep our
5 comments short. Again, thank you for inviting us to
6 speak regarding improving access to city services for
7 older New Yorkers. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Thank
9 you all. The next panel we'll call up is Tanya
10 Krupat and Diane Rose, and that's it. Tanya, you can
11 begin when you are ready.

12 TANYA KRUPAT: Thank you for the opportunity –

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: If you could just press.

14 TANYA KRUPAT: I'm sorry, I think I just turned
15 it off. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with
16 you today. My name is Tanya Krupat, I'm the Vice
17 President of Policy and Advocacy at the Osborne
18 Association. For decades, our organization has been
19 providing services to those in the criminal legal
20 system. My testimony focuses on older New Yorkers
21 returning from incarceration. Today, more than one
22 in five people in New York State prisons are over age
23 50. Hundreds of older people sit on Rikers right now
24 and due to the phenomenon of accelerated aging, 50 is
25 the age that we use to define someone incarcerated as
older.

3 The trauma that proceeded incarceration plus the
4 trauma of incarceration, including decades of
5 unhealthy food, lack of exercise, lack of age-
6 appropriate healthcare, disconnection from family and
7 perpetual stress and anxiety, age a person beyond
8 their years.

9 While the most important people for you to hear
10 from on this topic are older New Yorkers themselves,
11 my testimony includes in their input and guidance.
12 Since a major barriers faced a stigma, I also want to
13 start by sharing that the older New Yorkers I know
14 who collectively have served hundreds of years of
15 incarceration, are my mentors and inspiration. They
16 are wise, energetic, passionate advocates for justice
17 and equity. They care deeply about building
18 community, repairing harm and contributing towards a
19 world full of love, forgiveness, opportunity, family
20 and fairness.

21 Recognize the needs of older New Yorkers
22 returning from incarceration in 2017, the City
23 Council passed a resolution, creating the
24 compassionate assistance for returning Elders Care
25 Taskforce. Led by MOCJ and DFTA and including
service providers including Osborne, and formally

3 incarcerated leaders, the taskforce developed
4 recommendations, which focused on three main areas:
5 aging services, health and mental health and housing.

6 Within these important topics, within these
7 areas, topics such as isolation, technology, stigma
8 and discrimination and access to identification and
9 healthcare benefits were all addressed. And my
10 written testimony includes more information on all of
11 these.

12 One important recommendation that came directly
13 from a formally incarcerated elder was to have a one
14 stop reentry center, specifically for older people.

15 Specific to the critical issue of housing, models
16 exist that should be invested in and replicated.

17 Osborne recently opened the Marcus Garvey permanent
18 reentry housing in Brooklyn, the Fortune Society has
19 long had the castle and Osborne will soon open the
20 Fulton Community Reentry Center in the Bronx in the
21 coming months. Fulton will provide 135 transitional
22 housing beds for older adults, where they will
23 receive support in navigating their return and
24 transitioning to permanent housing.

25 We also support the Fortune Societies application
to develop a vacant building at Jacobi Hospital in

3 the Bronx, which will create 50 supportive housing
4 apartments for formally incarcerated older adults who
5 have serious medical needs.

6 I want to discuss today, we support your Intro.
7 1650 and also, the Fair Chance for Housing Bill,
8 sponsored by Council Member Powers.

9 For older New Yorkers to be able to access city
10 services, the age of eligibility should be
11 considered. Should consider accelerated aging. I'm
12 almost done. Since those who are returning from
13 incarceration, uhm, again the aging we really
14 consider to begin at 50 and we call on DFTA and the
15 City Council to considering lower the age.

16 Finally, we commend you, the Aging Chair for you
17 leadership and sponsoring the introduction of the
18 City Council Resolution calling on the State
19 Legislature to pass the elder parole and fair and
20 timely parole bills for there are many aging people
21 in prison who we need to come home right now.

22 Respectfully, we also ask this Committee to hold
23 a hearing focusing on older adult reentry, which
24 would include reinvigorating the Care Taskforce,
25 examining the recommendations and hearing from older

3 New Yorkers themselves. Thank you so much for your
4 leadership.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much for your
6 testimony. Diane.

7 DIANE ROSE: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: We're ready for you.

9 DIANE ROSE: Okay, uh, good afternoon and I'm
10 glad to be here as well. My name is Minister Dr.
11 Diane Rose and I represent the Center for Economic
12 and Enterprise Development, as an organization,
13 nonprofit organization servicing aging individuals
14 throughout the country, as well as a faith-based
15 organization entitled Anointed Faith Ministries.

16 Our program for aging populations include that of
17 grandparents and is entitled Aging Gracefully. So,
18 I'd like to start with having listened to the
19 wonderful testimony and thank you so much for your
20 great questions. Those were right on target with
21 what is the city's plan for aging gracefully in the
22 city. And we look at that as a wellness plan. We
23 look at that holistically. We look at it not cutting
24 people into pieces, focusing on areas of social
25 vulnerabilities etc.. We look at it as an

3 opportunity to create a thriving, robust, community,
4 beginning at the age of 55 plus.

5 So many of us are aging gracefully, are aging to
6 begin with and so our focus again, is to look at
7 individuals from that perspective. We are all aging
8 in community. Right now, the focus has been
9 primarily on older adults. Older adults supportive
10 services are robust and primarily focused on health
11 and providing healthcare. However, that only takes
12 up about 20 percent of the aging population. There
13 are more individuals who do not qualify for what we
14 call poverty programs and therefore, are left out of
15 an opportunity to support whether or not it's their
16 health, their housing, their social, as well as
17 economic needs.

18 So, I thought I would present my testimony. I
19 didn't know how long I had but three minutes is not
20 going to cut it. So, I'm gonna -

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You can also submit written
22 testimony.

23 DIANA ROSE: However, what I would like to add as
24 we think about programming and as I listen to the
25 testimony, is what is the strategic plan? What are
the goals? And how do we monitor those goals on a

3 regular basis? And hopefully that's what the Council
4 begins to look like hearing back from these
5 achievements in you know, what exactly are the
6 outcomes.

7 One thing I do know is, there is, and I would
8 like to finish this piece because it's important.
9 From an operational standpoint, there are just way
10 too many barriers. And time takes way too long for a
11 need to be met. And so, from that perspective as we
12 think about how services and programs are delivered,
13 then are we measuring what those deliverables are in
14 a way that shows an improvement in a persons life?
15 Otherwise, what we've experienced and what I've
16 experienced personally as an older adult.

17 So, I'd like to think of myself as an older New
18 Yorker, is the absence of all these wonderful things
19 you hear about in a seaming less, barrier free
20 process. So, operationally, it's just bad and so,
21 you have people that are waiting for years to access
22 for example what you describe for eviction
23 moratoriums even before an eviction proceeding
24 occurs. And so, I'm going to add the rest to my
25 testimony in writing but one thing I would say, is
that there is an urgency from an aging perspective to

3 reverse the trends that we are seeing that ten years
4 from now, not even ten anymore. It's eight years
5 from now.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Absolutely.

7 DIANE ROSE: Is only going to increase. And so,
8 I want to thank you again for leading such powerful
9 legislation. I reached out to your office and
10 thanked your office for at least hearing outside of
11 the community from an aging individual, which is also
12 important. And so, thanks for having me.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Thank you so
14 much. Thank you both for your testimony.

15 Before we move on to Zoom panelists, is there
16 anyone in this room who would like to testify but has
17 not done so? No, okay. So, we'll move onto Zoom
18 panelists. We have Shehila Stephens, MJ Okma, Lisha
19 Luo Cai and Nicole Brown in the first panel.

20 As a reminder, everyone has three minutes and
21 Shehila, you can begin.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

23 SHEHILA STEPHENS: Hello, can you all hear me?

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yes, we can.

25 SHEHILA STEPHENS: Hi, thank you all for having
me. Good afternoon Council Members. My name is

3 Shehila Stephens, and I am the Senior Director of
4 Programs at Encore Community Services. A nonprofit
5 serving older adults on Manhattan's west side with a
6 wide range of services. We appreciate the
7 opportunity today to discuss improving older New
8 Yorkers access to city services.

9 Our team faces challenges every day trying to
10 provide access to the resources older New Yorkers
11 need. The top two service requests that our case
12 managers experience are financial support around
13 entitlement benefits and housing security. The two
14 case managers based out of our flagship older adult
15 center near Time Square, which serves over 1,000
16 seniors per year are consistently booking
17 appointments for seniors two months out. This
18 doesn't include our walk-in crisis intervention with
19 around roughly 10-15 seniors a day.

20 This means significant delays in getting seniors
21 the support they deserve, especially as it relates to
22 eviction prevention services. Often times seniors
23 have to be actively in the eviction process to
24 receive support, which is counter intuitive to make
25 seniors be near rock bottom before they can receive
assistance.

3 Recognizing the need for additional services
4 amongst our community, last year we hired a financial
5 navigator to join our team thanks to private funding.
6 We saw an instant demand for services in this area
7 and he quickly was overwhelmed with needs of our
8 older adults. Again, forcing him to schedule new
9 intakes about two months out. For years, we have
10 needed more resources dedicated to case management,
11 as well as more resources broadly to provide wrap
12 around services at older adult centers.

13 Efforts by the city expanding offerings have been
14 hampered by a lack of funding uhm, to actually carry
15 out the goals. Our team at Encore Community Services
16 also regularly runs into extraordinary difficult
17 situations when trying to secure appropriate housing
18 for community-based seniors in need due to the lack
19 of available units specifically designated for older
20 adults in affordable housing and permanent supportive
21 housing developments.

22 The lack of available units leave excessively
23 long wait lists. For example, our wait list at our
24 affordable housing building Encore West, is over five
25 years. We have experienced a significant increase in
seniors who need assistance navigating housing issues

3 such as housing security, pest infestation and
4 overall unsafe living environments. Our case
5 managers have received multiple referrals from
6 Councilwoman Richardson Jordan, Councilman Bottcher's
7 Office and Councilwoman Brewer.

8 They attempted to navigate the city's 311 system
9 to file complaints in support of the seniors and case
10 managers have also had to navigate landlord tenant
11 issues outside of their skill set, as many housing
12 support organizations are overwhelmed and cannot
13 respond in a timely manner to assist the seniors who
14 are facing eviction. Case managers have also come
15 across seniors who are no longer capable of caring
16 for themselves in a safe manner, resulting in
17 referrals to adult protective services. In Encore's
18 case, none of our referrals have been addressed to
19 our knowledge. A particularly critically concern we
20 have about access to services is related to the
21 current limitations in supportive housing settings.

22 At our supportive housing development -

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

24 SHEHILA STEPHENS: I'm sorry.

25 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That's okay. Time is up but
you can submit the rest of your written testimony.

3 SHEHILA STEPHENS: Absolutely, will do, thank
4 you.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. MJ.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

7 MJ OKMA: Yeah, good afternoon. My name is MJ
8 Okma with Sage. The countries first and largest
9 organization dedicated to improving the lives of
10 LGBTQ plus and HIV effected older people.

11 In addition to our network of older adult centers
12 across New York City, Sage is the onsite service
13 provider at New York's first home to LGBTQ plus
14 welcoming affordable housing development located in
15 Brooklyn and the Bronx. There are over 250,000 LGBTQ
16 plus elders in New York State and 60 percent of New
17 Yorkers living with HIV are over the age of 50.
18 These populations are both growing rapidly as more
19 LGBTQ plus and HIV positive adults continue to age.

20 Due to history, the trauma and systemic
21 discrimination, LGBTQ plus older people and those
22 living with HIV face pronounced rates of isolation,
23 poverty, and lack of access to culturally competent
24 services and support compared to their straight
25 gender and HIV negative counterparts.

3 These challenges only compound for transgender
4 elders and LGBTQ plus elders of color. Due to the
5 growth of these populations, higher rates of health
6 disparities and the disproportionate impact COVID-19
7 has had on LGBTQ plus elders, there is a growing need
8 for LGBTQ plus and HIV competent aging services, that
9 must be met with both funding and policy to ensure
10 that all elders have equitable access to the supports
11 they need to age in place.

12 Because LGBTQ plus elders are less likely to rely
13 on biological family or children or informal
14 caregiving support, they often need to rely more
15 heavily on community service providers for care as
16 they age. Yet they're often distressful providers
17 based on past and current experience of
18 discrimination.

19 In addition, many LGBTQ plus elders of color and
20 immigrants often find themselves in environments that
21 offer few supports in their native languages and lack
22 knowledge and respect for their culture and customs.
23 It is incredibly important that LGBTQ plus and HIV
24 aging services are available in a culturally and
25 linguistically competent manner.

3 Access to affordable housing is also a major
4 concern for LGBTQ plus elders who are more likely to
5 face discrimination in elder living communities and
6 often have history of housing insecurity and
7 homelessness. 34 percent of LGBTQ plus older people
8 in 54 preventive transgender and gender nonconforming
9 older people fear having to retalk themselves when
10 seeking elder housing or to avoid discrimination.

11 This further stresses the importance of support
12 and legal resources to ensure LGBTQ plus elders can
13 age in their communities and have access to LGBTQ
14 plus welcoming affordable housing development. While
15 LGBTQ plus people and long-term survivors with HIV
16 are resilient, they had unique challenges as they age
17 and have severe negative health economic and social
18 implications.

19 We look forward to working with Chair Hudson and
20 the City Council on the preconsidered bill on the
21 agenda today and future bills to ensure that LGBTQ
22 plus elders and older New Yorkers living with HIV
23 have the support they need to age in place with
24 dignity and respect. Thank you so much for holding
25 this important hearing and providing me this
opportunity to testify.

3 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Lisha.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

5 LISHA LUO CAI: Thank you Chair Hudson and
6 members of the Aging Committee or holding this
7 hearing and giving us an opportunity to testify. I'm
8 Lisha Luo Cai, Advocacy Coordinator at the Asian
9 American Federation.

10 We're here today to discuss a legislation that
11 centers the needs of our seniors and the critical
12 work of our service providers. Members of our
13 seniors working group, the first Asian senior service
14 focus coalition in New York State led by AAF are the
15 experts on the ground and understand the needs of our
16 most vulnerable.

17 Language accessibility and cultural competency is
18 what drives their fight, and we're glad these issues
19 are top of mind today. Our 12 Asian led, Asian
20 senior serving member organizations comprising the
21 seniors working group serve nearly 250,000 aging
22 seniors in 2021. 87,000 of whom are low income.
23 Aging seniors comprise 13.9 percent of the city's
24 senior population and the number of aging seniors in
25 poverty increased by 63.4 percent between 2010 and

1
2 2019. The largest percent increase of any major
3 racial group.

4 Of our seniors in poverty, 29 percent live alone
5 and 80 percent have limited English proficiency. The
6 seniors working group serving over 150 Asian senior
7 clients about their greatest challenges in the fall
8 of 2021. With the data of this survey, we focus on
9 these categories. Safety from anti-Asian violence,
10 access to direct services at senior centers, access
11 to food programs, and combating mental health and
12 social isolation.

13 Our CBO's stated that in order to meet the needs
14 of our seniors, there must be systemic change for
15 culturally competent effective services. This means
16 the city should support, reinforce and build capacity
17 for programming, by and for marginalized communities
18 by prioritizing cultural competence and language
19 access throughout the policy making process.

20 In many cases, culturally competency programming
21 comes directly from older adult centers, a place
22 where many seniors call a second home and in many
23 instances, these older adult centers are providing
24 services to underserved communities and are receiving
25

3 clients from across the city, not just your local
4 neighborhoods.

5 These centers are where our aging New Yorkers eat
6 their meals, see their friends and spend many of
7 their waking hours because our CBO's provide
8 linguistically, culturally and financially accessible
9 resources. The aging seniors can actually take
10 advantage of the way they need them, especially in a
11 community as diverse as our PAN Asian community, many
12 smaller ethnic communities or more widely disbursed
13 ethnic communities, circle to find services that fit
14 their needs. And when they do find what they need,
15 they stay, and they build relationships and roots.

16 We have a few recommendations. Provide a
17 community-led older adult center running
18 organizations in policy making, especially those
19 serving underserved and isolated, ethnic and
20 linguistic communities. Many of these communities
21 require specific service approaches and are often
22 disbursed throughout the city. Similarly, some
23 organizations and older adult centers are uniquely
24 equipped to serve and focus on their needs.

25 To increase funding for Asian led, Asian serving
older adult service provider and expand this funding

2 to include time and expense spent on case management
3 and digital literacy devices and training. Funding
4 has historically prioritized mainstream
5 organizations; our marginalized older adults have
6 always come first to our CBO's.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time is expired.

8 LISHA LUO CAI: To access services they actually
9 take advantage of. On behalf of the Asian American
10 Federation, thank you for raising up the work that
11 needs to be done and for prioritizing the voices and
12 needs of our seniors.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Nicole.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

15 NICOLE BROWN: Thank you. Good afternoon. My
16 name is Nicole Brown, and I am the Director of one of
17 Greenwich houses five older adult centers. Thank you
18 Chair Hudson and members of the New York City Council
19 Committee on Aging for this opportunity to testify.

20 Since Greenwich House was found in 1902, we have
21 been committed to addressing the needs of children,
22 family, individuals and old adults working to
23 overcome our challenges through arts and education
24 programs, help services and older adult services.

3 Greenwich House is proud to operate a network of
4 five old adult centers in Manhattan, offering 100
5 vital social, educational, physical and cultural
6 resources. We applaud this Committee to speak an
7 opportunity to approve older New Yorkers access to
8 city services.

9 Investment in old adults in the Fiscal Year '23
10 Adopted Budget were a great place to start as in the
11 legislative package being introduced today, which
12 promotes health and stability, knowledge of flight
13 and culturally relevant services to older New
14 Yorkers. But as the aging population continues to be
15 the fastest growing demographic, with one in five New
16 Yorkers expected to be 60 and older by 2040, the city
17 must go further to ensure all older New Yorkers have
18 access to equitable aging services.

19 And provided with older adult services, Greenwich
20 House sees several opportunities to improve older New
21 Yorkers access to city services. Among the top
22 additional and critical needs that we see every day,
23 funding, better transportation services, such as
24 created on demand, flexible and wheelchair accessible
25 transportation service linking a network of old adult

2 centers which gives them more opportunity to partake
3 in the services, classes or what they need to thrive.

4 Healthy makes New Yorkers more fine and connect
5 to the service they need is important, just as we are
6 all making increased collective investments in these
7 supports. Invest in and upgrade in repairs, beyond
8 just emergency fixes, to the building and spaces that
9 house old adult services would dramatically help all
10 the people we serve and the organizations providing
11 those services.

12 Additional investment and workforce training,
13 services and support geared towards old adults is
14 also a tremendous and area of opportunity. For our
15 clients, we at Greenwich House and with funding with
16 support from DFTA, are set to launch an
17 intergenerational workforce program this fall, that
18 is particularly sensitive to the needs of New Yorkers
19 over the age of 60. We think seniors across the city
20 could benefit from such programming. We also
21 continue to explore creative funding solutions for
22 programs for repairs and upgrades—

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time is expired.

24 NICOLE BROWN: Transportation options for our
25 members and finding new and creative ways to reach

3 old adults who might benefit from these services and
4 support. But in the working system, these are
5 elements that government funding partner, legislative
6 and executive would recognize in advance.

7 Greenwich House applauds the New York City
8 Council and the Committee on Aging for seeking ways
9 to improve access to city -

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time is expired.

11 NICOLE BROWN: By older community members. I'm
12 almost done. And I thank the Committee for your
13 advocacy for older New Yorkers and for the
14 opportunity to testify today.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. The next
16 panel will be Jose Vega, Vik Bensen and Kimberly
17 George.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

19 JOSE VEGA: Hello? Hello, good afternoon and
20 thank you for allowing my presence to testify today.
21 My name is Jose Vega, I am disabled, and wheelchair
22 bound, Level T-3 paraplegic, paralyzed from my chest
23 down. I also have asthma, sleep apnea, seizures and
24 various other medical issues.

25 As an older adult, and resident of New York City,
changes need to be made, to improve the living

3 conditions for the older adults of New York City.

4 For example, the New York City shelter system is not
5 equipped to house the older adult, especially ones
6 who also have disabilities with medical issues. They
7 are not A.D.A., Accessible to meet one's disability
8 and medical needs. They are constantly being abused
9 physically, threatened and their personal items are
10 being taken from them.

11 Many of the New York City Housing Development
12 that house the older adults, the housing conditions
13 that one is being provided with are inhumane,
14 inappropriate and not safe to house the older adults,
15 especially those with disabilities and medical
16 issues. The elevators are constantly breaking down
17 for months at a time, forcing one to stay home,
18 because they can't use the stairways. The sinks,
19 toilets and household equipment is also breaking down
20 and not repaired in a timely fashion.

21 Also, during the winter months, they are not
22 being provided with sufficient heat for the
23 household. As an older adult coming home from
24 prison, as myself and being disabled, I was not
25 provided with housing, medical, clothing or
assistance. Better accommodations and assistance

3 need to be provided for the older adult coming home
4 from prison.

5 Many of the New York City Supermarkets, stores
6 and entities built after 1990, do not meet the
7 requirements of the A.D.A. of 1990, to meet the older
8 adults of New York City, especially ones with
9 disability needs. Changes need to be made,
10 especially the store aisles, ramps entering the
11 stores, many of them, one can't even enter, because
12 they don't have ramps, or the widths of the doors are
13 not wide enough for the older adults who depend on
14 their wheelchairs or walkers.

15 The Osborne Association recently provided 52
16 adults coming home from prison with affordable
17 housing at Marcus Garvey Housing Development, located
18 at 461 Chester Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11212, that
19 meets the conditions of one's needs. I finally was
20 provided with appropriate housing that meet my
21 disability needs and is in compliance with the A.D.A.
22 of 1990 after living with my parents for more than
23 four years in an apartment that was not A.D.A.
24 accessible, thanks to the Osborne Association and
25 Director Ms. Christina Green.

3 These are a few of many changes that need to be
4 made for the Older Adult of New York City. Thank You
5 Very Much and change is possible. Appreciate it,
6 everyone have a blessed day.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Vik.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

9 VIK BENSEN: Good afternoon and thank you for the
10 opportunity to testify. My name is Vik Bensen and
11 I'm the Policy Analyst at Citymeals on Wheels.

12 Citymeals works in partnership with the city and
13 the network of home-delivered meal providers to fill
14 the gap on the 115 days the city does not provide for
15 by funding the delivery of meals on weekends,
16 holidays, and emergencies to homebound older adults
17 alongside additional supplemental feeding and
18 connective service programs. We currently serve over
19 20,000 homebound older adults, a 25 percent increase
20 in distribution since the pandemic began. We know
21 that our recipients and thousands of older adults
22 live precariously and are often cut off from a myriad
23 of services that are available but do not reach them
24 because of requirements that necessitate showing up
25 in person or accessing them online and due to
mobility or cognitive issues and a lack of

1
2 technology, these points of access are particularly
3 difficult for the homebound elderly to meet.

4 Many of the aid services that the homebound are
5 connected to struggle to serve them adequately. Only
6 around half of eligible older adults are signed up
7 for SCRIE, and while 30 percent of HDM recipients are
8 signed up for SNAP, with 90 percent of our recipients
9 relying on mobility devices and 40 percent unable to
10 leave their homes without assistance, they struggle
11 to get to the store to spend their SNAP dollars and
12 have difficulty using online ordering.

13 And for our older immigrant population, the foods
14 available through feeding programs are often not
15 culturally competent. Older adults are the fastest
16 growing demographic and one in seven older New
17 Yorkers lives in poverty. The estimated cost of
18 providing Citymeal Services is \$1.1 million for every
19 1,000 older adults we serve. And Citymeals has
20 increased its funding to keep up with the number of
21 older adults requiring a home-delivered meal, but a
22 possible influx of 3,000 new clients in FY23 due to
23 the end of the GetFood feeding program, could create
24 an insurmountable challenge to this model of service
25 access.

3 With older adults living longer and on fixed
4 incomes, services for older adults to receive
5 nutritious food is integral to their survival and
6 should be a greater part of the food safety net. As
7 programs serving homebound older adults have been
8 consistently underfunded and under invested in
9 throughout the years. We support Chair Hudson's
10 legislative package and in all eight programs, we
11 hope to see explicit provisions for ensuring
12 homebound access to supportive services.

13 We urge the Council to adequately fund the
14 existing home delivered meal, case management and
15 older adult nutrition network excuse me, including a
16 \$3.3 million infusion for weekend and emergency
17 meals. We also urge the expansion of technology,
18 education and access programs for homebound older
19 adults to improve their ability to access services
20 and access programming and we support calls for an
21 outreach campaign complete with registration
22 assistance to raise awareness and increase engagement
23 for the benefits programs older adults are eligible
24 for. This work is even more crucial in times of
25 uncertainty and one facing crisis, like the COVID-19

2 pandemic. Or inevitable, worsening climate related
3 crisis.

4 Together, we work to ensure that no older adult
5 goes without food for a day in our city and we hope
6 that you are partners in city government, will
7 continue to help us advocate on behalf of those who
8 are hidden behind closed doors.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

10 VIK BENSON: To support better funding and access
11 the basic service like food, internet, and technology
12 necessary for reaching additional services and
13 emergency meals. We'll be submitting a longer
14 written testimony. Thank you for the time.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.
16 Kimberly.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

18 KIMBERLY GEORGE: Good afternoon. Thank you,
19 Chair Hudson, and Committee Members, for allowing me
20 the opportunity to present testimony today. My name
21 is Kimberly George, I am the President and CEO of
22 Project Guardianship. We are a non-profit agency
23 providing comprehensive, court-appointed guardianship
24 services to limited capacity New Yorkers citywide.

3 We serve our clients regardless of their ability
4 to pay for service and provide services for some of
5 the most compelling and complex cases in the city.
6 Our clients include older New Yorkers living with
7 disabilities, mental health disorders, dementia,
8 substance use disorders, traumatic brain injury, and
9 other conditions that negatively impact their ability
10 to make decisions.

11 We also work to improve the guardianship system
12 and advocate for more equitable services for people
13 in need of protective arrangements. For older New
14 Yorkers with limited capacity, the Mental Hygiene Law
15 provides for the appointment of a guardian to help
16 them manage their personal and/or property needs.
17 Guardianship is a critical link between city services
18 for older adults and those New Yorkers whose
19 functional limitations have prevented them from
20 accessing and benefiting from those programs.

21 Nonprofit agencies like ours work to secure the
22 public benefits, housing, healthcare, mental health
23 care, and other services that this population needs
24 to remain safe and stable and to allow them to age in
25 place. However, there are almost no services to help
loved ones assess the need for guardianship or

3 provide support in the petitioning process. And
4 there are obstacles to obtaining needed guardians
5 when necessary to connect this population to vital
6 programs and supports. We must therefore improve
7 supports for friends and family members who step up
8 to serve as guardian. It can be very challenging for
9 a guardian, particularly one who is unfamiliar with
10 the various systems that they must navigate to
11 successfully fulfill their responsibilities.

12 New York City should invest in training and
13 support for nonprofessional guardians in identifying,
14 obtaining and maintaining, the full scope of services
15 available to the people under their care. When there
16 is no family member or friend willing or able to
17 serve as guardian, the courts rely on a patchwork of
18 professional guardians, nonprofit organizations and
19 even the local Department of Social Services in
20 certain jurisdictions.

21 New York City should lead and create a dedicated
22 funding stream to support nonprofit guardianship
23 services, will thus enable older New Yorkers to
24 access the benefits and services to which they are
25 entitled. We are working to create a city where
everyone who enters the guardianship system, does so

1 truly as a last resort, where guardians have the
2 resources and support to provide person centered
3 services and where these expectations are met
4 regardless of zip code, or whether the person has
5 significant savings or as an SSI recipient.
6

7 This is only possible if we invest in
8 guardianship as a social service and provide support
9 to those with functional limitations and to their
10 guardians.

11 With your continued support, we will be able to
12 make New York City the equitable –

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time is expired.

14 KIMBERLY GEORGE: Aging place of an age friendly
15 place it strives to be where everyone can access and
16 benefit from the city's services regardless of their
17 limitations or other challenges. Thank you very
18 much.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Just a
20 reminder that folks can submit written testimony
21 within the next 72-hours to
22 testimony@council.nyc.gov. I'd now like to invite
23 Ravi Reddi to testify. Ravi, are you logged in?
24 Okay, at this time, this concludes our public
25 testimony. If you are on Zoom and your name has not

3 been called and you still wish to testify, please
4 raise your hand using the Zoom raise hand function.

5 Okay, seeing none, we have concluded public
6 testimony for this hearing. I'd like to thank
7 everyone who has submitted testimony. We take all of
8 the suggestions and recommendations to make our
9 legislation seriously and look forward to working
10 with all of the advocates who shared such suggestions
11 and recommendations in order to make this legislation
12 and the package of these bills the best possible.

13 And thank you everyone again who also showed up to
14 our rally this morning in advance of today's hearing.

15 This concludes the hearing for today. Thank you so
16 much. [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 September 19, 2022