

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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Thursday, March 20, 2025

Start: 10:07 a.m.

Recess: 5:31 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Hon. Althea Stevens, Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Rita C. Joseph

Linda Lee

Julie Menin

Chi A. Ossé

Nantasha M. Williams

Other Council Members Attending: Avilés, Brewer
and Restler

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

A P P E A R A N C E S

Keith Howard,
Commissioner at New York City Department of
Youth and Community Development

Alan Cheng,
First Deputy Commissioner at New York City
Department of Youth and Community Development
(DYCD)

Nevita Bailey,
Chief Financial Officer at New York City
Department of Youth and Community Development
(DYCD)

Angelina Martinez-Rubio,
Special Counsel at New York City Department of
Youth and Community Development (DYCD)

Darryl Rattray,
Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Partnerships at
NEW YORK CITY Department of Youth and Community
Development (DYCD)

Susan Haskell,
Deputy Commissioner for Youth Services at New
York City Department of Youth and Community
Development (DYCD)

Valerie Mulligan,
Deputy Commissioner for Workforce Connect at the
New York City Department of Youth and Community
Development (DYCD)

Mike Bobbitt,
Deputy Commissioner Community Development at the
New York City Department of Youth and Community
Development (DYCD)

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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

Jeremy Halbridge,
Deputy Commissioner Office of Administration at
the New York City Department of Youth and
Community Development (DYCD)

Denise Ramirez,
Associate Commissioner and Chief Diversity,
Equity and Inclusion Officer at the New York City
Department of Youth and Community Development
(DYCD)

Erica Caraway,
Deputy Commissioner Human Capital at the New York
City Department of Youth and Community
Development (DYCD)

Felicia Thornton,
EEO Officer at the New York City Department of
Youth and Community Development (DYCD)

Daniel Guillen,
Assistant Commissioner Youth Services Operations
at the New York City Department of Youth and
Community Development (DYCD)

Jess Dannhauser,
Commissioner of the New York City Administration
for Children's Services (ACS)

Winette Saunders,
First Deputy Commissioner of New York City
Administration for Children's Services (ACS)

Margaret Pletnikoff,
Deputy Commissioner Financial Services of the New
York City Administration for Children's Services
(ACS)

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Caitlyn Passaretti,
Senior Policy and Advocacy Associate at
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

Ira Yankwitt,
Executive Director, Literacy Assistance Center;
Member of the New York City Coalition For Adult
Literacy

Sophie Charles, Ph.D,
Associate Executive Director, Downstate; Council
of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA)

Kate Connolly,
Senior Policy Analyst at United Neighborhood
Houses (UNH)

Michelle Avila,
Director of Public Policy at Children's Aid

Dr. Shakeema North-Albert,
Chief Executive Officer at Covenant House New
York (CHNY)

Kha'ja Mendheim,
Member of Youth Advocacy Board at Ali Forney
Center

Galloway,
Advocacy Manager at Ali Forney Center

Paula Magnus,
Deputy Director of Northside Center for Child
Development

Tricia Mullen,
Director of Lehman College Adult Learning Center

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Nate Duvall,
Artist with the Groundswell Community Mural
Project

Rebekah Kwong,
Lower East Side Girls Club

Joneé Billy,
PowerPlay

Mia Lema Lindao,
Sadie Nash Leadership Project

Isabella Perez,
Armory College Preparatory

Alyssa Hernandez,
New York Edge

Cheikhou Diouf,
New York Edge

Neomi Neptune,
New York Edge

Isabella Navarro,
New York Edge

Danny Lam,
New York Edge

Jazmine Reed,
Development and Communications Manager at Figure
Skating in Harlem

Anthony Rowe,
Project Director for Neighbors in Action at
Center for Justice Innovation

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Illiana Santiago,
Staff Attorney for the Community Justice Unit at
The Legal Aid Society

Rachel Walman,
Director of Education at The Green-Wood Cemetery

Sebastien Vante,
Associate-Vice President of Streetwork Project at
Safe Horizons

Jane DaCosta,
Executive Director and Founder of Metropolitan
Equestrian

Robin Veenstra-VanderWeele,
Associate Executive Director of Youth Services
for Queens Community House

Joan Kanarkiewicz,
Adult Education and Administration Coordinator at
Make the Road New York

Silas Dupigny,
Senior at Sunset Park High School; Afterschool
Elementary School Assistant Group Leader for
Center for Family Life

Emily Versen,
Program Director at Center for Family Life in
Sunset Park

Moomina Rahman,
Groundswell Community Mural Project

Piyali Basak,
Managing Director at Harlem Neighborhood Defender
Service

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Ysmerlyn Murshed,
Director of Early Defense at the Center for
Family Representation

George Kottas,
Director of Early Defense of the Family Defense
Practice at the Bronx Defenders

Nila Natarajan,
Associate director of Policy and Family Defense
at Brooklyn Defender Services

Psyco Wilson,
Advocate from Youth Represent

Carlos Caiza,
Participant in the Arches Transformative
Mentoring Program (Arches) at Youth Justice
Network; Member of the Youth Committee at Youth
Represent

Grace Wang,
Youth Worker at Chinese American Planning Council
(CPC)

Joshell Lawrence,
Youth Assistant Coordinator of Project DOT
(Project Dream, Own, Tell) at the New York City
Alliance Against Sexual Assault (The Alliance)

Gregory Brender,
Chief Policy and Innovation Officer at the Day
Care Council of New York

Faith Behum,
Manager of Government and External Relations at
UJA-Federation of New York

Roberto Rodriguez,
Teen Center Program Director at Kingsbridge
Heights Community Center

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Constance Lesold,
Retired Social Worker; Advocate

Christopher Leon Johnson,
Member of the Public

Sharon Brown,
Member of the Public

Alejandra Ng,
Program Manager for Community Tennis Programs;
New York Junior Tennis & Learning/NYJTL

Daniele Gerard,
Senior Staff Attorney at Children's Rights

Allison Hollihan,
Director of the New York Initiative for Children
of Incarcerated Parents at Osborne Association

Liangliang Han,
Social Worker with the Center for Family Life;
Family Enrichment Center, FEC Project.

SERGEANT WONG: Sound check for the Committee on Children and Youth. Today's date March 20, 2025—being recorded by Danny Huang in the Council Chambers.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: WNYC, are we ready?

Good morning, and welcome to the New York City Council Preliminary Budget Hearing on Children and Youth. At this time, can everyone please silence your cell phones? If you wish to testify, please go to the back of the room to fill out a testimony slip. At this time, and going forward, no one is to approach the dais, I repeat, no one is to approach the dais.

Chair, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (GAVEL SOUND) (GAVELING IN)

Good morning, and welcome to the Committee on Children and Youth. I'm Council Member Althea Stevens, Chair of Children Services, and today we'll begin our hearing with the Department of Youth and Community Development followed by the Administration for Children Services.

I would like to welcome DYCD here. This morning we will be discussing the Department's Preliminary Financial Plan, which includes a budget of \$1.2 billion for FY26. The plan includes an additional \$2.1 million in FY25 and \$5 million baselined

beginning in FY26 for an additional 1,508 slots for the Fatherhood Initiative Program and baselined funding for \$6 million beginning in FY26 to fund 100 beds for young adults ages 21 to 24 Runaway Homeless Youth Program Expansion.

I would like to thank the Administration for the increase in the number of beds. It is making sure that... it's a much needed investment. Thus, I won't be yelling about it today.

However, there are concerns that the increase in the number of beds is not accompanied by the increase in the current per bed rate of \$45 to 55,000, as the cost of runaways... to safely and effectively run a program. We need to right size the cost for the funding it is truly needed and necessary.

I'm happy to see that the plan included a restoration of \$19.6 million, a One Shot Funding for the Summer Rising Program. This funding will extend the program hours for middle school student programs all across the school's districts. Unfortunately, this restoration does not account for the fact that the original PEG was baselined. For programming to remain consistent, it's critical that we don't have to go through this process each year and this

restoration is made for all the years of the program's plan.

I want to take a moment to note that I have over... I now currently have oversight over ACS, and I have a clear view of how we are failing our middle school students, because, at this time, we are seeing a rise in youth offenders in the juvenile justice system. And we're not seeing the investments that the young people themselves are asking for. What they are asking for are things like internships and jobs.

We currently have a SYP program that has over... that has project-based learning, a \$700 stipend, and a Summer Rising Program that forces students to be in the classroom half of the day, which they have said, with their attendance, that they do not want.

I hope that we can take time to think about how we can reimagine workforce development and programming for what young people are asking for and not what we think they need.

DYCD is preparing a new procurement for COMPASS and SONYC Afterschool Programs in the next year. Providers have expressed much concern to me about the funding for the existing capacity of after school

programs, particularly related to the unequal base rates within COMPASS elementary and middle schools.

I hope during this hearing DYCD will be able to provide the Committee with details about the new procurement for COMPASS and SONYC Afterschool Programs we will all like to see. And we would hope that a new RFP will meet the needs of the CBOs to run an effective program.

Another area of particular concern for me this year is the status of the federal funding. The Preliminary Budget includes \$110.4 million for federal funding for DYCD in FY25. With all the Executive Orders being issued by the Trump White House, we can never be sure of what funding is in jeopardy. But it's likely that some proportion of this funding will be reduced or eliminated. If the City is unable to secure this federal funding, DYCD would have a shortfall that we need to resolve in the future financial plans.

We are also hearing that there have already been cuts from the federal government that will affect our RHY (Runaway and Homeless Youth) population, which will be stopping Section 8 and NYCHA access. I would like for us to work together to develop a plan for

those young people to ensure that they have stable homes.

The Council will continue to champion programs for youth as a funding priority. The City should prioritize investments in DYCD programs that provide leadership, social, and workforce development tools for young people.

The youth today are the leaders, entrepreneurs, and change makers of tomorrow. It's essential this budget that we adopt this year is transparent, accountable, reflective of the priorities and interests of the Council and the people we represent.

I look forward to an active engagement with Administration over the next few months to ensure that the FY26 Adopted Budget meets the goals that the Council has set forth.

I would like to acknowledge... All right, well, at this time, I would like to take the time to thank staff; I would like to thank the A-Team back in the district office; Sandra Gray, Financial Analyst to the Committee; Aliya Ali, Unit Head; Christina Yellamaty, Committee Counsel; and Elizabeth Arzt, Senior Legislative Policy Analyst.

At this time, I will turn it over to committee counsel to swear in the Administration, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hi, good morning, please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this committee, and to respond honestly to council member questions?

Keith Howard?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Susan Haskell?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Darryl Rattray?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Angelina Martinez-Rubio?

SPECIAL COUNSEL MARTINEZ-RUBIO: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mike Bobbitt?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Dana Cantelmi? Not here? Okay.

Valerie Mulligan?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: (INAUDIBLE)

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Alan Cheng?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Jeremy Halbridge?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: (INAUDIBLE)

1 COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH 15

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Felicia Thornton?

3 EEO THORNTON: (INAUDIBLE)

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Denise Ramirez?

5 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER RAMIREZ: Yes.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Erica Caraway?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARAWAY: Yes.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Is there anyone else that I

9 didn't call?

10 Okay, thank you, you may begin. Oh, what's your

11 name?

12 CFO BAILEY: Nevita Bailey, CFO.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sorry?

14 CFO BAILEY: Nevita Bailey, CFO.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Oh, Nevita Bailey, uhm?

16 CFO BAILEY: Yes.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, thank you. Can someone

18 fill out a slip for her, please?

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Did you guys have an extra

20 copy of the testimony for me or no? I didn't get it.

21 Oh, thank you.

22 UNKNOWN: (INAUDIBLE)

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, yeah, don't, they'll

24 tackle you.

25 (LAUGHTER)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Good morning, Chair Stevens and members of the Committee on Children and Youth.

I am DYCD Commissioner Keith Howard, and I'm joined today by First Deputy Commissioner, Alan Chang; Chief Financial Officer Nevita Bailey, and Special Counsel Angelina Martinez-Rubio. We are pleased to be here to discuss the Fiscal Year 2026 Preliminary Budget.

Last year, DYCD served an unprecedented 480,000 New Yorkers, up nearly by 100,000 or 26% since the beginning of the administration.

The year also saw another record number of jobs and some enrichment activities for young people, as well as targeted strategies to make the city safer and more affordable. This is largely due to the hard work of our dedicated nonprofit partners and our DYCD staff. Shoutout to our DYCD staff, especially the ones in the room here today.

In that regard, DYCD recognized challenges our partners face due to delayed payments. We are working diligently to review and approve financial transactions, provide training, well as revise and streamline our internal policies where needed to expedite processing.

Where possible, we have worked with our partners to determine the best approach to address their immediate cash flow needs. We know more work is needed. We will continue to work with our oversight agencies and our partners to ensure that this work happens as expeditiously as possible.

We also recognize that our partners and immigrant communities are fearful of federal law enforcement and protecting the privacy and safety of those we serve is at our top priority for DYCD.

In response, we've conducted a series of training for our nonprofit partners and DYCD staff on procedures developed in conjunction with our city partners for in person interaction with non local law enforcement. The trainings generated great interest with over 4,000 attending and participating in robust questions and answer, sessions and follow-up inquiries. Our nonprofit partners with questions may call our staff. Additionally, DYCD recently established a hotline for our partners to call after hours to speak with a DYCD attorney.

The Preliminary Budget builds on this progress by making investment in programs that help elevate the effects of poverty and provides opportunities for New

Yorkers and communities to flourish. We are carefully monitoring the developments and actions in Washington D.C., which can have a very serious impact.

The budget, as you mentioned, stands at \$1.2 billion. It is comprised of 90.07 in city tax levy funds, point 16% in intercity funds, 6.24% in federal funds, and 3.51% in state funding. Part of this funding goes to one of our most treasured and successful programs, our Summer Youth Employment program, SYEP. We are deep into our planning for the 2025 season, and I especially want to thank the Council for your strong support of this program.

Last summer, New York City again provided a 100,000 summer job opportunities for young people ages 14 through 24 at thousands of work sites across the city. We are also pleased that 30 city council members hosted a 24 SYP workers. And for this summer, we hope that all 51 will participate.

Shoutout to you, chair, for making that happen.

We released the 2025 SYEP application for participants and work sites on January 21st, the *earliest* application release ever. With a focus on program quality, we believe this early release would give participants more time to prepare for their

summer experience and give providers time to work with the NYC business and nonprofit community to develop additional work sites.

Today, we have 25 targeted recruitment events in priority police precincts with the highest incidents of gun violence. We work with the crisis management group, service groups, and partnered with NYCHA so that applicants can make use of their digital van.

The online application closed last Friday, and we are continuing targeting and recruitment to allow participants with barriers to employment the opportunity to apply.

This year, all SYEP participants will receive at least two hours of financial literacy education as required by Local Law 98.

DYCD also launched a financial empowerment peer mentoring pilot in which selected Work, Learn, and Grow participants will take CUNY courses on financial literacy and serve as peer mentors during SYEP.

Work Learn and Grow, a school year extension of SYEP, is now serving over 7,000 youth, its largest class to date with more than one-third of enrolled youth residing in or attending schools in the six

priority precincts identified in the Mayor's Blueprint for Community Safety.

Also, the first time, our CMS providers had the opportunity to participate in Work, Learn, and Grow with 19 CMS groups enrolling over 330 participants; 38 Work, Learn, and Grow participants are serving as youth ambassadors to students in temporary housing with a focus on migrant youth.

These workforce programs will soon be complemented with a new program the Mayor recently announced, the Community Resources for Employment and Development we call CRED.

Extending DYCD's portfolio of workforce programs up to age 40, it will provide tailored support services, occupational training, and paid work opportunity to 1,500 underserved New Yorkers by Fiscal Year 2027.

In addition to our SYEP planning, we are actively preparing for another summer of wide ranging enrichment programs for the City's Summer Rising Program in partnership with New York City Public Schools. Applications for this summer opened March 4th, and will close on March 28th, and we expect to again serve a 10,000 elementary and middle school

students and connect them with fun, hands on enrichment experience to strengthen skills, develop interests, and cultivate curiosity.

Some example of the programming that will be offered include drama, yoga, community service, visual arts, sports, cooperative games, and more, more, more field trips.

In 2023, we introduced Exploring Futures, a new feature of the program for middle school students to facilitate early career exploration aligned with their individual interests and passion. This program exposed students to a wide array of career paths, enabling them to navigate and explore fields that may have otherwise been unfamiliar to them. The program included visit to CUNY campuses, career connected field trips, and workplace tours. We look forward to another year of this exciting program.

The Office of Neighborhood Safety officially joined DYCD in Fiscal Year 2024. This office included... includes, I'm sorry, the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety, the Office to Prevent Gun Violence, and ATLAS. These programs are aligned with DYCD's mission and improves community police

relations and reduce crime, incarceration, and other contact with the criminal justice system.

As promised, when I last testified, DYCD has worked hard to build support around the ONS team and CMS providers, especially around quality and oversight. DYCD has developed, one, key metrics for systematic reporting on program activities and outcomes. Two, put in place a comprehensive monitoring system and regular provider network meeting for program oversight and coordination. Three, launched a structured implementation evaluation. And four, continuously analyzes real time data from the NYPD to inform operations on the ground.

Over the first year under DYCD, the Cure Violence providers conducted 15,000 de-escalations and mediations and supported an average caseload of about 1,600 participants at a time. Additionally, the transition to DYCD, ONS providers have access to the Agency's \$6 million of capacity building and professional development services for programmatic and organizational support.

One highlight of our commitment to the professional development of frontline staff was

through our Family Development Credential, our FDC program. During spring 2024, 15 credible messages from ONS programs participated in the program, and all 15 pilot participant earned their credentials and received college credits.

I am pleased that as part of the Mayor's efforts to address homelessness, the budget includes \$6 million to add 100 runaway and homeless youth beds to service homeless young adults, bringing the total number of beds to 913.

Chair Stevens, this is a big win for you, the Council, advocates, and all young people. We thank you for your tireless advocacy as always. We look forward to briefing the Council on how we are implementing and planning to roll out these new beds.

Finally, at the State of the City Address, the Mayor announced that the City will double the size of fatherhood... of the Fatherhood Initiative to reach 3,000 fathers in the coming year.

As you know, the program helps fathers reconnect and build strong relationships with their children through one, counseling, two, conflict resolution training, three, mediation and mentoring. And as a dad, this is both professionally and personally

meaningful and impactful. Shoutout to my kids, Maya and Tyler.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to discuss the Preliminary Budget. We are pleased to answer your questions. Let's do it.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You're trying to soften me, right, with the shoutout to the kids? All right, I see what you're trying to do.

(LAUGHTER)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Got it.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I knew it would work.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (LAUGHS) Everybody knows I'm a softie for the (INAUDIBLE)

(LAUGHTER)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well thank you guys for being here, and I'm really excited to dig in. I know you gave me a special shoutout, but let's give you, DYCD a shoutout, because I know you guys can't come in here and tell me what you want, but we all know that you guys are excited to get those 100 beds because you guys are the ones that we yell at. So thank you, to you guys, and we're really excited to hear about what those plans look like.

I said out there this morning, you know, if I'm gonna yell at people, I also gotta give them their flowers, too, so we are a team and this is a win for us. But y'all know I got bigger asks, too, so now that we got the beds, I got some new asks.

DYCD's \$1.2 billion Fiscal 2026 Budget in the Preliminary Plan is \$166.2 million or 12% less than the Fiscal 2025 Adopted Budget \$1.4 billion. The difference is mostly due to the \$146.4 million Council Discretionary Funding that was included at adoption.

What metrics, if any, are used to determine the funding levels of each of the DYCD programs?

UNKNOWN: (INAUDIBLE)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What metrics, if any, are used to determine the funding levels of each of the DYCD programs?

CFO BAILEY: Thank you, Chair Stevens.

DYCD values looking at the quality and impact of our programs, so we have different metrics whether it be attendance, enrollment, outcomes for our programs.

We are very invested ensuring that we make sure that funds are spread well.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

I forgot, I forgot to acknowledge my colleagues here. Sorry, guys, I jumped right into the questions.

We have Council Members Lee, Avilés, and Williams who are with us.

DYCD Preliminary Plan included funding for two new needs. Did DYCD submit any new needs that are not included in the Preliminary Plan? If so, what were those requests and how would that factor be included in the plan impacts in operations?

CFO BAILEY: Thank you, Chair Stevens.

So DYCD's has ongoing conversations with OMB, we're constantly assessing our programs, but at this time, there were no additional new needs.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: None? Oh well maybe after this year we'll have some new needs, right?

The Preliminary Plan included an additional \$325,973 for the Young Men's Initiative in FY26 for the Men's Program. Last year at this time, the Department reduced YMI by \$200,000 stating that this decrease would not have an impact on programs.

Why was the additional funding added to the preliminary plan? Did the reduction that was made last year impact programming? Are there any new shortfalls to the funding for this program?

Welcome.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Good morning, Chair Stevens.

So there are no shortfalls to our YMI portfolio. The additional funding is supporting some direction from YMI. Of course, as you know, YMI has a new Executive Director, James Stratford, who is from the Bronx.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Y'all really in here today working it, huh? Let me tell you, they were like, Althea's gonna be nice today.

(LAUGHTER)

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: And he's coming in with a really good vision of how we can evolve YMI programming to better connect to young people across the city. So everything from a college fair that had close to I wanna say 3,000 young people there about a week or two ago to some other initiatives that we're rolling out.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. I'm happy that we got some additional money for it this year.

The Preliminary Plan included the restoration of \$19.6 million in FY26, restoring the Summer Rising Program PEG in FY26 only. The original plan was a

baseline reduction, but this reduction is only for one year of funding.

Why is the restoration not baselined? Has there been any conversations with OMB on what baselined funding for this program will look like?

CFO BAILEY: So as you know the City is facing a number of different competing priorities. I think it's a testament to the Administration that they ensured that the restoration happened early in the year so that the agencies and providers can effectively plan for this upcoming summer.

But at this time the funding is not the baselined in our budget.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

CFO BAILEY: And we're continuing to work with them to ensure that we can— if funding is (INAUDIBLE) baseline, it can happen early enough so that we can effectively plan for upcoming summers.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know where we can get some money from, I mean, you were listening to the DOE hearing I had the other day, there's some money over there that we probably could use to run an effective program. But, you know, I think it's about \$80 million over there that we could use.

With the current change in the Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Plan, do you feel the DYCD has adequate resources to meet all the programmatic needs?

I know you're gonna say, yes, but go ahead.

CFO BAILEY: Hi Tristy.

(LAUGHTER)

CFO BAILEY: DYCD has the resources that it needs. I think that we're on... again, we're always in ongoing conversations with OMB. It is in the best interest of every entity of the city to ensure that agencies are appropriately staffed so we can deliver service. And so we continue to be in conversations with OMB.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. The Pulmonary Plan includes \$110.4 million for federal funding in DYCD in Fiscal 2025 and \$105 million for Fiscal Year 2026. What are DYCD's federal funding sources and what programs and services do they support?

CFO BAILEY: Our predominant federal funding source is WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) and we also receive CSPG which is (INAUDIBLE) through the state. WIOA funds our in school and out of school youth programming and CSPG funds a whole host of programs with the NDA, literacy, immigrant

services, and so they fund a number of services through our agency.

What I can also say is that we have not received any guidance from the federal government that there will be any impact to these services at this time, and so we are continuing as is.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: But how are you preparing for it if it does? Because we are in a place where we have to prepare for the worst.

CFO BAILEY: I understand that, but at the same time there's so many unknowns. So, at this time, we're just trying to figure out what we can do to reinforce our existing systems, make sure that staff are properly prepared, but at this time we really can't make that decision because if any cut happens it's a citywide decision, it wouldn't really be the DYCD. So we're doing all that we can internally to make sure that we are... our reinforcements and our foundation are strong so that we can effectively respond to whatever decision is made.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So even... and while we're talking about the federal government, know that I've been getting frantic calls and text messages around the Section 8 and NYCHA access being cut to RHY-

young people. So this is why... that is federal, and this is why we need to prepare.

So could we talk about how you're even preparing for that piece that is affecting DYCD participants? And this is gonna affect the program. And also how are you working with other agencies to ensure that young people can get access to things like CityFHEPS now that this is going to be a huge issue?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Well all of those conversations are happening with OMB, because one of the things that in conversations with OMB is to understand exactly what the impact was... would be, and understanding that we have to continue monitor and just really pay attention to what's happening up in Washington D.C.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know, but this is— according to the providers, that they had a call with DYCD, and they were told that this is happening. So how are we— because ,like, even saying we're in conversation with OMB, like how are we preparing for this? This is, in real time, going to be affecting our young people if they don't have access, because we already did not have adequate access to the CityFHEPS Vouchers— which if we would have

implemented the City Council's Bill, that wouldn't be the case.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And, again, if we're in conversations with OMB, and internally we are looking at the impact, and we do not want to minimize the conversation that is happening, especially on the ground with our partners in the nonprofit world. I have gotten calls as well. It's kind of hard to say, "This is going to happen...", when we haven't seen any evidence of it happening other than... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So you guys did have calls (INAUDIBLE) the providers... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: other... other than the confusion that happened a month or so ago when emails or whatever went out, but there has not been any impact to our knowledge of any of our programs as Navita Bailey stated.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, I'm confused, because that's not what hearing. Because I'm hearing that you, DYCD, had a call with providers that this was happening, that this was being cut and to say that it hasn't impacted them yet—okay, the call the call was—I believe it was relatively this week. So how are

we preparing for what we said is happening? Because this is going to affect them.

CFO BAILEY: So, Chair Stevens, I'm gonna defer to Deputy Commissioner Haskell who can expand more on what is happening underground for the archway providers.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: All right, thank you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Hi, Chair Stevens.

I mean, you raise a good point. I think what Commissioner and our CFO are saying is this is a developing situation with federal funding. It's not clear— Navita mentioned uncertainty— it's not clear exactly what the impact is going to be.

We are aware there could be impact to federal fundings like Section 8, Housing Choice Vouchers for NYCHA, and all the support housing opportunities that we seek out for young people in Runaway Homeless Services. We did flag for RHY providers this week that there could be challenges seeking support for housing assistance.

But at this time there's no impact to Runaway and Homeless Services specifically. And we will continue to seek out all stable housing opportunities for runaway and homeless who are in our programs.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, this is why I get frustrated. Because planning for something that you told providers and having... saying ,like, "Okay, we don't have the answers now, but let's move forward to think about a plan," that is all I'm asking. I'm not asking what's the impact? Obviously there's no impact because we said it happened this week. But there is going be an impact. So how are we planning for this cut? I mean it's going happen, so what does the plan look like? Or you can say, "We haven't started planning yet, but we are working on the plan." But I think to say like there's no impact and try to emphasize on that, to me it is going to be impacted. It happened this week. So we could acknowledge that there is going to be an impact.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Our communication with providers was flagging the potential for impact. We still... We don't really know what the impact is gonna be at this point. We know there's a potential impact to federal funding on vouchers, but we really don't have certainty on what that's gonna be. So we're flagging for them. I believe we can share that there'll be a pause right now on Housing Choice Vouchers, but that's not... there's no cut

necessarily that we're communicating. We are still figuring out the full impact of the federal funding situation.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So are you guys looking to work with OMB to talk about the CityFHEPS Voucher? Is that going to be an option?

I'm just actually really just trying to push for us to make sure that we are thinking about what options and plans we can put in place at our level, right?

We cannot control what we cannot control, but, for me, planning is the best solution for us to have moving forward, because we know that there will be an impact.

And when this administration was here last time, and I'm talking about the Trump administration because he was here before, RHY was hit the hardest. And so for me, I would like us to be over prepared, because clearly we have to make sure that these young people aren't vulnerable.

So ,you know, we know that this is a huge LGBTQ population. They're ,you know, they're being attacked regularly. We know that a lot of these folks are immigrants that are coming here from other countries.

So, for me, this is a place where we have to overly be prepared, and should be at the top of the bill, because they're the most vulnerable at this moment.

So that's why for me, I'm, like, what is the plan? And if we don't have a plan, then let's meet to make a plan. Because there's no way that this is not gonna be impacted. Because if you're flagging it, that means we know this is something that's coming down the pike.

So definitely let's make sure, after this, we set up some time to talk. Because I am very scared for our young people. And that was one of the things that I heard from the providers when this administration came back-- that RHY was hit so hard last time. I mean, Susan you've been here, you know this was hard for us this last... the last go around when this administration was here.

So I want us to be overly prepared and think about how the... we can't pick up everything but what we can I want us to make sure we do.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So just want to just say that we are in conversations with OMB. They are the lead agency. They are the ones that are guiding us if

there are impacts. But, currently, those conversations with providers are happening in real time, but they are happening across the city. They're happening across the city. I am not saying that this is not concerning to us. Of course this is concerning to us— on the highest level, but right now we can only have conversations about exactly how we maneuver, if we have to maneuver at all, because at this time we don't see an impact.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So OMB is not the lead agency. You are. DYCD is the expert in your development...(CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: (INAUDIBLE) funding.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Again, you are the expert. And we will not... I will not... Because that's a problem. You are the lead agency on youth. You are the ones who need to tell them the things that you need to do your job. So they're not the lead agency and that's that... And (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Chair, I said, on funding.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Not even on funding.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Okay? I... We are the expert on youth— youth development, community development. But on funding, it's OMB.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Again, you are the expert.

And they... You tell them what you need to do the effective programming. That's the problem with the system. They are not the expert. You need to tell them the money and they find the money. And that's the problem. We are always in this cycles, because you... this agency is the expert, and you know what the people need. So if we have people telling me, well, you don't need that for the kids, which is why we sit here and go back forth, you guys are the experts. You guys have been in this work. You know the work. You are the experts. And I don't know why you wanna argue with me about not being an expert...

(CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I'm not arguing with you...

(CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's weird...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I am just trying to clarify...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: to me, but...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I am trying to clarify. When we just...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: discussed over the... Over the... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Let's agree to disagree...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: (INAUDIBLE) the year. And (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: DYCD's the expert. And I want that on the record. Not OMB... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: In investment...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And I'll tell Josh myself. So let's move on.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: It's all good.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I don't know why you're arguing with me about that. Like, you go (INAUDIBLE) (LAUGHS)...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I am not arguing.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (LAUGHS) The Plan includes funding for 600... I'm talking about headcount for 634 full-time positions in FY26 for DYCD, an increase for 46 positions from FY25 Adopted Budget. The Department Fiscal 2025 January actual headcount is 588.

How many vacancies does the Agency currently have?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Sure, I will take that one. Currently we have 553 full-time staff on board, so roughly about 50-60 vacancies.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What are the specific titles for the additional 46 positions? What programs are those positions allocated to?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: So most of those are to continue supporting the ONS transition— those programs over to DYCD. And we also got some headcount in FY26 for the expansion in Fatherhood and the RHY— 100 beds.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does the Agency have adequate headcount to effectively run each of the programs and initiatives?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Yes, we believe we do.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What are those vacancy positions that DYCD feels are adequate to be filled? If so, what positions are included and how many positions?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: So roughly half of our vacancies, and those additional positions, are for admin support— so contracting, budgeting, you

know, legal, IT. And then the other half are direct program management.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What are some of the main challenges DYCD experiences in hiring new candidates?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: In some of those positions there is definitely a lack of qualified candidates, like in the IT area, even in finding lawyers. But, for the most part, we are able to fill ,like, our programmatic positions and some of the contacting positions.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What does the recruitment look like for some of those more challenging positions?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Sorry, can you repeat that question?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What does recruitment look like for some of those more challenging positions?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: So the more challenging positions, we are engaged with ,you know, there's... with the citywide hiring halls, we're also...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Have those been effective?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: We've gotten a few people from there. I don't have the exact number, but, yes.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And so what are some of the other places that you're looking? Especially, I think you said what? Lawyers and IT positions, those have been harder to fill.

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: We are also looking at working with CUNY and other local colleges to find ,you know, upcoming graduates or recent graduates.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Have you looked at ,like, especially with the IT, have we looked at some of the nonprofit agencies like Prescola (phonetic)? I know we do a lot of funding for them. Have you been working with them? Because I know that part of their program is also about hiring. Have we talked with them?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Not that I'm aware of, but we definitely will look into that.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I think especially a lot of the IT programs, I know that we fund on the Council side, part of it is job development. So we should definitely make sure that we're kind of

connecting those dots. So after, we can definitely try to connect you with those agencies...

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Sure...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Those providers...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Chair, one of our great successes is within our college aid program. How we bring in college students that transition into these professional jobs. Our IT department is one of the departments that hosts a significant amount of college aids. Then as they complete their education requirements, they transition into employment opportunities.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I think that those are the places we should be going and starting. I know specifically, and I even brought up the Prescola, because the Council funds for them to train NYCHA residents. So, I think that would just be a nice fit if they have young people that they... or not young people, but people in general, that they can recommend. And I know that they have a whole alumni base.

DYCD... so this is some contracting issue— DYCD recently sent letters to COMPASS and SONYC providers requesting that they sign another contract extension

based on contract rates that had not been updated since 2015. The use of the non-updated rates would continue to financially strain providers, as the rates do not account for increased costs and the need to provide continued services to afterschool programs.

Have those programs been... has there been any discussion with OMB to provide the release of a COMPASS concept paper and include a model budget that will increase the rates for providers with the RFP process?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We are in continuous conversation with OMB. We are in continuous conversations with our stakeholders. We are continuous conversations with our providers.

As you know, Chair, this the COMPASS program, afterschool program, it's been 10+ years since we've had a program model.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I think our concentration is listening to the providers and having focus groups. One of those focus groups, we want to make sure that we are bringing in young people to be able to guide us on exactly what a new program model looks like.

And then, of course, continuously hearing exactly what new services should be part of the afterschool programming model. So those conversations are ongoing as we are trying to really get it right.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I don't think it takes 10 years though.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Well, hey...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And this is before you, so...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: This is before me...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: But...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You told me, I believe at the last hearing, that y'all was gonna have it out by September.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well things happened.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (LAUGHS) I'm just saying.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And... And... And comments... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That was out of your mouth because you said you was gonna have a RFP to me...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I hear you, and what happened is, things happened, comments came back, program models changed and investment. I mean 10

years ago we weren't talking about mental health and trauma, uh, in program... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We were.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: In program models. In program models... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We... We were.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Consistently a uniform investment. And I'm not talking about referral services. I'm talking about having, you know, clinical clinicians on staff as part of the program model. So again those conversations are happening... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: But what's the delay? So ,like, really? I think, obviously, I know ,you know, folks are like. "Okay, at least we have an extension," but what's the delay? Because 10 years is a really long time for a program to continue without any additional financial support.

I mean it's bad enough they get paid late, so I didn't even get there yet, right?

And then we're giving them rates from 10 years ago. And I don't know if you know, eggs are ,like, what \$15 at this point?

So I don't know how much crayons are at this point. So how are we expecting providers to have a rate from 10 years ago to be able to provide quality programming?

So let's say we didn't say, alright, we didn't do the RFP, fine. But what are we doing about the rates? I think that's an even bigger issue. We want to get the program model right and all the things, so, great, fine. How do we then make sure that the providers have the actual things that they need to provide the services that we know that our young people deserve and need?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Very good question.

But we also need to shout out the \$741 million that went into investment on COLA across the nonprofit network to help with (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The COLA

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: rates...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, that's... well the COLA is to pay the staff because, they're...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: It's an investment. It's an investment in the system.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: All right, so what about the other investments that we need?

CFO BAILEY: Chair Stevens, we're working on it. And I won't say that the money is there, but I think the commissioner made good point, that we recognize that salaries have gone up, cost of living has gone up, things have gone up. As you referenced, eggs have gone up.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, no, y'all don't (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

CFO BAILEY: And, so...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: If y'all see the eye rolls that's behind y'all...

CFO BAILEY: It's okay.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (LAUGHS) So many eye rolls. Because ,like, I think that one, I think it's offensive to tell people that, "Oh, we gave you a cost of living adjustment." Because it's not a race. So that's kind of offensive, which is why I'm sure everyone was rolling their eyes ,like, please, right?

And that is something they should have gotten anyway that we had to fight for, right? So what happens is when we have to fight for basic things, other things fall off the table and understanding

So now we're talking about actual program and the lack of having, again, you want to extend the contract, we know that the cost for all of the services in the programs have gone up. So then how do we account for that? So do we chip away at the quality of program? Because that's what ends up happening.

Currently the City has a number of competing priorities. The last five years have been eventful. And so...

(LAUGHS)

CFO BAILEY: So I think that we've all had to adjust and adapt to the changing environment. So

funds have been a little bit more limited, but recognizing the work that the sector does, as the pandemic and the many things, show these are essential workers, are people who do great work in their community. So recognizing the competing priorities the City had, they thought at the bare minimum they would do what they can to at least provide additional wages to the staff, so they can get funded for it.

We will continue to do the work to provide additional funding, but our first step was trying to see what we can do for wages to address what's going on.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, remember, I want to also just shoutout the providers because, the City wouldn't have done that if we wouldn't have been out here with 3,000 people for two years saying we need the money. This wasn't like they did it because it was like, "You guys did a good job..." (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: It's a team... it's a teamwork... it's teamwork. It's with you advocating. It's with ,you know, Jacques and the Mayor, and everyone involved making sure that, you know, we're looking across... and we're taking in... those things

in consideration. But it starts with communication.

It starts with the exchange. We understand. Trust me,

I understand. I'm on meetings with our providers, you

know, just really going through their pain and

looking at the pain points that we need to land this

thing, you know, and I hear you. But those

conversations happen the same way that our

conversation with the 100 beds that we had at RHY.

It starts with a conversation with OMB.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I don't know if started with

a conversation. I think it's sort of me yelling and

being a crazy person. But, I guess if we're gonna

call that a conversation, we can, but... and ,you

know, and bringing my colleagues along to start the

fight with me, because they also jumped in last year.

And I so appreciate them as well.

But, again, we have to make sure— and listen, I

don't have a problem going to OMB and telling them

that this is unacceptable. But this is a real

problem, I think even going into this year and seeing

the inflation, and not being able to provide a

quality program. Because it does affect the program,

and we have to acknowledge that.

How many contracts does DYCD have for the COMPASS and SONYC programs?

CFO BAILEY: There are a total of over 300 contracts, approximately 400.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The other thing I want to note, and it's interesting because my colleague who here, Council Member, Dr. Williams, was texting me yesterday about expansion. And even with the way we have it, there are some programs who are struggling with attendance. There's other programs who have long wait lists. And even with the RFP, that would also address some of the issues to be able to right size some of the programs.

So, again, having these programs in places for 10 years, and not looking at the whole system of ,you know, some places got a lot of new schools, they need extensions or whatever. This is another issue because she was asking specifically around how we get an extension. Because one of her programs is busting at the seams.

So it has so many other challenges that ,like, we have to make sure we address. And get it, I know they go... y'all have to say what you have to say, but I have to say what I have to say around- we have

to push back, and if I gotta go yell about, I will, but it has to happen.

And I think first step, if we're gonna say we're gonna do this extension because I think it's since 2028, correct?

CFO BAILEY: It's a two-year extension (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, it's a two-year extension. So, at minimum, if we're going to say we're going to have a two-year extension, there is no way that we should not be talking about an increase. But we do need to talk about even rightsizing the program, because, again, I'm sure when she has questions, she's gonna ask y'all, how does she get this done? Because she has programs busting out the seam in Southeast Queens. And so it's even those things. So I'm preparing you guys, because I know it's gonna be her question, so get ready.

The current base rate for SONYC program is \$3,200. Providers are requesting a base increase to \$4,150 in Fiscal 2026. Will DYCD consider this rate? If not, why?

CFO BAILEY: Chair Stevens, DYCD does not have the funds in our the budget to do that at this time.

That's a conversation that would have to be with OMB.

At this time we cannot commit to that rate.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Don't worry, I'm gonna add this, I'm gonna go extra myself.

Okay, RHY contract issue— They have a similar issue too, same thing. New York City RHY program providers recently received a two-year proposed contract extension for FY26 and 2027, with indications that the bed rate will be unchanged, with rates ranging between \$45 and \$55 per bed and no change in cost of living adjustment.

Again, I'm confused about that. I don't know why, they said that they didn't get the COLA.

CFO BAILEY: So, Chair Stevens, my office sent an email out to all of the providers, and we did a number of follow-up emails and outreach to them.

If they are still having an issue, I would recommend that they reach out to our help desk and they'll follow up.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. Because I, myself, was confused. I didn't understand. I didn't call y'all yet, so sorry Andrew, I forgot.

But they did say that, so you're saying to call the help desk, because (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

CFO BAILEY: Go to the help desk, and they'll follow up. We'll have someone follow up. (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: All right, I see some of them out there. Go to the help desk. Call right now. Somebody's at the help desk now.

All right, some of the providers are proposing the rate of \$70,000 per bed. What is the Agency's thought on this adjusted rate proposal for the RHY beds? Are you gonna say, "That is not in our budget right now, you have to speak to OMB?"

CFO BAILEY: Thank you, Chair Stevens...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay.

CFO BAILEY: But, yes, that is correct...

(LAUGHTER)

CFO BAILEY: It's not in our budget. We're not funded for that. In fact...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: All right, I'll add that to the questions. I will go to OMB.

Has DYCD met with providers to discuss the 2026 and Fiscal Year 2027 proposed contract extension?

CFO BAILEY: I'm gonna defer to our Program Unit. So what unit are referencing?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: RHY.

CFO BAILEY: RHY?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's Susan? Hello. Deputy Commissioner Haskell will answer that question.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yes, there you go.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yes. We... well, the confirmation about the contract extensions went out by email. And several RHY providers asked for a discussion, including to some of your points about their requests for bed rates.

Commissioner and some of our Finance leadership joined the meeting to hear their concerns. The commissioner asked them to share all the detail that they had. That has been shared with us, and we're reviewing that, and we're discussing planning another meeting to walk through their scenarios, but to answer your question, yes.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, so you've been meeting with them to talk about that. I mean I've already talked about it already. I'm really concerned about the RHY, especially with the federal stuff that's going on. So let's continue to have conversations. And I know they're concerned about even the bed rates of not being...

And I have a question, why are the... why is there a range between \$45,000 and \$55,000 per bed?

Why isn't everyone getting the same rate? That's a \$10,000 difference.

CFO BAILEY: I'm unaware of the rates being at that low. I think that some of these rates are coming in for a time when we got an RFP and ICR and COLA...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm?

CFO BAILEY: But there are no... there should be no rates at that lower rate. The base should be around in the 50s. So we can look more into it, but I'm unaware of rates starting off with that low.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. Well...

CFO BAILEY: We can follow up offline.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, that's where I was confused, but what's the difference between the rates? Do we know why the rates are a varying?

CFO BAILEY: Because timing of procurement. Timing of procurement and initiatives are already included in the funding. But it's very few contracts that actually have differentials.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So do they have different requirements? So we... so you get paid a different rate to do the same work?

CFO BAILEY: Yes, because it's incidentals like ICR, which is like the additional funding that

happens throughout the term of contract. So some of those things caused variations regarding the rate, as well as different timing of procurements.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And this is one of the things that I'm always really concerned on in the city around the difference in the contracts. Because then when we hear from young people where some programs are proven to provide some things and others can't, it literally provides inequities in the program.

CFO BAILEY: Mm-hmm.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So we definitely have to get to a place where we are providing consistency because it's not fair— where ,like, some folks are able to do... like, maybe they are able to provide more services or amenities, and then others can't because the rates are different. So we definitely have to talk about what equity looks like. Because, to me, it isn't really fair.

CFO BAILEY: Chair Stevens, I will just also add there are other providers who also get in kind contributions.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm?

CFO BAILEY: So, while some (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, yeah... (CROSS-TALK)

CFO BAILEY: (INAUDIBLE)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And some of them fundraise and are able to have... So all of that already taken into consideration... so we should also just think about, like, when we have these contracts, what's the inconsistency? So if there's a new contract that comes out at a different rate- a.k.a when we think about Summer Rising and then Cornerstones. Those rates are different, too. And I yell about that, too. But, I didn't get there yet. Did not get to Summer Rising yet. But that's one of the big issues, because it creates competition when it kind of doesn't need to. So at least at the city level we should be consistent.

I'm gonna ask a couple of more questions and then I'm gonna pass it back.. I'm gonna pass it to my colleagues, and then I have more questions, obviously.

Commissioner, you talked about the Community Resource for Employment Development, CREED, that's what it is?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: CRED

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, CRID?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: CRED, like credit

(INAUDIBLE)...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: CRED?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Cred on the streets?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh...

(LAUGHTER)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You came up with that, didn't you? (LAUGHS) What's the funding for provider, I mean what's the funding for this? And could you talk more about it? I know you started to talk a little bit about it because I know this is a new program. Can you talk a little bit more about this? What's the like funding rate for this?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, Deputy Commissioner Mulligan is going to talk and give you the and give you the essentials— but long and short of it is, uh, there was a gap in service areas when we surveyed our workforce programs. And we realized that the gap was we weren't doing a real good service for people, participants ages 24 to 40. Especially those who were justice involved or linked to a criminal justice system. You want to talk about the (INAUDIBLE)

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Great, hi, Chair Stevens.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Hi.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: So we're really excited about the CRED program. We have eight providers who have gone through the RFP process.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Who are the providers?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: I can rattle them off right now.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: We've got Cases, Common Point, JCC of Staten Island, Queens Community House, Renaissance Technical Institute, United Activities Unlimited, Youth Justice Network, and Brownsville Community Culinary Center.

So you'll hear from that list, it's a good mix of folks who have been in our portfolio before, and some new folks who are really excited to start working with.

Our team has been on the ground working with each of those groups to launch these new programs, because they're really something different for DYCD up to age 40 like Commissioner referenced.

Each program is going to be really comprehensive. So offering job training, supportive services, referrals, paid internships, job placements at the end of all of that. We have programs in construction, culinary, entertainment, health, technology, transportation. It's a really exciting opportunity for us, because, like the commissioner said, we kept hearing that after 24 there's no DYCD workforce program for that really critical population. So this is really going to be the place where we're able to build out those services.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What's the funding the program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: I want to defer to our Fiscal Team to rattle off the...

CFO BAILEY: Funding in FY26 is around, approximately \$27 million.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How are you collaborating with other agencies like HRA and things like that? What does that look like?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Yeah, we have been really busy talking to all of these agencies, sharing the program with them so they understand what it's going to be. We've met with Department of

Corrections, MOCJ, HRA, SBS, all of our partners. And we're working on building intentional referral pathways with each of them.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And our CMS groups as well.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Oh, and of course the CMS groups are all really excited for this. One of the really cool innovations of having the ONS team in DYCD is we've been able to work with them, work with their providers. Many of them are in our portfolio now doing Cure Violence, uh, Work, Learn Grow, Cure Violence, SYEP with us. And so they are very aware of this program. As soon as we told them it was launching, we immediately started collecting a list of referrals from them.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And shoutout to Commissioner Liddie over at DOC. We met with her as well, her and her staff, to create pathways as well.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, and have you worked with ACS as well, because I... okay. All right, I'm going to pause here and I'm going to turn it over...

I also would like to acknowledge that Council Members Menin and Joseph have joined us, and I'm going to turn it over to Council Member Avilés for her questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you, Chair. Good morning or afternoon, whatever time of day it is.

Okay, well, first I want to start by thanking the DYCD team. I know, again, you're doing an enormous amount of work for the City, and we appreciate that. And while we have complicated questions and issues to tend through, we do appreciate the work of every staff member in the agency.

So let's start with— I'd like to talk about adult literacy funding. The Preliminary Plan includes \$43 million in Fiscal Year 2025 and \$12.8 million in Fiscal Year 2026 for the literacy program.

The difference between the Fiscal Year 2026 Preliminary and Fiscal Year 2025 Adopted is a decrease of \$20.3 million. Can you explain the difference?

CFO BAILEY: Difference, next year's budget is primarily associated with the one time funding that's not included in the budget. As you know, was one time funding that happened typically in a budget, and that is primarily driving the reduction between years.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: How much and what percentage of funding for the DYCD RFP contracted adult literacy programs comes from federal funds?

CFO BAILEY: I don't have that in front of me. I can get back to you afterwards and give you that information.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great, thank you.

The Preliminary Plan also includes federal funding of a \$105 million in Fiscal Year 2026. With the current federal hostile policies that we've talked about earlier today, how does DYCD intend to fill this gap if federal dollars are cut?

CFO BAILEY: As I mentioned to Chair Stevens, it's a larger conversation. That's something that we have to have at OMB because there's a number of competing priorities and things to determine. At this time we have not received any notification that there'll be reduction to CSBG which is the funding source to help support our literacy programs. So as of right now, we're continuing as is.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: As is?

So last week we heard that the Federal Department of Education's Division of Adult Education and Literacy was dismantled. And it's clear, uh, it is

unclear whether the federal WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act funding will actually be restored.

How does DYCD plan to support the continuation of adult literacy services currently provided by the community based organizations through the State Adult Education and Family Literacy funding if the providers are gonna be losing this funding?

CFO BAILEY: I'm going to defer to our Deputy Commissioner Bobbitt who will speak to the programmatic implications of these changes.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Thank you, Council Member, for the question.

As our CFO and commissioner indicated earlier in the conversation, we're in constant communication with OMB. The possible enormity or scope of cuts of federal funding are not yet known, so it's hard for DYCD to take a clear position. But I think as Chair Stevens and the commissioner agreed, we would continue to be in in consultation with the Council as well as OMB about the potentialities.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: We do we do appreciate the challenges of the uncertain environment, but it is certainly a little disconcerting that we are facing

pretty eminent cuts and we have no semblance of a plan yet.

In terms of- I'd like to segue a little bit to the Immigrant Opportunity Initiative. The Preliminary Plan Includes, excuse me, the current budget for DYCD's Immigrant Opportunities Program totals \$14.1 million in FY25. The funding drops to \$7.1 million in FY26.

For context, at adoption, the programs were budgeted for a total of \$1.1 million. What is the reason for this initial increase in FY25 and then sudden decrease in 2026?

CFO BAILEY: Council Member Avilés, are you referring to our Immigrant Services Program?

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: The Immigrant Opportunity Initiative. The IOI.

CFO BAILEY: IOI. Is this a Council funded or discriminatory...

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: No, this is your... This is your initiative. It started at \$1.1 million, expanded again to \$14.1 million and then has dropped to \$7.1 million. Wild flows up and down.

CFO BAILEY: I will follow up with you afterwards and give your more information about the disparities within that budget.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Okay. So we'd like to know that. We'd also like to know what is the relationship between DYCD 's IOI program and the Council's funded IOI program? If you could speak to that? We'd also like to know, given the drastic rises and falls, (TIMER CHIMES) if there is going to be any impact on services and programs. And certainly, let me just check— and we would like to know specifically what the DYCD IOI's programs are, uh, what the funding covers... what programs the funding covers.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We're definitely going to have to get back to you. Because that program is not familiar to us. We think that's the, uh, Commissioner Castro's program. But we can get back to you to definitely tell you whether or not we have any sort of relationship with that program.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great. Yeah, we certainly find the up and down quite alarming, given the needs in services that continue to expand.

But, thank you, Chair, and I will be back for a second round. I have so many more questions.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (INAUDIBLE)

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Oh, I can? Oh, amazing, thank you.

In terms of for services for immigrant families, the Preliminary Plan also includes roughly \$3 million for Fiscal 2026 for services for immigrant families. Can you provide a breakdown of the services that are provided with this funding?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Thank you, Council Member.

The Immigrant Families Model provides holistic services to individuals and families of any composition, so that could be case management, practical supports. If members of the family are unhoused or seeking education or seeking employment, really it can run the gamut, and this program's operating in all the boroughs.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Do you know how many providers are funded through this program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: My recollection is it's five. Hold on, let me turn around— four at this moment.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Four? And how many people have been served through this program in Fiscal 2025?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Approximately 300 families.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Oh, I'm sorry, I missed that.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: That's all right.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Is there... do you anticipate a continuing number of service at that level?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: We do anticipate that. As you may recall, we released a concept paper, and thank you, Council Member Avilés, as well as Chair Stevens, for giving us feedback.

But we don't have a concrete timetable as to when we will release the RFP. So for the immediate future, we'll be maintaining the service levels and the model that's presently in place.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Good. Love to hear if any of that feedback was integrated into any new iteration or not.

In terms of the Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Preliminary Plan includes \$336,000 for five full-time positions in Fiscal 2026.

Are these positions designated to MOIA, or are they new staffing who will cover DYCD immigrant related services?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Although I would love to have additional staff, that doesn't reflect in our headcount.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: So are they...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: They...

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: belong to MOIA?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Those are MOIA's, yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Okay.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I'll talk to Commissioner Castro.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Yeah, and I guess, for the record, we'd like understand the details on the roles and responsibilities for those positions. So...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I will refer to Commissioner Castro.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: That's a lot of referring going on. What's the point of the hearing if we don't...

To quickly segue on SONYC and COMPASS programs, we talked a little bit about the request from providers. I know on January 30th, almost 60

providers sent a letter to the Mayor, to OMB, and to DYCD sounding the alarm about the underfunding, chronic underfunding of afterschool programs and a continuation of a 10-year-old contract.

So the cost of those services are going up and up and up, and we are not reimbursing at even comparable rates. I think it's actually less than half of the true cost of these services are being covered. How is DYCD addressing this issue?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I have met with the with if not all, but most of the nonprofit partners that have sent the email and the letter.

Again, we continue to talk to OMB about the concerns that the nonprofit sector and our COMPASS and SONYC are experiencing. Those conversations are very robust. We're bringing a lot of concerns from the sector. We have concerns. OMB has concerns as well. But that's the nature of the engagement. We have not landed yet. But those conversations are constantly and will continue to be ongoing.

Our Deputy Mayor, Ana Almanzar, has been meeting as well. Just expressing, you know, City Hall's opinion to the sector and understanding the concern of the sector as well.

So the conversations are happening at the highest level. But as I told the chair, we understand that it's an old model, it's an old program model. And we understand the pain that the sector is going through.

But again it starts with everyone continuing to communicate and share what those pain points are.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: I think the sector has been pretty clear what the pain points are. I guess the short of it is while we appreciate your understanding and your communication with the sector, the City has to dedicate the resources. If it is in fact prioritizing our youth across New York City, then this program needs to get some additional funding. And I'm sure you probably agree with me, but we need more money. I know you can't say that, but we are gonna say it, because continuing to renew contracts at a 10-year-old level and then expect continued quality services is both unfair and unrealistic. So I want to...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Definitely hear you.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: I hear you, I know you do. I know you can't say you need a lot more money, but we are going to (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Don't worry, we can say it for them.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: (LAUGHS)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: They need more money.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: So one last thing, in terms of timely reimbursement for services rendered, one of our critical agencies, Center for Family Life, is waiting for a total of \$3.4 million in reimbursement. In Fiscal 2025, they have... excuse me, they... hold on. In Fiscal 2024, they have invoices totaling more than \$500,000; Fiscal 2025, invoices totaling \$980,000, totaling \$1.9 million that they are waiting for services that have been rendered, receipts that have been put in, and still, two years later, looking at increasing demands waiting for this money. What is going on?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We're working with our nonprofit partners to make sure that we're resolving issues. Some of those issues are being led by Mayor's Office of Contracts. But they're working in partnership with us. I can honestly say that the Mayor's Office of Nonprofit has also been leading the way as well, making sure that providers understand that yes there are there are problems in the system

and we're working with those problems. We are providing white glove treatment to those organizations who reach out, to my understanding, and those, uh, Center for Family Life is a really... they really have amazing programs. They're a very good partner of ours. I have not gotten a phone call from them, but I will reach out to them (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: So, I want to correct something for the record. They have contract registration and approval on PASSPort totaling \$1.9 million— in addition to the \$500,000 for Fiscal 2024; in addition to the \$980,000 in Fiscal 2025, which totals actually \$3.4 million in funding that should be reimbursed.

With all due respect, Commissioner, white glove treatment, if you owe me \$3.4 million, that is not white glove treatment.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Well, the other thing is the complexities on why there is a system problem. But what we've been doing across the board, is making sure that we case manage those who are having problems across the board.

And again, Center for Family Life, they are running one of our programs. They're a really good provider, and I'm just concerned that I haven't gotten a phone call, a letter, or any correspondence... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Well, I'm here right now.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: And I'm pointing it out. And I'd love to get a very clear time frame of when this is gonna get repaired.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Because they are a great provider, and they want to do their best, and they work well with DYCD. But... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We will have an answer to you...

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: \$3.4 million outstanding... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Council Member, we will have an answer...

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: is obscene...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: before the end of the day.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Okay?

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: All right.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you, Council Member Avilés. And we will be having a hearing on contracting in conjunction with Contracts in April, so make sure you get that hearing as well.

I just had a follow-up question around adult literacy. The Adult Literacy RFP funding has been contracted. Is there any NFT competition still pending for the contracts for the Adult Literacy?

CFO BAILEY: There are two left.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: There's two still pending?

CFO BAILEY: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, thank you.

Okay, I'm gonna pass it over to Council Member Lee. But I want to give my mom a special shoutout, who is watching this hearing on TV right now.

(APPLAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And she told me I was really doing a good job. So shoutout to my mom for watching.

Okay, passing it over...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Oh, you touched our hearts.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (LAUGHS) You started, and my mom turned on the TV to watch.

So, passing this over to Council Member Lee...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hello to Althea's mom.

I was just listening to Council Member Avilés' questions, and my heart started beating, because as someone who ran a nonprofit for 20+ years, I have to say there were times where we had to think about foregoing pay for a lot of our senior staff, because we were waiting on these contract payments. And it is a very real serious thing, and to not be able to pay our staff, and to know that me, as the head of the organization, have to provide for their livelihood, it's a lot of pressure. And I know there's a lot of issues around the contracting, so I'm glad to hear that we're going to have a hearing on the contracting with DYCD. But one note is that as an ED, one thing I can say is, I think also it's important to make sure that the (INAUDIBLE) have all the same training and that they understand. Because I had multiple DYCD contracts, so from one (INAUDIBLE) to the other, they're like, how can I say, the bouncer in that moment where they have all the power and authority to let you into that club, where it's like in that

moment they have the ability to say, okay these documents are sufficient versus not, and a lot of time there's inconsistencies in what they're asking for. So, that's one point of a barrier that I would like to personally say, I think in my own personal experiences, that's been something that's been a little inconsistent. And... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And, I love that... the love the fact that you said that, and I love the fact that you bring real experience to it.

This is the reason why the Mayor's Office of Nonprofit was created to make sure that there's uniformity across the system and across the agency.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah, that was after my time, unfortunately, as a ED, but it would have been nice to see, yeah.

And just going along with that whole theme, just out of curiosity, do you guys have internal meetings looking at the outstanding contracts that are sort of on hold?

You know, when I worked at the hospital they would look at outstanding bills, payments. So do you guys have those regular meetings internally?

CFO BAILEY: Hi, Council Member Lee. I'll speak for that, Nevita Bailey, CFO.

So I can tell you that there are weekly meetings on contracting...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

CFO BAILEY: we have them weekly where we get reporting. I can tell you that there's... everyone at DYCD is committed to getting paid... people getting paid and registered.

We can expand on CFO, but I can also tell you that there are complexities. They can be delayed submission of documents from providers. They can be outstanding insurance documents. I think that it's a shared experience with both providers and staff. A lot of our staff are chasing providers for a very long time to get documents, and so I think that it's a shared experience. We're all in it together, and we're all working on it together.

I think that DYCD is working where possible, if contracts are registered, giving out advances to ensure providers get cash flow. We have a CNO in house that if a provider is experiencing immediate crisis, we can be able to rapidly respond.

So I just wanna let you know that I understand, we hear you, we hear the issues from the field regarding contracting. It is not something that we take lightly. It's all hands on deck. There's staff who will do personal sacrifice to make sure people get paid.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right. So in that case, if you're saying you guys have weekly meetings, and then Council Member Avilés' this example, wouldn't that have gotten flagged then if there were outstanding payments to that degree?

CFO BAILEY: There are complexities to what she's referencing. So, I know that for our FY24 amendments, over 90% of them have gone out and come back in. And so, I don't want to go into specifics to her specific example. We can speak about offline...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

CFO BAILEY: But I think that there's layers to what is being presented.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, and then also one other experience I had is that, are the agencies, can you, uh, just personal request, to make sure that everyone is looking at it, because PASSPort was created for this very purpose, so the agencies should know, even

1 before they get to you guys if their documents are
2 updated or not. I get flags for that ,like, so I know
3 very clearly what the status of my organization is if
4 there's outdated information which prevents me from
5 even that next step of going to you guys to get the
6 payment.
7

8 So then I just want to make sure that that is
9 also happening where— because a lot of times when I
10 would ask the contracting agencies or the staff you
11 know at DYCD, you know... but it's on PASSPort, I
12 know I'm up to date, so why are you guys asking me
13 for these documents again? So I just also want to
14 make sure that on your end it's going both ways,
15 right?

16 And then just switching really quickly, for the
17 contracts in general for DYCD, how much advance
18 percentage do you guys give?

19 CFO BAILEY: That is on a case by case basis. I
20 think overall for the City we have a flat rate that's
21 30%. Depending upon the program area available
22 funding, that makes adjustments. I think for our
23 Summer Rising portfolio, we gave additional
24 substantial advances...

25 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right.

CFO BAILEY: because of delay in funding. So for our Summer Rising portfolio, almost 90% of their funding has been given out to them so that we can...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Ninety?

CFO BAILEY: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

CFO BAILEY: And that is not typical, so that is not something that should be expected on an ongoing basis. But given the delay that we did, it was DYCD's commitment to ensure that we try to minimize cash flow issues we did that. So that's why I'm saying for the examples that you bring up, there could be layers to them. So that's why I'm saying (TIMER CHIMES) it is much better to get more expansive responses offline.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. Sorry, Chair, can I keep going for a couple more questions?

Okay. So, for COMPASS and SONYC, uh, what are the number of community based versus school based programs? Do you guys still do the community based after school as well as the school based?

CFO BAILEY: There are school based and community based programs, (INAUDIBLE) to defer. About 85% is our portfolios based in footprint in schools...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

CFO BAILEY: and 50% are community based.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. And is this accurate where the last contract was in 2015? Because I remember applying for those grants. Was it 2015? Oh my god, okay.

So, I obviously don't want to, you know, keep reiterating this point, but I can't emphasize enough how important it is to look at those rates and see what we can do. Because I think when we look at the actual cost per student versus what is being given in the contracts, there's like a 50% discrepancy there in terms of where the salaries and expenses should be. So I just wanted to reemphasize that point which I know Chair Stevens has already done. So I also echo those sentiments.

And just really quickly, do you also provide afterschool programs for students that have ID and DD, the disabilities?

CFO BAILEY: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, and then for those, do you oversee them with a different agency like DOHMH? Because I know they have some of those programs, but is that also? Okay.

CFO BAILEY: No.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. Then, in those instances, I would imagine, do you see the same if not more, I would say, staffing challenges or issues around how to address the students that have special higher needs, or? And what is the (INAUDIBLE)...
(CROSS-TALK)

CFO BAILEY: Deputy Commissioner Haskell...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: for that?

CFO BAILEY: will speak to the students with disabilities in the afterschool portfolio.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: I'm sorry?

CFO BAILEY: Deputy Commissioner Haskell will speak to the students with disabilities... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, for...

CFO BAILEY: (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, so that's my other hat, is Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction Chair. So, I just really... (CROSS-TALK)

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Right, excellent. We... in all our afterschool programs and other programs, we have a range of young people with varying abilities and different needs including

intellectual and developmental disabilities. We don't have separate regulatory structure or infrastructure or contract structure even for those programs. But one of the things that is unique about out of school time, whether it's Beacon or Cornerstone or COMPASS, is that young people in an after school environment can really come with the skills that they have and be served as part of a project based community in terms of the activities they sign up for.

Staffing has been a challenge across the board coming out of COVID. We're really seeing...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: uh, get to a better place with that. But I think the structure of afterschool is uniquely equipped to suit young people of different needs.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: And do you also have to follow under— I'm assuming you work with the state OPWDD (Office for People With Developmental Disabilities) as well on that, or is it totally separate?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We don't work closely with the state...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: OPWD on that. We have the same regulatory structure for school-aged child care programs, and a young person needs to be able to be served within that regulatory structure to participate in our afterschool programs.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. And then in the first, just switching gears to the Beacon, first four months of Fiscal 2025, the Beacon Community Centers program served 34,310 youth and 6,972 adults, an increase of 6% for youth and 7% increase for adults when compared to the same period in Fiscal 2024.

So has the Agency seen a continued increase in Beacon Community Center usage this fiscal year compared to last year? So what has that increase been if there has been one?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Thank you for that question. Can you say specifically which part of the Beacons that you're talking about an increase? Could you say that again? This is in the PMMR data you're looking at?

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yes.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Okay, great, go ahead. If you don't mind, can you ask again?

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Oh yeah, sure, sure.

So it was about 34,310 youth and then 6,972 adults, so an increase in 67% respectively. So just wanting to know if you've seen similar increases in this fiscal year.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Those increases are from this fiscal year, I think...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: that you're pointing out, from the July through November period.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We can get back to you, dig into that information a little more detailed.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: There was an expansion of some summer services, including the Summer Safety Plan Initiative that may have increased, in particular that July through August period, and that may account for some of those increases.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, and then just similarly in the PMMR, the English Literacy program, in the first four months was revised from 4,881 to 8,533.

So what was the reason for that increase?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: The literacy programs are my colleague. I'm gonna...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: change over.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you, uhm...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Holdup, oh, wait, she's going to give me (INAUDIBLE) I'm sorry...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay...

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Sorry, Council Member, can you just restate the last...

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Oh, yeah, sure, the English Literacy program, it was revised from 4,881 to 8,533. So just wanted to know what was the reason for the difference in the enrollment numbers?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: There's two elements regarding the update to literacy participants, one is registrants must reach 12 hours of instruction to become considered enrolled. So there'll be a change in the name of participants as students reach the 12 hour threshold. And the new income eligibility proofs were finalized in October of last year, so some providers were holding data entry to ensure new enrollments would be satisfied.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Thank you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You all done? Thank you.

I know we were talking about contracting, and Council Member Riley sent me a question to ask around organization not being paid.

His question is, the Game Over Foundation, which has been funded by the 12th District council member to run a youth program in the Northeast Bronx. The organization has reported not receiving any payment for the past two fiscal years and is now facing fiscal challenges that may prevent them from continuing their program.

What is causing this delay and what steps are being taken to resolve it?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I believe that's discretionary program.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: This is discretionary funding. And I know that that has been a bigger delay than even some of the contracting. So that's even separate from that. So have you have they reached out about this, and where you guys at with this?

CFO BAILEY: We will look more into it. I see a deputy commissioner Bobbitt coming up.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You can come back, Bobbitt.

Chair Fariás Bobbitt you can come up to speak to... who is better well versed on a discretionary portfolio.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Thank you, Chair, for the question. I'll have my team look into it today. I will say there are ongoing conversations with providers. We make a point of having routine provider meetings. And, basically, everyone in the discretionary portfolio, we try to make ourselves available when problems arise. So I'll flag that now and bring it back to the team.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. I know specifically the discretionary funding has been even more delayed than the contracting. And the contracting has been the priority to get out and so...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: It's a complexity in that whole process, in the whole system. One of the good things that are happening is the Working Group with capital council finance you know happening on a deputy mayor level. I participated in some of those meetings, and I do believe a 100% that the recommendations and the fixtures to the system is gonna show improvement across the board.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Listen, mean I gotta say it just because it's a budget hearing. The procurement process in New York City is just out of control and ridiculous at this point. And I know even with even asking the contract questions to some of you guys sometimes, and I don't give you a lot of credit, it's not fair, because a lot of it is out of the control of the agencies, but we do have to continue to push forward to figure out where the systemic issues are, because it's a problem that we're not paying people.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And 100%. And that's why ,you know, I just wanted to put some light at the end of the tunnel with the Working Group that's happening.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I mean, we had a Working Group before, and we pretty much cleared up the backlog (INAUDIBLE) forward... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: But everybody's at the table and everybody's talking through systematic issues and... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That was the...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: the (INAUDIBLE)...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: that was the work... we had a Working Group before when we cleared up the

backlog. And we're back to... even worse off...

(CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: But I'm talking specifically about discretionary.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yeah...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: When they had the Working Group before, it was cleared, and we're back in the same position. So I don't know if a Working Group was where we need to be. I think that it's a systemic issue, and we need to be looking at reforming real policy and not just trying to fix the issue. It clearly needs long term solutions, because, literally, when was it, but I'll give the credit again, it was like two years ago, the backlog was almost cleared out, and now here we are again and the same thing.

So that means that it's a systemic issue. So it's not a Working Group because they had a Working Group. So clearly we need to make some legislative changes and some real investments into the MOCS system that often gets overlooked and underfunded, which isn't you guys. So it's not my fight, that's Julie Won's fight, so I'll leave it there.

I'm going to turn it over to Council Member Williams at this time for her questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yes, I just want to say that I know the chair holds you all accountable at these hearings, but she's very protective of this agency. Even when members like myself are quite critical, she helps us to understand a lot of the complexities.

I just was talking to her about a complexity, because I am currently doing an initiative with NYU around mental health outcomes and student success, and we just had a session yesterday, and some of the schools who also double and work at the Afterschool Program, run the Afterschool Program and expanded program, talked about how some of the healing modalities that we're talking about need to transfer over into after school. So even if a student may not present in a particular way, but maybe they are struggling with some type of mental health challenge, or maybe they have an IEP or something to that effect, the commentary was that the training that the staffers have to go through is not comprehensive and does not give them the appropriate skill set to deal with a wide range of issues that we are seeing. And I

1 know it came up in this hearing, especially post
2 COVID- and she just shared with me a whole bunch of
3 things just now- but I'll just ask you, on the
4 record, like, outside of potentially dismissing ,you
5 know, a scholar from a particular program, what other
6 resources, solutions are we doing to provide support
7 for the providers so they can appropriately, like,
8 service the student so they're not getting kicked
9 out?
10

11 You know, I know you have these unique programs
12 for folks who deal with this population, wonderful
13 population, we love them, but I'm just wondering,
14 because I know there are a lot of other students who
15 are ending up in regular after school programs.

16 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Mental health and trauma are
17 one of the highest priorities in DYCD. And to the
18 fact that we've actually created a unit within DYCD,
19 the Office of Mental Health Support, to make sure
20 that we're coordinating not only internally program
21 areas, but also externally to make sure that those
22 that are really in the space, like the Mayor's Office
23 of Mental Health, uh, the Department of Health and
24 Mental Hygiene, and New York City Public Schools, you
25 know, all of our stakeholders across the board that

we're that we're coordinating and sharing resources to make sure that those... that the young people are receiving, at the highest level, treatment and opportunities to be able to have clinicians and have services that they can really just really commit to and we can commit to them.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah, they didn't reference any resources, they referenced some training. So I guess there's a little something that you all try to do, but the commentary was that ,like, income... his person is a program director, but they're also ,you know, a DOE employee, right? So they're getting a certain set of training that's still not enough, right?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Mm-hmm

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: But it's more than what is actually required at the Afterschool level and this is for all students across the board.

So like I want to acknowledge that he mentioned that there's some type of something, maybe a DOH state training or something that folks are required to do, I'm not sure. Yeah, but he just he said it it's it does not go far enough to providing support

for the employee to properly care for the young person.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: No, and I hear you, and I appreciate you bringing that up. I think that the investment in mental health actually is on the mayor's highest list. When we... about a year ago we had town hall meetings with young people across the six precincts with the highest level of gun incidents and shootings. And one of the two things that came out of that hearing that young people stated to us is one, concern about police interaction, and number two, their mental health and trauma.

But one of the things that one of the young persons told to at the time, Dr. Fassad (phonetic) was peer to peer. And (TIMER CHIMES) we started to take a look at that, uh, to say... to see exactly how we can pass that on to the providers and create those opportunities to do peer to peer counseling and train providers and train our young people to be able to take on that part. Because the young person was very clear, and he, you know, and I remember it like it was yesterday, and really approached Dr. Fassad and said, "I'm not gonna talk to a clinician. I'll go through the routine, but I would rather talk to my

friend as opposed to someone who's social worker." that was vitally important for us to hear. So we've been creating focus groups. We've been, again, meeting with our stakeholders to make sure that the investments and the training are actually happening across our program areas.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Chair, can I get a little bit more time? The commissioner has a lot to say.

(LAUGHTER)

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Took up my time for my question. I was trying not to be rude, was trying to let him get his points out. Okay, thank you, Chair.

So the other questions that I have, I'll just ask more after school questions since she lined me up for that.

So afterschool providers report having ongoing difficulties with staff recruitment and persistent staffing shortages that impact their ability to meet contractual obligations.

So how is the Agency planning to support providers to pay competitive wages and address the long standing issue of CBO staff turnover? I know you are about to issue an RFP soon. Oh the hope, okay.

So just wanted to know if you're taking those things into consideration in terms of how you're crafting the RFP itself.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: One-hundred percent. We're highly engaged with our nonprofit partners looking at the salary levels. We've been doing surveying across the board, meeting with providers, Deputy Commissioner Haskell and her team, constantly engaging. And yes, it's you know, I think we mentioned previously that across the sector there is concern that we're not being competitive and competitive with the salary. So we see that. We're working and hopefully ,you know, if and when the RFP and the concept paper and all of that... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: If and when...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: goes out... When all of that comes to play, we'll be able to right size some salary. That's the hope, that's the goal.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. And I know you may not take that into this particular thing I'm gonna ask into consideration when you're crafting an RFP, I mean, I guess you could, because you do have waitlist numbers so you do know how certain programs are doing in comparison to other programs across the city. And

my question that I had asked the chair yesterday was around this. And I kind of compared it to the 3K issue where you have some programs that are beyond capacity and then you have some programs that have reduced numbers. I know in the PMMR it kind of shows that there's been a slight reduction of participants in some of the afterschool programs, but how are you ensuring that the communities that need the afterschool programs actually get the support, the number of spots that they need, in comparison to communities, maybe there's an under utilization of an afterschool program, and like making that assessment and thinking about how you award contracts and the number of ,you know, slots a particular program can have ,like, all of this seems like some type of methodology that you have crafted based off of whatever data. If you have that information that'd be great to know. But just wondering, as you look forward to this new iteration of COMPASS and SONYC, how are you ensuring that we're rightsizing programs by community need? Because that was another thing, that was another one of their complaints, that they don't have enough seats, and there's no real clear way to increase the seats.

And I was educated by the chair because I was about to go crazy. And she was like, no, they have all these complexities.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I hear you...

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: See, she cares about you guys most of the time...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We care about her... and we care about her.

So 100% understand we do have an extensive program evaluation team that evaluates how organizations are doing. Our first initial response is capacity building. How do we provide governance? How do we provide structure to those organizations that appear to be struggling-- for a variety of different reasons? And the chair has been (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I'm not even talking about...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: (INAUDIBLE) very complex...

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: organizations struggling. I'm talking about ,like, programs that don't have enough seats in comparison to the need. You know, like somebody told me...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: There, yeah, there's...

(CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: "Oh, the parents line up so early. The line is around the corner."

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: There is... there are waiting lists, yes, absolutely. There are waiting lists across the board. So, again, that does tie into capacity, right? So, yes, we have waiting lists in most if not all of our programs. I'm really understanding... trying to understand the question on our MMR, because... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah, how do you expand the seats?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Because our MMR... Our MMR...

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Because, there's... there's theories, which the chair educated me on, there's theories that certain afterschool programs are struggling, right? Like some... but for whatever reasons, maybe it's the infrastructure issue with the CBO, maybe they just, you know, they don't have their numbers up in terms of participants. And then there are other afterschool programs...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Sure...

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: that have extensive wait lists. So how are you, like...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So those contracts are very certain, right? So if a CBO has a 100 slots, right, and another CBO has 50 slots, those are all contracted numbers.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yes, so that's my... My question is as you look forward to the next iteration of a new contract... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We will look at the numbers... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: how are you ensuring that the contracts, the RFPs, reflect that? Like you seem.... you have... It seems like you have a lot of data, right? So...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We do...

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: How are you using the data that you have to make the programs make sense in certain communities that have... and I know, we're never gonna have enough money to service all of the things.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Mm-hmm.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: So I'm just trying to understand, though, is there any assessment being made...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yes...

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: to right size that across communities?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yes, 100%, yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, thank you.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you, Council Member Williams.

Just a couple of things, too, and I'm gonna mention Summer Rising quickly, but I'm actually gonna be leaving a lot of that to Chair Joseph today.

But there was one thing that's about Summer Rising that I did appreciate, is we did expand to ensure that we were working with young people with disabilities. That's the one thing that I do like.

But even with talking with Council Member Williams yesterday, I do think it is true— a lot of times afterschool program, all the kids are just folded in. But in the same way during the school year, it would be nice to have the same type of training and supports because in Summer Rising, we

1 have paras all of a sudden that we've asked for
2 years. We have all these different access... so just
3 thinking about, when we're thinking about this moving
4 forward with the RFP, I hope that if it's important
5 for this Summer Rising program (UNINTELLIGIBLE), that
6 is just important in these other programs to be
7 thinking about.
8

9 So I just want to make sure that was on the
10 record. Because it is just very interesting how we
11 make exceptions for things or ,you know, new
12 initiatives that come up. So ,you know, that was the
13 one thing that I (UNINTELLIGIBLE).. Maybe a couple
14 other things after Summer Rising, but that's one of
15 the one things that I do appreciate about that we
16 open it up to make sure that more young people had
17 access. So I hope to see those things moving forward.

18 And, then, Commissioner, you had spoken about
19 peer to peer training and stuff like that. Somebody
20 passed the legislation around that. I don't know
21 who...

22 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: (LAUGHS)

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (LAUGHS) but there was like
24 a package of some people doing that good work. Three
25 of them are sitting here of the package.

But I just wanted to know, how are you guys utilizing some of that stuff that's gonna be coming up? And have you guys been working with DOHMH?

I know that the emphasis was on schools, but most of our programs are in schools, and how are we gonna make sure that young people are accessing this peer to peer curriculum that they will now have? And how do we plan on using it in our programs?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And, absolutely, I think that we are still in the beginning stages of the actually buildout...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: because what's key to us is training, uh, and making sure that young people, if they are involved in the peer to peer, it can be through Work, Learn, and Grow, it can be through any one of our school based programs, that they are trained.

One of the things that we don't wanna do, and we're very concerned about, and you know this as well, is trauma bonding, right? Which is... which is which is real. So we have to... we have to build it up with that mindset, understanding that although

it's a peer to peer model, we do not wanna create another problem across the board.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. Absolutely. But, you know, just making sure that we're thinking about this will be another tool in the toolkit, which is why we have it now, that we can have young people sign up for. And it is a training so that they can do the peer to peer work and have access to it.

So we should definitely think about how we can use that in our programs...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: because it's not just gonna benefit DOE schools, it's about the climate.

So they have access, they'll be able to take it, and we should think about integrating it and using it in our model, too, since it's out there.. (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And... And when we... When we land on a draft, we will definitely touch base with you and the regular other council members to get your input as well.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, okay. I want to turn it... Okay, all right, I'm gonna turn it over to Council Member Joseph.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you, Chair, good afternoon, how are you? Good to see you all.

I'm gonna talk about Summer Rising. In the Preliminary Budget, we saw \$19.6 million in the Fiscal for 2026 program to enhance the hours for middle school students, right? That was a big win for us last year when we decided to make it Monday through Thursday, and what was gonna happen to that middle school crowd? It was huge, but please explain why the decision was made to enhance the hours for middle school students. I know why, but folks want to know why.

CFO BAILEY: I think it's creating a space safe space for (INAUDIBLE) so that ,you know, we can ensure that we minimize any issues and they're productive and continue to expand and build upon what they learned during the summer, minimize learning loss.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Absolutely, tutoring we know that. But the original PEG reduced the... eliminated Fridays and weekday hours. What would the enhanced hours be like for middle school students? What does that look like?

CFO BAILEY: The PEG we... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Other than the learning loss?

CFO BAILEY: Yeah, the... So, the PEG expanded the work... the weekday hours to 6:00 P.M., as well as added hours for Friday, and so it was a full restoration.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Full restoration of the Friday hours?

CFO BAILEY: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And that's what we were all fighting for.

Families and CBOs has also expressed concerns that there needs to be more options within the Summer Rising program, especially for some students with middle school. Some students say, "I want to go for enrichment, because I don't need the academic portion," right? We have our students that are going to the next grade, they don't need that.

How do we make it they so want to come, they want to go, because when we did this hearing last year, we saw a drop in 500 kid... a 100,000 kids apply, and then for some reason it starts dropping off.

How do we retain the students?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So...

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Uh-huh? Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I appreciate you being an educator and asking those questions. We are having conversations and continued conversation with our partner over at New York City Public Schools to make sure that activities, learning are happening continuously throughout the day. That a young person should not think about, "Hey, you know what, I'm getting stuck in some academic part for the morning, and then," you know, "Then it's fun in the in the afternoon."

DOE, the public schools, have been open to having those conversations. I believe the chancellor and her team had mentioned that as well. I also wanna highlight the chancellor for the survey that that was performed that showed that ,you know, it's a positive experience to be in Summer Rising as well.

As we continue to talk about Summer Rising, and I'm looking sideways to Chair Stevens, because I know she's gonna say something, but as we continue to look to improve...

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: She knows about it...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: to improve the Summer Rising experience, you know, from the very launch until where we are now, we've seen major changes. And I

think we just need to continue to communicate, to talk with the parents, to talk with you about what those changes need to be as we continue to build on that program model. And New York City Public Schools have been open to those conversations.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: As they should. I would love to see a lot of project based learning for our students in middle school during the early morning, it doesn't have to sit down, let's do a lot of project based learning in the morning until they go and they have the fun.

So, real life experience, let them design what's the solution for the next problems in the world. So, project based learning, I would love to see that incorporated for middle school students in the morning versus just sitting at their desk all day long in crowded classrooms.

I visit sites, 30 kids in a classroom during Summer Rising- I also talked to the chancellor about the class sizes that I'm seeing ballooning during Summer Rising.

And, how do, uh, your students with IEPs that are mandated to have related services in the afternoon part of the evening, do they have a para, do you

follow their IEPs, what is being done for students with disabilities in the afternoon portion of Summer Rising?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: That's a great question. Every Summer Rising student who has an IEP gets an accommodation plan for the summer, which is gonna outline the services that they need to participate fully in both the morning and the enrichment parts of Summer Rising.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And what about the ones that require a one to one para as well? How does that work?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: That would be recommended in their accommodation plan and our partnership with the Office of Students with Disabilities would help facilitate those resources.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: I know we're also working on transportation in the evening, because I know our students who take the bus normally cannot stay for the afternoon portion because of bus contracting (TIMER CHIMES) because it's the contract, it's not you. It's the contract. Is there any work being done around that?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We have... Any participant in Summer Rising who's staying to the end of the day can use rideshare as an alternative to the busing.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: But some of the rideshares require a parent ride with them.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: That's right.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: So how are we... how is that working?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Uh, it...

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: That's still in the works?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: It's an alternative to busing for young people who want to stay for the full day.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: So what is the percentage of parents, if you have data, that are satisfied with the Summer Rising program? A lot of our low income families have also expressed a lot of concern not being able to get their children enrolled. We saw a huge barrier. What changes are you making to implement, to increase parents who technology may not be at their fingertips to have access to enrolling their children and Summer Rising?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Actually I am going to call on my colleague, Daniel Guillen, to talk about some of the supports we're giving for parents and some of the improvements that we've made to the enrollment system to help both families and CBOs do a better job. Uhm...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: He has to be sworn in.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You have to swear him in. All right, thank you. Thank you for being honest.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please raise your right hand.

Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this committee, and to respond honestly to council member questions?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: I do, yes.

All right, good afternoon, Chair Joseph. As you know the recruitment process is not just a centralized process, it's work that happens on the ground. So we're anticipating not just our CBOs, who do amazing work in connecting those families who have technological issues, but also our parent coordinators, and New York City Public Schools Family Welcome Centers to ensure that there's alternative

ways to making sure that they can apply using the MySchools.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And families that English is not their first language, how are you providing language access and support for those families as well?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: So, the website itself has the ability to translate to many different languages, not just necessarily to English. So, with having the family Welcome Support Center, along with parent coordinators and school leaders and CBOs, to be able to navigate that system through the languages that they need in order to enter the information.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And, in the hearing we had around Summer Rising, one of the things we heard around was vacancy, staff vacancies, low attendance and support for students with disabilities. How are you changing that system this year? What does that look like this year?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: So, are you speaking in relation to the system or just across the board?

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: The Summer Rising itself.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Okay so if we could start with the low attendance rates...

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Mm-hmm.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: So it is worth noting that Summer Rising not a mandated program except for a select few. Historically, this allows this level of flexibility for families to take full advantage of the program as they need. One of the things that we are keeping in mind is that this is a full process, right, from when the app is open to the start of the program. There are phases, and there's different levels of engagement right, centrally through New York City Public Schools and DYCD, but as well as the CBOs. So when a parent, their family is selected, there's a parent orientation. We want every parent to take full advantage of that, whether it is happening in person or Zoom or with any type of level of conversation, so they can learn about the program.

This is also about trust. Right? You're leaving your child in stranger's hands. You wanna use the time between a child is selected and that start date to engage with that family. Because if you feel that you can trust someone, then you're gonna show up. Right? And we know, because the data showed, we

1 learned last week from New York City Public Schools,
2 that when you attend 20 or more days, there is some
3 growth academically. So there's some value in showing
4 up, and I think it's important that that got out
5 there. And not only that, that our CBOs play an
6 important factor in that process as well.

7
8 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: We know.

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Because what
10 happens in the afternoon is very valuable. And we
11 believe that if we continue to push this model and
12 the results start coming out, they'll really feel
13 more confident that I should keep my child here a
14 little bit longer than I normally will.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: How long does it take
16 someone to get off the waitlist once, let's say, you
17 waitlist them— and I may have family vacation
18 planned, and you put me on a waitlist, how long does
19 that take to get off the waitlist so that family can
20 plan around Summer Rising?

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Well, what's
22 important here is that there is a phase between
23 selection and the start date in which a family may
24 decline the position. So that wait list is active the
25 next day after selections are made. So meaning a

parent may not have gotten called the first day, but maybe a week later, now the list starts to move because maybe I am gonna go on vacation now- I applied early in March, but guess what, I'm gonna go to the islands for the summer. So now a parent has the ability to decline, and now that next child, right, thinking about the prioritization to get the highest need young person there, can say, now I'm a part of that program.

So a lot of the list can start moving even as early as the notifications happen in the spring. So in the summer, we know it's a very short window, but that happens a lot more locally, which is much more true to what happens on the ground, right? School leaderships, CBOs, are seeing who's showing up, they know their waitlist, they'll be able to filter and navigate and fill in gaps by the grade levels, which is a new feature within MySchools as well, which makes that process move a lot faster.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Is there a plan to hire more paras in the evening? Has that been a challenge to get paras in the afternoon portion of the programming?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: So, what's good about the collaborative nature of New York City Public Schools and DYCD is that we have escalation protocols. So, when there were instances that there's no staffing available, we're able to connect with that office and Central to be able to address those issues, because we want to make sure that those services are readily available for young people.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Is there a plan to lower the class sizes this year as well?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: That is a great question— that is a great question that we would have to work with New York City Public Schools understanding all the space that we have available to open up more classrooms and buildings.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And what are some of the issues you saw last year that New York City Public Schools, I know they're not here, but DYCD can say hey, we're gonna work on this to improve this area?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Uh, I think...
(CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: (INAUDIBLE) you can talk about the curriculum that you've been having conversations with them about.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Yeah, I think one of the things that we want to highlight is that summer learning happens everywhere, right?

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Right.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: And I think, as the commissioner mentioned before, over the past couple of years, we've seen New York City Public Schools being more amenable and understanding that enrichment happens all day. So we do know that New York City Public Schools intends to implement some enrichment activities during the day and connect with CBOs on how that works, right? Because our CBOs, they know how to run enrichment. They do it very well and how we can collaborate together, offering sustainability projects, financial literacy classes— for all grades— on top of what already CBOs offer in the afternoon. And we hope that is another driver. And we're looking forward to experiential learning that happens outside of the classroom as well, a.k.a. more trips that happen during the day which will also drive more attendance.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you, Council Member Joseph.

I have a couple of Summer Rising questions. I know you mentioned parent orientation is a requirement, but what happens when a principal denies parent orientation? I actually had a couple of complaints from parents last summer where the principal did not allow for parent orientation to happen. And the principal themselves wouldn't even meet with the parents. So what happens in those instances?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: So in any instance where there is a disconnect with partnerships between both our central offices, we have those escalation protocols at the district, the school level, to be able to engage school level folks to ensure that these events happen. The benefit as well that ,you know, if it can't happen in the physical space for ,you know, scheduling or capacity reasons, we can also have Zoom options for families because we do know working parents, they get home...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: But the issue isn't with the parents and them having the option, the issue is that the principal is telling the CBO that they can't do

1 it, then it gets shutdown. So what does that look
2 like, especially when it's a requirement on the CBO
3 side and not the DOE side. So how do we mitigate
4 that? I mean, obviously, if they called me and I
5 started to be a crazy person-- but how do we mitigate
6 that? Because that is a factor, and I had a number of
7 parents complaining that they couldn't meet with the
8 principal, and they didn't let them have the
9 orientation. So then the CBO was doing one on one,
10 which I, uh, shoutout to them, but that was just
11 unfortunate.
12

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Well, we want to
14 avoid those types of incidents this year. So as we
15 hear of them, because it shouldn't be happening,
16 CBOs and principals work on a collaborative planning
17 tool, which should include all phases of pre-planning
18 and startup to the program and parent orientations
19 play a huge factor.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, I'm aware, and that was
21 a huge issue, so I just wanted to make sure. And I
22 know at the last week's hearing on DOE, they cited
23 that attending Summer Rising showed an increase.
24 However, the kids that also attend our Cornerstones
25 see the same increase. Just want to point that out,

1 because I want it to be clear that, like you said
2 yourself, education does not just take place in the
3 class. And even one of suggestions, I'm thinking, I
4 don't... we've been talking about trips. Teachers
5 could go on trips. I don't know why they don't do it
6 during the day. I don't know why all of a sudden
7 during the summer they can't. They can do a trip
8 during the day, because the CBO is gonna be there
9 regardless. So maybe that's one of the things that we
10 can push for, Council Member Joseph... (CROSS-TALK)

12 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And that's actually one of
13 the things that Daniel and Susan have been actually
14 talking with our partners over at New York City
15 Public Schools. And I believe when I was listening to
16 the testimony of the chancellor and her team, they
17 did acknowledge that that school trips can happen
18 during the day.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: They can, but we know that
20 that don't be happening, which is why they happen on
21 Friday.

22 But I will say this, I did speak to the
23 chancellor afterwards, and she said she heard all of
24 my concerns, and she did not know that I had such a
25

disdain for this program. So she wants to sit down to go through some things.

I have... and I do, because, again, even at the last hearing, even things that our side does well, we should be in charge of ,like, recruitment and application and those things. (UNINTELLIGIBLE) I'm not going reiterate that right now.

All right, the United Neighborhood Houses evaluated the Summer Rising program and found that 37% of CBO staff respondents are reporting that applicants and registration process is still challenging. And 35% of the CBO staff respondents identify a lack of coordination between DOE, DYCD, and CBOs— and the CBO has another challenge they facing for Summer Rising. Has the Agency had a discussion with the providers regarding this concern and related to Summer Rising programs?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: So yes, so we've done a number of things. First and foremost, we know that we wanted to make sure that CBOs had access to the same MySchool system. So that was something we were able to accomplish last year. Meaning that school principals and our CBO site directors were able to see the exact same portal.

One of the enhancements we made was filtering the wait list by grade level, because we know that if two kids from second grade went out, but the wait list only had kindergarten through first grade and weren't able to go down that list. So we were able to work with New York City Public Schools...

UNKNOWN: (Sneeze)

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Bless you...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Bless you. It's cold in here, right?

(LAUGHTER)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We are freezing!

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: I don't know what's going on.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Like, I'm just trying... I'm freezing to death, I'm sniffing. Thank you, I'm sorry, continue...

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: So yeah, so we definitely made those enhancements to make sure that it's a lot more fluid.

Another key component was making sure that CBOs had access to MySchools and making sure that through our DYCD Connect portal, that all you needed to do was update your contacts there, and that data would

then transfer into MySchools so you'd be able to get into the system as well.

So those were two major, you know, it's kind of in the weeds. It's what (INAUDIBLE) the work, but it makes it much easier for the CBOs to navigate the system.

We also host ongoing sessions for all programs, not just Summer Rising, (INAUDIBLE) based as well, on all summer programming content, but it's also inclusive of the training, the portal, having access. We have a set team in place to connect with every single CBO. If they have any technical issue, they should be reaching out to us directly. They know who we are. We bother them all the time, we send them thousands of emails. So if there's any particular issue that a CBO has with the system, they should be reaching out to us and we can troubleshoot immediately.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So is the information transported over to DYCD Connect? Is that a seamless process or does the CBO still have to enter it into the system?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: They wouldn't have to enter it into the system...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: They should be, already as a process itself, updating DYCD Connect whenever you know a site director changes or any contacts has to be updated. Meaning you have a new cell phone number, you should be updating that. And then that data is then being able to transfer over, so that they can log in seamlessly into MySchools and be able to see their portfolio of applicants.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, I have some in the weeds questions that I'm not going to do right now, because I have questions about some (UNINTELLIGIBLE) and I'm not going to do that to you now. I call you later about it.

Council Member Brewer?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. I do want you to know that all the Summer Youth Employment Program students have all been hired in my office. So thank you very much. They're all excellent.

My question is, because we're in budget season, and I've been in budget season for the last 20 years, 30 years, 40 years.

My question is, how many contracts do you have in total? You have them more than anybody else, any other agency. And what percentage are paid on time?

CFO BAILEY: Well, Chair... Council Member Brewer, we have about 1,400 contracts in our agency for FY25, we had 1,455; FY26 we are looking at 1,367; the drop is primarily attributed to the discretionary portfolio. So you can say we have about a baseline of about 1,400 contracts in our agency.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. But how many are paid on time, 1,400? No...

CFO BAILEY: I can't say that many are paid on time at this time.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Can you give me some percentage or...

UNKNOWN: It's zero.

CFO BAILEY: Well, right now we're in a transition year, so I can't speak to that. We're in a transition year from PASSPort and we're all transitioning. So the reporting is still not available for us to be able to effectively determine cycle time.

But, anecdotally, I will not sit here and state that all of our invoices are not are paid on time, that's just not accurate.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Do you, uh, how about from last year? In other words, how about from FY24? Do you have that?

CFO BAILEY: Twenty-four, typically prior the transition into the past, but our invoice turnaround time is five to seven days.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. All right, this is the biggest issue. You know that. So you're gonna let us... let the chair know what we can all do to try to improve the on time payment? You'll let the chair know? It is the issue. It's out in the streets. It's at Fairway. It's at the (INAUDIBLE)... it's everywhere. So we all want to help, but it it's really gotta improve.

CFO BAILEY: We agree.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's it? Okay, great.

So we're gonna call this the lightning round, because I have a whole bunch of questions, and we still have another agency. Let's keep the answers short.

All right. So we are going to go into ONS. Is Darryl coming back up?

UNKNOWN: Yes, is.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yep, let's go.

Okay Neighborhood Safety has a budget headcount of 48 in Fiscal 2026, but a current actual headcount of 23 as January.

Has there been any change to the actual headcount since January?

According to the to the reporting provided to council from DYCD, the Cure Violence Program with ONS has an actual headcount of 11. Is this an accurate headcount for the program?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Yeah, the headcounts are accurate. I did allude earlier that we are getting some of those in FY26, so that's why they're not on board.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. There's a total of 24 contractors and providers for the Cure Violence Program citywide. The greatest number of contracts and largest funding is in Brooklyn. Has there been any expansion of sites in Brooklyn since 2024? If so, which precincts and sites?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Since 2024? No, we haven't expanded any of the contracts.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And is there a specific reason why the biggest funding sources are in

Brooklyn? Because it's a... because it's big, is that...

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: I mean, of course, geographically, but also population density— and those are the areas that were identified and precincts by having the greatest need, if you will, to place some of those programs and contracts.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: There's a large number of vacancies in ONS as a result of hiring. Is there an issue with having experience to fill these critical positions? Are you having an issue filling them?

(PAUSE)

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Chair Stevens, are you referring to provider staff or agency... DYCD agency staff? (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Agency... the agency staff. Because you do have a headcount issue. So, are you having issues?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: So, Chair Stevens, so we do have some vacancies that we're waiting for approval to hire on. In addition to that, we are going to get additional paras and headcount come next fiscal year.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What are the permission... what are the vacancies there that you need permission to hire for currently? Do you have those?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: For the program staff, I want to say we have two initiative managers... Actually I have it here. Nice. Two initiative managers, one program assistant, and then two borough managers.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay.

So I'm gonna go into some questions around one of the reductions that we had last year. The CJU (Community Justice Unit) Budget was cut and ,you know, because we were in a economic crisis.

DYCD now, is there a fiscal ,like, we are out of the fiscal emergency, do you think there's a possibility for us to restore the CJI funding at the past levels this year?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Chair Stevens, are you referring to the Legal Aid...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah...

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Society? Okay, I'm sorry...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm, I'm sorry.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: You said CJ...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (INAUDIBLE)

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Yeah, it's the division within, I'm sorry...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm sorry, mm-hmm.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: So, yes. And as we testified before, that cut came at a time when the City's budget was in dire straits...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: and we had to make drastic budget cuts in that November. It was cut by \$2.5 million, as you know.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Which left us with \$2.5 million of a contract with Legal Aid.

The team has been working with them closely on the work that they do. And it's very important work to our providers across the system.

I could tell you now that the work they've been doing, they've provided legal services to over 325 cases of legal services, which include representation, advice, briefing services. They've done workshops across the city connecting with our CMS providers. Attendees to those workshops have been over 3,900.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: So they are... they are still doing very vital work across the city. And we work with them closely to actualize whether or not, uh, how the cuts (INAUDIBLE) affecting.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I mean they are still doing the work, but they still need the funding. So just thinking about when the CMA organizations rely on CJI legal services to meet community needs and support their mission to eradicate gun violence.

So what is DYCD's plan to ,you know, either fight for it or try to get this restored? Because this is something that works hand in hand, and the overall mission around CMS, and we don't want to just have piecemeal. So what are we doing around that?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So I had the opportunity to really see their services up close and personal in terms of the way they have supported not only the CMS system but our participants across the board. As Deputy Commissioner Rattray said, their support and their service is vital to what we're doing. Those are going to be ongoing conversations that we're gonna have with OMB.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

And I guess the last question I'll just ask around this is ,you know, CJI was critical in the Public Safety Plan. And public safety has been a key aspect. So just thinking about, for the last year, how do we continue to sustain public safety and talk about reducing gun violence without this?

So I know you said you're gonna have conversations with OMB, definitely will add this to my list of things to go and talk to them about as well. But I do think this is something that we do have to talk about, because as CMS is building out, and we know it's reducing gun violence- I believe the comptroller put out a report recently around it- Council put out a report around CMS's work as well. So we want to make sure that, as it's building out, that we are not leaving out critical pieces, and just also just ensuring that ensuring that, uh, now that it's under DYCD, we don't want it to be like, oh it's over there now, and it's messing up.

So I want to make sure that we have all the tools that are necessary for us to be successful in what was given to us and not just piecemeal. So I will leave it at that.

I guess Deputy Commissioner Haskell is gonna come up, because we're gonna be moving on to Runaway Youth. Thank you, Darryl, for your services.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: (LAUGHS) Thank you, Chair Stevens.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So I want to talk a little bit about the additional 100 beds that we have and some RHY stuff.

So the Preliminary Budget includes a baseline of \$6 million for the 100 additional beds for young people ages 21 to 24. Is the funding significant enough to meet the needs of the RHY programming?

CFO BAILEY: Yes it is. We are grateful for this funding, as you mentioned, and we're hopeful that ,you know, we'll be ready to move forward and implement it.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Have we already identified the providers that are going to be implementing these 100 beds?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Not yet. We... Senior Director Samantha Dawkins began immediately engaging with our providers to understand where there's capacity both in existing programs and for new programs...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm>

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: and so we're in the midst of those negotiations with providers now and hope to land a plan soon.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What's your anticipated date to have these 100 beds online?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We will roll out the 100 beds throughout FY26. It's our goal to open some of them immediately. And as we're in conversations about available sites and how close they are to state certification, we'll understand better what that timeline is going to look like. They'll roll out over the course of the fiscal year.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. How are you like divvying up the beds when you're thinking about it, and will there be ,like, an even distribution amongst boroughs or are you starting with providers? Could you talk a little bit about that process as well?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I think we'll see—based preliminarily on our discussions, I think we'll see a nice distribution across the boroughs, and yeah for different populations.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And I also want to make sure, because we also have a conversation with the providers about capacity...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. And I will say this, listen, when I was out here advocating for the beds, we were also talking to providers at the same time to make sure that this could be a fast turnaround.

So I want that to be on record too. This was not coming out of anywhere. Everyone was on board and knew that I was yelling about this. So my hope is that the providers are prepared.

Well, I know that they are prepared, because we talked about this beforehand. So whatever support you need from me, let me know so we can continue to make sure that this happens.

And just the last question on this is, just thinking about with the additional beds, are there specific places we already kind of see gaps that we want to try to use to fill these 100 beds? Whether it's like boroughs or ,you know, locations? Are we thinking about that, too? Like, there was like great need maybe, like, oh, in the Bronx, they didn't have

enough beds, let's start there. Was that is that being taken into consideration?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We are definitely looking at utilization and demand in terms of how to finalize where these beds go.

On the first hand, our plan is to fund homeless young adult beds for the older youth, noting that there's a high need there and we have just 60 beds funded right now.

The other thing we're seeing is high demand for male beds, so we're taking that into consideration. So we will absolutely be looking at meeting the needs of the specific demographics.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you so much.

So we're gonna move on to Saturday Night Lights. I don't know if you want to come back up, Mr. Darryl. I'm making sure you get all your steps in today. And, Val, if you want to get ready, SYEP is coming up after that.

(LAUGHTER)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, all right, you know how much I love this program, Darryl. I'm being facetious.

All right, what's the attendance for the Saturday Night Lights Program in Fiscal 2024?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Great question. In FY 2024 we had a total enrollment of 8,830 participants.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You said 8,000 what?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Eight hundred and thirty.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Eight hundred and thirty. All right.

Have there been changes in the number of borough site locations for the SNL programs? I believe there were some additional add-ons for that.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: So we had one program that dropped out. So we're currently at 135 locations across the city.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm. What was the program? Why did they drop out? And where was it?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: I need to get back to you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What borough was it in?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: It was a Manhattan based program.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. All right. What is the DYCD's Fiscal 2025 budget for SNL programs?

CFO BAILEY: Hi.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (INAUDIBLE)

CFO BAILEY: Budget is approximately \$5 million.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: \$5 million? I just want to point out...

CFO BAILEY: A little bit lighter, around \$4 million.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: \$4 million?

CFO BAILEY: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I would like to point out, I asked the attendance, and I know you gave me what the enrollment was. But you think I didn't pick up on it, it took me a minute, but what was the attendance before... (CROSS-TALK)

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Chair, Chair Stevens, I... Let me get back... Let us get back to you the average attendance. I... We have those rates...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: But I don't have them with me.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm, like, wait a minute, am I crazy? No, that was enrollment. I didn't ask that but, okay. So you'll get back to me with the attendance percentages?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Got it. I know... I know where to find you, too. I know you where you work at.

What were the overtime costs associated with this program last year?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Chair Stevens, I'm assuming that you're referring to NYPD overtime costs?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, what was that? You don't know?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: I'm not... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah.

UNKNOWN: You're not privy...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Just say you don't know.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: I'm not familiar... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, it's not (INAUDIBLE) got it.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: (INAUDIBLE) the overtime.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Got it.

Other than attendance, how does DYCD measure the success of the program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Great question. I mean, from the programmatic lens, you know, our program managers go out, assess the programs, how are they doing with recruitment, retention, quality of services, implementation? Essentially, are they trying to create a vibrant program and community within that space that they're in? And a safe space where they're also connecting with NYPD as well.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And I also want to add this, that we heard you from previous testimonies. So there is, and there's going to be... there's a survey that we've completed and some numbers that we have associated with the program. We're still going through the... what that assessment is and what the data is showing us. We would love to read you in on that when we finalize the numbers.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely. I mean, that was one of the things that I've been hooping and

hollering about for the last couple of years, just around the evaluation of this program because...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Two-and-a-half years.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: All right, fine, two... No, it was three years.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Okay, three years...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: This is three years, because the whole time...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Two-and-a-half years of my tenure... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You wasn't here, right?

(LAUGHTER)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: He wasn't here, right. It's not my fault he wasn't here. I, it's been three years, no. But... And it's really about, like, how are we measuring the success of this program? Because honestly, if we like, zoom out, right, if we're looking at DYCD, we're zooming in, and it's, like, okay, we're serving the kids. But when we zoom out, and then I see that we are increasing in gun violence and juvenile folks ending up in jail, it's, like, okay, so is this program serving what we need?

Because you stated that we're at like maybe \$4 million for this... (CROSS-TALK)

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: (INAUDIBLE)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So we're between \$4 and \$5 million, is this doing what we actually want it to do, is always going to be my question. So we need to have data to back this up. Because I don't... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And we do.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I don't think that we are, because...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We do and, again, we're going through the numbers, we're going through the survey, we will be able to read you into exactly what the data is showing us.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely. But, again, if I'm zooming out, and with the great leadership of my Speaker, who gave me ACS and DYCD, I'm able to evaluate on a whole different level than I have in the past. And the numbers that we are at, literally, I was at Crossroads yesterday, it's full to capacity. And it's crazy, and, so, for me, I'm thinking, I don't want to talk about what they do when they're after, I want to talk about prevention. And this is what... this is why I said, you're the expert, and not Jacques, because you have to come up with a

1 solution for them not to come there. So, for me, that
2 is really what the driving force is.

3 And, again, young people, what they saying they
4 want? Jobs, not programs. So thank you Mr. Restler
5 (sic) for your time. You can now leave the dance. I'm
6 looking for Ms. Valerie. Please come to the front of
7 the delegation.

8 (LAUGHTER)

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So I'm gonna start my speech
10 off real quick.

11 SYEP, obviously, we love this program, but we
12 have to reimagine youth employment in the city. We
13 just have to. It just... it just can't continue to be
14 this way because again, even in the Crossroads
15 yesterday, they're like, "Miss, when I get out I need
16 a job," and da, da, da, and we are not offering that
17 to them.

18 So we... it's a program that we obviously love
19 and we want to keep, but we also need to, at the same
20 time, walk and chew gum, reimagine workforce for
21 young people because this is not enough.

22 And I know we've extended Work, Learn, Grow, but
23 it still has restrictions there, and I think
24 holistically, I mean, I met with the chancellor, I
25

1 met with her also yesterday, and we talked about the
2 things that they're doing around workforce
3 development. So I really think that we all just need
4 to come to the table to really come up with a
5 comprehensive plan to talk about how many internships
6 we can provide, how many jobs we can provide and all
7 the things, because I am concerned.

8 We are building out a facility at Horizon to add
9 additional beds, which means we are... if we build
10 it, they will come. Which means young... more young
11 people will be in secure detention.

12 Our close to home programs are busting out at the
13 seams. So this is a problem, and we have to
14 understand we are in a crisis. Because we know that
15 once they get touched by the juvenile system, they're
16 going to stay there, and they're going to be in a
17 revolving door.

18 So we as, a collective, have to come up with a
19 real comprehensive plan because every single young
20 person is like, "Miss, I need a job. You don't want
21 me to be on the street? Give me a job." And they're
22 like... and I don't know why nobody wants a minimum
23 wage job, but that's some other story.

So, hello, welcome to the dais. What is the target number for SYEP slots for 2026?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: So we're aiming to serve over a 100,000 across the whole system. Some of those slots live with DOE and CUNY, so DYCD is aiming to serve over 97,000 in our system.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does the Agency have plans to increase the slots for youth ages 16 to 24? No, right?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Increase over... no.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. Okay I think it's, no.

How many providers manage the SYEP slots?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: We have 65 unique providers who hold 177 contracts across them.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How would the Agency respond to federal administration's threats to cut off funding for DEI supporting organizations? Have the providers expressed concerns about the modifications to their DEI?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So we are moving forward, we have not in any form or fashion rolled back any DEI initiative in DYCD.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Have you had any talks? I know maybe agencies...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: No...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: are feeling some type of... Go head?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We haven't had any concerns with DYCD when... in terms of our program and DEI. We have been in communications with our nonprofit partners to let them know that they should not have—although; they do have concerns that we are supporting them and we're moving forward with our programs.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Listen, I agree. That's ridiculous, and I know we've been winning in the courts, but I know that does not mean providers do not still feel uncomfortable, especially some organizations who are a lot more vocal about the work around diversity, equity, and inclusion. So I think we just all need to work together and...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And we will continue. And just ,you know, shoutout to our providers who are doing SYEP Pride, that's one of the initiatives that the Mayor had introduced in his State of the City

about a year and a half ago, and we still continue to be able to push that program.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Recently DYCD implemented a new policy to de-enroll SYEP employees, uhm, enrollees who did not complete the Key Work Readiness Tasks prior to July 1. This policy was initiated in efforts to reopen those slots for those applicants. How many students did the agency de-enroll in Fiscal Year 2025?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: So I can get you all of that info offline. I don't want to misspeak. But I will say that we were really excited about the policy, because what we had seen in the past was that after we enrolled a young person, a lot of times they weren't showing up for the job, they weren't completing the work readiness training, and that slot was essentially going unfilled. So what we able to do last year was have several thousand more students participate in SYEP and fill slots when other young people didn't show up.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Is the agency tracking the applicants that are already de-enrolled?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Yeah absolutely. I have it for you. I can get it for you offline.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The deadline for the application submission was March 14, 2025, how many applicants... applications were received?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: So that was the public deadline, but we are still actively recruiting in our special initiatives so I don't have a final number for you yet. I will say that, what I've seen so far, is the numbers are really big. We have a lot of interest in the program this year. I expect that we will far exceed— I've already seen we've exceeded the application number that we had last year, and I think it's going to keep growing.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does DYCD include feedback from the youth who attended the SYEP program and its evaluation of the program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Absolutely. Every program year, we do two surveys in the middle of the program and at the end of the program, and ask all sorts of questions from, did you feel supported through the program, did you enjoy your employment experience, how was the pre employment training?

I mean we have a whole host of questions I could show you this (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How do you use that to continue to build out the program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Yeah, we... my team goes deep into that every year. Everything from what we include in the pre-employment training portions, the curriculum, and content— takes that into consideration, and our conversation with employers and what we think young people need.

I mean a perfect example is that we saw that young people really wanted to be out in person and working, so our numbers have moved in that direction. We have more and more in person placements ,you know, coming out of COVID, than we'd had over the last few years in response to what young people are telling us they want.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So this is one of the... even with SYEP, one of my bigger pet peeves, which is the SYEP project based learning program for youths 14 and 15, and they only gets \$700 for the summer. Has there been any consideration by the Agency to increase the stipend?

CFO BAILEY: At this time, no, Chair Stevens, there has not been any discussions regarding increasing the stipend.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What was enrollment for 14, 15 years old last year?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Last year we had over 25,000 young people enroll in the younger youth program.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Did they all complete it? Do you have numbers of ,like, who stayed and who didn't?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: I can get that to you, but the vast majority have completed at least half of the hours, got half the stipend, most completed the whole program.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, \$700 really low. I eggs is \$15, y'all.

In the last committee hearing in Fiscal 2026 budget... wait, hold on... All right, back. Okay I'm going to jump to COMPASS and SONYC.

DYCD is preparing a new procurement for COMPASS and SONYC afterschool programs in the next year, making the first since 2015. What conversations has the Agency had with advocates regarding the redesign and reimagining youth programming? The SONYC Program, I know we talked about not having the RFP, but as we... I mean not, having a concept paper, but as we are building it out, what are we talking to programs

about? I know you said that you were having focus groups. You had a couple of focus groups in prep for this. Just trying to see if are there other conversations that's going on to prepare for the concept paper that'll be coming out and stuff like that. Are we doing anything else?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: There's just ongoing conversations around program models.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: On going conversations.

I have some questions regarding the Fatherhood program. What type of outreach has DYCD made to reach the young men that are currently part of the Fatherhood program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Thank you, Chair. For the concept paper, which came out a while ago, and as you know the request for proposal is out in the street. The Agency conducted a number of focus groups and interviews. So we talked to current participants, formerly served participants, as well as providers and advocates in New York City and elsewhere, actually. So we did solicit feedback from younger as well as older dads.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does the Agency track the outcome of men who exit the program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: We do. We do, uh, initially, during their term of service, and at the close of their term of service in the program, we ask about their satisfaction with the program and if they (INAUDIBLE) the outcomes of the program.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many men are enrolled in this program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Currently... oh, I forgot my paper. Give me one second.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No worries.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: The current model serves 1,500 dads a year. And I just wanna to see if I have the current enrollment, I think we're at about 1,300 and so for this year- 1,350.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirteen-fifty?

Where are the programs currently being provided? And do you have a breakdown by borough? And if you don't have it, can you send it?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: I can follow up with you. We have programs in every borough, but I can follow up with you and give you (INAUDIBLE)...

(CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And if you... possible if you can break it down by council district, if not, we'll take just the boroughs.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What is the attendance rate... Oh, well, you'll get back to me. Because, uhm, when you send it over, if you could send over, like, the attendance rate for each of the locations and things like that.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How do you quantify the success of this program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: There's one key measure, which is the self-reported success of the dads themselves. So when they enter the program, they're asked a series of questions, which we take as a baseline, what they characterize as the nature of the co-parenting relationship with whoever has custody of the children, how much time do they spend with the children, how much treasure or child support owed or arrears have they been able to contribute? And as they spend time in the program, we look to see for movement along those measures.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The additional \$2.1 million in Fiscal 2025, and \$5 million in the out years for the program, indicates the needs and success of the pilot program. Has the Agency had conversations regarding implementing a similar program for mothers?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: You want to reply?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yes we have. And one of the things that was important to us in building the RFP and the concept paper was to include mothers in the conversations.

We're gonna be leaning heavily on coparenting and just really looking at the toolbox that's needed to have a successful coparenting between the custodial or noncustodial dad and the mother.

So, yes, and we're gonna continue to hear the voices of the mothers as well to make sure that every voice around is being heard.

I also want to emphasize this, uh, that we're looking and we're engaging in young men who are 18 and under. Because we think that's also a level of complexities that we have not engaged in past, which we will be engaging in the future.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So I wanted to just say, I'm really just happy to hear that the Fatherhood program

1 is thriving. I know we had a hearing about this, I
2 think probably was like a year or so ago, when we
3 talked about this. Too often fathers are overlooked
4 in this process, and there's not a lot of services
5 and supports for them. So I think that this is a
6 great initiative. I think also looking at teen
7 parents is also important. I was a teen mom, and
8 understanding that there was not a lot of services
9 that were provided, not a lot of places to go, it's a
10 lot of just figuring the things out. So I do think as
11 this is building out, I think the coparent strategy
12 is important.

14 One of the things that I've been trying to take
15 on since I got an office in my district specifically
16 is doing more parent groups and parent sharing.

17 Parents are struggling right now, especially when
18 they don't know how to reach their young person, and
19 they're working, and all these things.

20 So there is a need for this. So whatever supports
21 you guys need from me around building things out, you
22 guys know I'm a thought partner, but I do think that
23 this is an important issue and topic. And even when
24 we're thinking about lack of supports around, you
25 know, not even lack of supports, but the lack of

things that we have offered when we are talking about young people. If we're not helping and supporting the parents, sometimes it's null and void.

So I'm really happy that this Father's Initiative is building out. Now we're talking about mothers. And, honestly, just having a whole system around parenting, I think, is necessary and a key piece that has been missing. So as this is building out, I would love to be a part of it and continue the good work...

(CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And in addition to that, the family dynamic, right...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: because we know if we're dealing with a young person who is 18 and under, or... I just recently was part of a teen group over at Marcy Projects in Brooklyn, and we met with a few young people, 16-year-olds, 15-year-olds who have one and two children. Then family dynamics also extends to the legal guardians as well. Right? Because the legal guardians are also struggling with resources and help.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yep. So whatever I can do to be supportive, and if we need to get more money,

because that's what I do best, let me know. Because, honestly, I think this is a big... a big missing piece. Because even when I'm going to community meetings and talking about public safety, I have parents who are like, "My kid is out of control. I don't know what to do."

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Mm-hmm

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And sometimes they just need a support network and a place to go to have these conversations. So I think this is a necessary and an important piece.

I'm just gonna have a couple more questions about Train & Earn and then we're be done. Look at that- look at that! We might be done early.

How many providers are in the Train & Earn program? I know I've been having you all go back and forth. They should have probably organized it. You know what, don't worry. Next year I will organize it to make sure you all sit there and so you don't have to go back and forth but...

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: It's okay, you're keeping us on our toes.

So we recently did an RFP, we made 18 awards to train and earn providers.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Which boroughs and districts have the highest attendance rates for this program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: I will get back to you on the specifics. But broadly we're in ,you know, where you would expect us to be Brooklyn, Bronx, but there are programs in all five boroughs.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many young adults are currently enrolled in the Train & Earn Program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: We are in the process of enrolling. Our enrollment goal is 1,369 this year. I think we have between 300 and 400 right now, but it's actively enrolling, so that should go up every day.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How do attendees learn about this program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: So first and foremost, our providers are the point of contact for young people. So they're all on the ground recruiting. And we're working internally with our Communications Team to share that the program is recruiting— always. So, it's on our social media. Uhm...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How would you rate the success of the program? And are there metrics that you are measuring to show its success?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Absolutely. So Train & Earn is funded by WIOA, and WIOA comes along with some really specific measures that we're constantly looking at. So measurable skills gains for every participant in the program, job placements at different points in time after they exit the program, uh, credential attainments. All of those things are things that we measure and then course correct.

But, of course, this is a brand new set of providers so they're just starting to enroll their programs now.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: You're welcome. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Look at that. Ya'll made it through. We're all done - for now.

Oh, wait! Oh, look, someone is back. You snuck in there. Almost, sorry, well, it isn't me. Make it quick, because, I mean...

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Make it quick, okay. And, in fact, you may have asked this, so forgive if is this a repeat.

Actually two things. Wanted to put on the record that the... we know that the Council's IOI record, uhm, the Council's IOI Initiative is \$2.6 million, is managed by HRA. And so the \$14.1 million, DYCD IOI Program is different. And I know you're gonna get back to me, but I just wanted to state that for the record.

The other quick question, which you may have answered, so forgive a repeat, but would DYCD be able to supply the Council with a copy of their Preliminary Racial Equity Plan? Did we talk about this?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We did not, and it's surprising that chair didn't even ask that.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: She has to be sworn in.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER RAMIREZ: I was sworn in.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: She was? Okay.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER RAMIREZ: Thank you for the question.

UNKNOWN: (INAUDIBLE)

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER RAMIREZ: Yes. We will be happy to provide a copy of the preliminary plan once it is released. We've been working with The Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice to finalize the plan, which our agency plan, and all agency plans, will be integrated into the citywide plan.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: And would you be able to describe at all how the work of the Agency works to reduce or perpetuate racial inequity?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER RAMIREZ: That is the mission of DYCD. That is the focus of all of our initiatives.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: I know you're...

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER RAMIREZ: (INAUDIBLE)...
(CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: I know a little ahead of other agencies and started that work in earnest like agency wide many years ago. So I do recognize that, but we would definitely like to see the report and certainly how you are measuring kind of the metrics of that.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER RAMIREZ: Absolutely, happy to share.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: I think that's it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well thank you, and I'm sure Chair Williams will be happy that you asked that question. And we do want to see the report, and this is a citywide report, because I believe, at this point, we are 465 days late with that, but that is not your fault, because you said you did your part.

So thank you for doing your part, and thank you for showing up here today, and we're really happy, and I'm happy that you guys got through it. People are smiling. And thank you, and we will take a short... we will take a 10 minute recess until we go back to ACS. Thank you. (GAVEL SOUND) (GAVELING OUT)

PANEL: Thank you.

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Good afternoon and welcome back to today's scheduled programming. I am Council Member Althea Stevens, Chair of Children and Youth.

The second part of the day's committee hearing is on Fiscal 2026 Primary Preliminary Budget and the 2025 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report for the Administration for Children Services better known as ACS. Thank you, Commissioner Jess Dannhauser, for

joining us today. We've also been joined by okay,
none of the other members are here yet. Oh, look at
that, Lincoln's here. Y'all ought to watch out for
this guy. If he's here, it's to start trouble. Not my
fault. Just telling you.

(LAUGHTER)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Following testimony and
questions with ACS we'll be from hearing public
around three, so we've enough time.

Thank you for all the advocates and community
members who have joined us today. I will keep my
comments here brief and request that the commissioner
keep his oral testimony brief, so we can move through
questions to the from the council members.

ACS Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Budget is \$2.8
billion and \$39.2 million greater than the Fiscal
2025 Adopted Budget.

The Preliminary Plan includes increased
investments in foster care and several youth
programs, but does not restore previous cuts
including programs such as Close to Home and
preventive services.

I was delighted to see that the data in the PMMR
showed a 21% increase in low income child care

vouchers enrollment in the first four months of Fiscal 2025 when compared to Fiscal 2024.

Due to the successful outreach and more efficient application process, ACS also saw an increase in the number of families entering child welfare prevention services as compared to prior years, which means they are getting vital support services they need.

Juvenile justice is an area of ongoing concern to the Council and myself. According to the PMMR, ACS saw an average of daily population of juvenile detention rise 22% in the first four months of Fiscal 2025 compared to the same period during Fiscal 2024. Juvenile detention increased by 32% between those same periods, driven by an increase in arrest including ones related to gun violence.

I would like to learn more from ACS's strategy to stabilize the juvenile justice system and ensuring that trauma informed, community based treatment is provided whenever possible, as well as what ACS's vision is for keeping the city's kids on the right track out of the juvenile justice system.

You'll be happy to hear in my last hearing I talked a lot about how DYCD also needs to play a critical role in this this process. And I look

forward to meeting with everyone for us for us to really come up with some real concrete solutions as we are seeing these numbers progressing.

I also look forward to hearing from ACS in dealing with its staffing issues, as well as capital upgrades and conditions at the two secured detention facilities, Horizon and Crossroad— and thank you guys for hosting us at Crossroads yesterday.

I look forward to discuss the budget actions including the Preliminary Plan Performance Metrics, including the PMMR, ACS Capital Plan, and a vital program such as Close to Home, prevention services, childcare, and foster care.

I am particularly interested in here how ACS is strategizing to meet the multifaceted needs of at risk families across the city, and working to increase the utilization of preventive services that ensures the health, safety, and stability of families and children. It is the Council's responsibility to ensure that the City's budget is fair, transparent, and accountable to all New Yorkers. As the chair of Children and Youth Services, I will continue to push for accountability, accuracy, and ensure that the

budget reflects the needs and interests of the City's youth.

At this time, I would like to thank the committee staff for their help preparing for this hearing, Saiyemul Hamid, Julia K. Haramis, Christina Yellamaty, Elizabeth Arzt, and the entire A-Team back at the district office.

At this time, I will turn it over to committee staff to swear people in... Oh, so, we have Council Member Restler, and Council Member Joseph has joined us again, thank you for coming back. And now I will turn it over to counsel to swear the folks in.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hi, good afternoon. Please right hand.

Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, in your testimony before this committee, and to respond honestly to council member questions?

Jess Dannhauser?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Winette Saunders?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Margaret Pletnikoff?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, you may begin.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Good afternoon, My name is Jess Dannhauser, I'm the Commissioner of the New York City Administration for Children's Services. I'm joined today by our First Deputy Commissioner, Winette Saunders, and Margaret Pletnikoff, who is the Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Finance.

Thank you, Chair Stevens, and the members of the Children's Youth Services Committee for holding today's hearing on our Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2026. I appreciate the opportunity to share the important work we are doing at ACS to keep children safe and provide support to youth and families.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the ACS team, as well as our colleagues and partners at the provider agencies, for the incredible work that they have done this past year. We have made substantial progress and I'm grateful.

Supporting and uplifting families and communities so that they have the resources, information, and services they need to thrive is critical to our mission. Our prevention providers, community partnerships, Family Enrichment Centers, and Office of Child Safety and Injury Prevention do this in

every community of the city each and every day. These supports, along with child care assistance, enable children and families to be safe and well.

Over the past year, the number of children enrolled in childcare with the support of an ACS issued voucher has increased by 37%. ACS has made a particularly robust effort to expand access to childcare assistance for families with limited incomes that are engaged in work, school, training, and to families that are unhoused.

Compared with October 2022, when ACS opened applications citywide, the number of children enrolled in care with costs offset by a low income voucher has climbed from 10,683 to 62,555 as of the February.

We also streamlined our application processes, reducing application processing time to an average of 15 days.

We are now advocating at the state level for the funding needed to maintain these gains. We appreciate the Council's support in this effort.

This past year we also implemented our school-based early support prevention model. This new model aims to provide families with meaningful and

effective support while avoiding unnecessary child protective investigations by more easily connecting families in need to services and resources.

The school-based early support programs aim to address stressors— academic or behavioral— that may impact the child's well-being, help meet families' concrete needs, and strengthen social connections and engagement with the school community. All of which reduce the likelihood of future child welfare involvement.

Each of the provider agencies offering these programs has identified at least three partner elementary and or middle schools in their district and must maintain a presence in each school.

Providers are also required to collaboratively co-design at least four school-based offerings per year that reflect the needs and priorities of the school community. Connecting families to our free, voluntary continuum of prevention services that are available to all New York City families is essential. We've spent this past year continuing to get the word out about our support line, which gratuitous promotion coming, can be reached at (212) 676-7667.

Calls to the support line have increased about 600% from about 500 inquiries in 2023 to over 3,500 inquiries in 2024.

We have continued to collaborate with our sister city agencies including New York City Public Schools, Department of Homeless Services, and Health + Hospitals to both get the word out that the support line and ensure that they know how to access services for families without the need to make a report to the SCR (New York State Central Register). We have trained over 19,000 mandated reporters across schools, shelters, hospitals, and afterschool programs.

For example, ACS and New York City Public Schools have trained more than 12,000 school staff over the last 18 months about when it is necessary to make a call to the SCR because of concerns about child safety, and when it is more appropriate to seek support for a family through other means. As a result we have seen a steady reduction in the number of reports from education and child care reporters, down 11% last year, a similar reduction in the number of reports that include allegations of educational neglect.

In recent years ACS has also substantially reduced the number of families for whom it seeks orders of supervision in family court. As a result, the Adopted Budget for Fiscal Year 2025 enabled ACS to shift staffing from the Family Services Unit to our Family Preservation Program. At FPP, child protective staff provide families with intensive, short term, one-on-one support to address risk to children without the need for court intervention—Caseloads are no more than four at a time.

The program is now in every DCP (Department of City Planning) borough office and has seen significant expansion from serving just 63 families in Fiscal Year 2024 to two 243 families in 2025, and we expect much more in the year to come.

Earlier this month, we released a concept paper for the community partnerships anticipating new contracts to begin January 1, 2027.

Since 2007, ACS has partnered with community coalitions in 11 communities. In 2024, the partnership supported over 33,000 community residents. Most of the partnership's work is conducted through community-facing programming and events where community members access information,

resources and referrals. The 11 partnerships are made up of roughly 400 member organizations and individuals, each bringing distinct resources and expertise.

Members of the partnership engage in collaborative planning and social capital building, including through monthly coalition meetings where members make connections, share information, and receive updates about new local and citywide programs.

Since their inception, the partnerships have come to be known as hubs for information sharing, coordinated planning, addressing individual family needs and referrals to support.

As described in the concept paper, our vision for the future is to maintain community partnerships in the same 11 communities. This will allow the new contracts to build on our coalition infrastructure developed over the last years.

We also plan to enhance the leadership role of the community ambassadors as community assets who both co-lead engagement events and help connect local residents to resources and information; to deepen partnerships outreach to focus on quality over

1 quantity through a close understanding of families
2 needs and providing connections to resources using
3 warm handoffs; deepen the partnerships impact by
4 focusing on recruitment and retention of coalition
5 members; high quality service referrals, enhance the
6 partnership's capacity for capturing qualitative and
7 quantitative data to demonstrate their reach and
8 impact on the families.
9

10 The partnerships, I have to say, have been
11 particularly effective in welcoming new New Yorkers.

12 There's no more important mission than keeping
13 children safe from harm. For ACS safety means
14 protecting children from the harms of abuse and
15 neglect, as well as from the harms of avoidable
16 separation from their families. It is our obligation
17 to get it right every time on every case and to learn
18 the right lessons when we do not. To do this we need
19 to nurture a wide ranging organizational culture of
20 learning and improvement. We refer to it as safety
21 culture.

22 To help our CPS make the best possible decisions
23 for children and families, we provide expert coaching
24 to assure strong and supportive staff supervision,
25 strengthen our training academy to teach essential

skills, reduce caseloads so staff have time to work closely with families and children, and launched a new Leadership Development Institute to teach leaders how to build a culture where accountability thrives, not blame.

Each week more than 500 staff assemble for child stats sessions, we had nearly 700 this morning, where we review key performance indicators and dive deep into case practice, helping us make improvements in each local child protection office and implement system wide changes when necessary.

Every month we also publish a data report, called the ACS Flash, so that advocates and other stakeholders are aware of and can hold us accountable for our outcomes.

We've seen more children remain safely in their families over the past several years. For those children who were not safe at home and were placed in foster care, we have increased our rate of timely reunification while lowering the number of children who need to reenter care.

We see signs that staff are feeling this shift in culture. In the midst of staffing challenges across human services, we have seen the opposite here with

steady improvements in the number of child protective specialists retained. Today we have nearly 200 more on active duty handling child protective responses compared to two years ago, helping us maintain case loads well below national standards.

Moreover, when a critical incident involving a child occurs, we focus relentlessly on learning from that tragedy to identify ways to prevent others from being at risk in the future. ACS investigates every fatality of a New York City child that is reported to the state hotline with allegations of possible abuse or maltreatment. We complete a comprehensive review of every child fatality where the family was known to ACS within the last decade.

The review includes an analysis of case records, and for more recent cases, Human Factors Debriefings with involved staff to identify and implement potential system improvements. This approach is built on methods common in the medical field and other safety intensive industries.

I recently convened a new multidisciplinary review panel to bring experts external to ACS into the fatality review process to help identify systemic solutions that will enhance ACS's ability to protect

children and deliver high quality services. The panel includes a group of esteemed experts and child welfare stakeholders. It includes those with lived experience folks (INAUDIBLE) in child abuse, pediatrics, mental health, law enforcement, accident prevention, parent advocacy, community based services and more. The panel gives us a formal pathway to incorporate their expertise and strengthen practice policy information sharing and more. I'm grateful to our fellow city agencies who have joined that panel including the medical examiner, the Department of Health, the NYPD and others.

We hope this panel will also help New Yorkers better understand our work as we promote systemic transparency and system accountability. Their work and recommendations will be incorporated into our Annual Public Fatality Report.

When children and youth come into our care, either through foster care or the justice system, ACS is focused on ensuring that they and their parents get the services and supports that they need. For families with children in foster care, have strengthened our trauma informed approach. For some children entering foster care, this starts with our

newly renovated intake, family visiting room, beauty bar, comfort shop, and cell phone cafe at the Children's Center, all developed with the goal of reducing trauma. Nearly half of children entering foster care are placed in the care of a relative or a close family friend, which both reduces the trauma of removal and assists with timely reunification.

Foster parents are now trained using TRIPP (Trauma-Responsive and Informed Parenting Program) training model, which supports caregivers' knowledge and ability to respond to the needs of the youth in their care.

We're also taking important steps to better connect youth to appropriate and stable housing when they leave foster care. In 2023, there 269 successful housing move ins, and in 2024, we increased it to 320 youth, a 19% increase.

We have been contracting with Anthos|Home, a housing navigation and stability provider that helps youth and families with housing vouchers find apartments, get leases, move in, and then maintain their housing over the course of that first year.

We've also strengthened support for young people in care including major expansions of programs like

Fair Futures and College Choice so that youth in care can thrive into their adulthoods. In 2024, more than 4,000 youth benefited from Fair Futures coaching and or tutoring. Of the 2,000 young people coached for more than 90, 92% achieved at least three positive outcomes, such as reconnecting to school, grade promotion, graduation, enrollment in college or vocational training, or successfully engaging in a job or internship.

In 2024 participation in the ACS College Choice Program, where tuition, housing and a daily living stipend are given to foster youth attending college, doubled from the program's inception just two years ago, with over 400 youth enrolled in the fall semester.

As I turn to juvenile justice, I just want to thank you, Chair Stephens, Council Member Joseph, and Council Member Nurse and your staff for coming to Crossroads yesterday and engaging with young people so fully.

We've been seeing similar education success in our juvenile justice programs. In the 2023-2024 school year, 50 students in secured detention graduated with high school diplomas, GEDs, or

completed middle school. Twelve additional youth have already attained either a Regents diploma or GED in this academic year. Many of these youth are now enrolled at either Hostos or Borough of Manhattan Community College, completing live college courses while in secured detention facilities and earning transferable college credits. These education achievements are the result of a close collaboration between ACS, New York City Public Schools, and other partners to maximize school attendance, engagement, and achievement.

During the 2024-2025 school year, ACS continued to expand its academic opportunities including tutoring, assistance preparing students for regents and high school equivalency exam, and offering credit bearing college courses.

Together with the school liaisons in our detention facilities, the school-based team is responsible for encouraging young people to attend school and engage in other educational services. This has significantly improved student engagement, student attendance, exam completion, and graduation rates at both facilities.

ACS continues to fund as well as to leverage funding received from the Young Men's Initiative to provide daily tutoring services to students in secure detention to improve their engagement in school literacy, as well as students' attitudes towards learning.

Our workforce partners, Bard Prison Initiative, that you saw yesterday, and the Children's Village provide on-site tutoring to youth at Crossroads and Horizon. Bard and Children's Village tutors collaborate closely with Passage's Academy administrators and educators to identify youth in areas where they may need additional supports.

While serving older youth charged with more serious crimes certainly poses additional challenges, as noted by Nunez monitor experts in their most recent report, ACS has achieved compelling reductions in the frequency of youth violence, continues to develop and implement strategies to improve overall security. Specifically, despite the increased census, violence is down, supportive programming has significantly increased, restorative work with youth is making a difference, and we are seeing improved educational outcomes for youth in detention,

including more high school graduations, GED attainment, and college participation— on March 6, 202, 137 youth at Horizon and 136 youth at Crossroads— today it's a total of 275 young people.

Secured detention currently holds a youth population that is nearly six times what it was before Raise the Age as ACS has absorbed this population of youth charged with committing offenses at 16, 17 years old who would otherwise have been detained on Rikers Island and youth can remain with us until age 21. As a result, the youth in secured detention are on average older, face more serious charges, and experience longer lengths of stay than before Raise the Age, with 99% of the young people in secured detention facing charges in the adult system.

We're also taking important steps to be able to address capacity issues in secured detention. OCFS (Office of Children and Family Services) has issued a waiver approving our capacity to 310 youth. We're also working with DDC) Department of Design and Construction) to build an annex at Horizon, which would not only create additional capacity but would provide the youth in our care with a state of the art facility with a commercial kitchen, new dining halls,

healthcare suites, staff lounge, more educational vocational classrooms, and a three-story outdoor recreation platform.

In addition to meeting the needs of justice involved youth in detention, we are focused on meeting their needs in the community so that they never come to detention.

This year we assumed responsibility for MOCJ for the Assertive Community Engagement and Success, ACES, run by CASES, which serves some of the highest high risk youth aged 16 to 24 in Harlem and the South Bronx, by seeking to relentlessly engage them in a three to four year behavioral change and skill development program.

Given the success of programs like College Choice and Fair Futures, as part of the State of The City, Mayor Adams announced the Youth Safety and Success Initiative. As seen in the Preliminary Budget, Youth Safety and Success is nearly a \$40 million annual investment in programs aimed at supporting youth in foster care and those at risk of justice involvement. This initiative is comprised of five components that include the expansion of successful programs and the creation of one new one.

For youth in foster care, the initiative will provide funding to expand College Choice to over 500 youth. In addition, it will create a new program, Career Choice Workforce Ready, which builds off the success of College Choice, connecting young people in foster care who choose not to go to a two or four year college with similar financial, social, and academic support, as well as vocational and job readiness trainings. The funding will also enable us to expand Fair Futures to serve an additional 2,000 young people.

To help address the needs of youth in the community who are at risk of justice involvement, we will expand the diversion program known as Girls JustUs, currently operating in Brooklyn to Queens and the Bronx.

Finally we will expand assertive community engagement and success, ACES, which I mentioned earlier, citywide. ACES provides evidence-based services to high risk youth who have been involved in the justice system by providing social pathways away from gang and gun violence for youth ages 16 to 24.

ACS's Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2026 is \$2.83 billion, including \$932 million in City funds.

In addition to Youth and Safety Success Initiative, the Preliminary Budget includes \$139 million to address our Fiscal Year 2025 need for funding the increased state mandated reimbursement for foster parents, adoptive parents, and kinship guardians.

In addition to the state failing to fund ACS for the increased foster care rates, the state's proposed budget does not include the funding ACS needs to maintain our child care voucher expansion. Based on the availability of funding, and with the agreement and encouragement from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, New York City dramatically expanded the number of children in receipt of child care assistance supported by the state child care block grant known as CCBG over the last several years— as have other counties across New York State.

Absent additional investment from the state, New York City will be forced to dramatically reduce its provision of child care support to families who need it, deteriorating the gains achieved.

Given the state mandated increase of the reimbursement rate for childcare providers serving children with subsidies, which was not funded in the

State's Executive Budget Proposal, and the anticipated increase in mandatory child care for families on cash assistance, we will need the State Budget to provide approximately \$2 billion for New York City, about \$1 billion above the City's current allocation, to maintain child care assistance for low income families at our current caseload level.

We are in continuous conversation with the Governor's Office and the Legislature, and we are very grateful for all of your support on the Council.

In conclusion, I want to thank the City Council for your ongoing collaboration and partnership as we work together to continue to make New York City a place where children, youth and families thrive.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. I am going to pass it over to Council Member Williams to ask some questions before I get started on my questions, thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you so much, Chair.

I actually have to go to a social work, uh, kind of convening thing about certain topics, so thank you so much.

Just one brief question, which is I'm Chair of the Civil and Human Rights Committee and the City is over 430 days late on releasing the racial equity plans that require city agencies to produce some type of racial equity plan. And I just wanted to know what was the status of your agency submitting that plan to the Mayor's Office?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We have submitted it. That work is led by our first deputy commissioner and we have an Office of Equity Strategies that does excellent work across our entire agency. So we've completed the submission.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you, yes, we just want to get that on the record, because we do understand why they have not released it when, according to the last couple of agencies we spoke to, they have all submitted their racial equity plans.

Thank you so much, and thank you so much, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I would like the record to reflect both of my agencies being compliant. So, thank you, Council Member Williams. I don't need to be yelled at.

Good afternoon, I'm gonna jump right in, and we're gonna talk about federal funding.

On January 27th, the Trump administration released a memo halting all agency grant loans and financial assistance programs that are federally funded. The White House Office of Management and Budget detailed various federal programs were subjected to this pause but later rescinded the offer. Federal funds make up 39.1% of ACS's budget in Fiscal 2026 and 42.6% in 2025.

What are ACS's primary federal funding sources and what program services do they each support?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you.

So, just sort of a top line and sort of response— In Federal Fiscal Year 2024, we expect about \$1.35 billion in federal resources. It primarily supports two areas, one is the Child Care Block Grant, so that's a significant source of the resources for the major expansion in child care assistance. The other large component is foster care, so that's our Title IV-E funding stream. There's been legislation that was passed several years ago around that funding stream and it allows states to begin to take advantage of using that funding stream for preventive services as well. We're monitoring all of this really closely. Anything that is coming down, we're making

1 sure that we're in conversation with our providers,
2 that we are learning what this might mean, really
3 studying it to make sure we get it right, because
4 obviously there's been a lot in the rumor mill. And
5 so we're hopeful that we'll be able to continue this,
6 these important programs. They have typically been...
7 had bipartisan support, and so we are monitoring it
8 very closely.

9 I'll also just add, we have issued to our
10 providers, a reminder that ACS supports gender
11 affirming care for children in our care. We have a
12 disproportionate number of young people who identify
13 as LGBTQ+, and they need to know that we're here, we
14 affirm them, we want to make sure that they're
15 getting the best possible care, whatever they may
16 need.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, no, that's important,
18 especially in this climate, to make sure that we are
19 going above and beyond to make people feel
20 comfortable. And thank you for answering the question
21 that I did not ask yet, so appreciate it.

22 So, I mean, I know you're obviously, I was not
23 saying it as it's going on, but have you guys started
24 to develop a contingency plan? Because it's such a
25

significant part of your budget. So you have you guys started to think about a contingency plan if funding was to be ceased? And what programs, simply, if ceased, would the City be able to be backfill it? And will eligible requirements... will we change the requirements for different programs? Please provide any or all specifics around this.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So ,you know, it's very important that this contingency planning be done citywide, because anything that affects the City Budget could affect the \$900+ million we have in the city tax levy as an example. So ,you know, we're trying to look at what is our absolute core functions. We want to make sure that we're maintaining what is needed to protect children, to keep them safe, to make sure that families have the supports that they need. We have not made any particular adjustments. We are trying to make sure, you know, it's consistent with our vision and direction. We're trying to make sure that we get families to preventive services, if they don't need protection, uh, child protective services.

So we're looking across the board where we can find potential resources. But I have to say, most of

the ACS Budget is quite essential and really directly supports children and families. So Plan A is to try to maintain as much of this funding because it matters for children and families. But we are planning with OMB, on a regular basis, to make sure we're up to date and we're clear on any cuts that may come down.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: A state childhood cliff and advocacy plan, I think is definitely... we need to kind of talk about— State funds make up 27.7% of the ACS Budget in Fiscal 2025 and 24.5% in Fiscal 2026. Non-city funding consists of approximately 67% of ACS funding for Fiscal 2025 and 2026. Over \$4.1 billion of the two fiscal years. This funding is critical for various ACS programs including child care, foster care, and preventative programming for youth.

In your opening statement, you indicated that the need from the state budget this year for child care vouchers is \$2 billion with a gap in funding of approximately \$1 billion.

ACS notified the Council of this child care voucher funding gap last week. When did you first become aware of this issue, and what actions did you first take?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So we have been in conversations with the state every single month, both at the deputy commissioner level and at the commissioner level. So I'm going to sort of take us back just a couple years, Chair, just to sort of describe what's going on.

So we had a real opportunity because of some pandemic rollover funds. There was less childcare being used. There was also some pandemic related investment in childcare. And so a couple years, three years ago now, were at about 7,000 children enrolled in low income vouchers and today we're at 62,000.

We have worked extremely hard, led by Deputy Commissioner Welkomir and her team, to make sure families can get access to those supports. We have, with encouragement from the state, all along, we've been providing them our projections. We have been making sure that they understand what we're claiming. They've been encouraging us to increase our claims so that we didn't leave any rollover money on the table. This was absolutely a co-planning thing with the state.

We began to let them know, months ago, that we were looking like we were going to run out of funds,

that we were going to go over that cliff. They wanted us to continue to see the claims that were coming in. They made a 20% increase in the fall in the rates to providers, which is excellent, but have not yet put any resources in to cover that. So that accelerated us getting to this point. Currently for Federal Fiscal Year '25, which we're currently in, we need about \$125 million additional dollars. And for next Federal Fiscal Year we need about \$860 million.

Much of this relates to the fact that the work requirements will increase the number of families who qualify for a mandated child care voucher from HRA. We expect by the end of the calendar year, early 2027, HRA will have issued around 60,000 vouchers.

So with that growth and the growth that we've already created is why we need that money. So we have been talking to the state all along. We have had conversations with the Governor's Office. We've had... there's been conversations with the Division of Budget. And we have engaged the State Legislature and then, more recently, engaged the Council.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, this is one of the ones that ,like, I know we've just been brought into the conversation, which hopefully, moving forward,

please know that we're your allies and that we can also help advocate. Because now if ,you know, we've been doing the best that we can, and I know that's why... I guess he left, oh, there you go.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I'm here.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, he's over there, oh.

(LAUGHS) Not yet, not yet, Lincoln, calm down.

(LAUGHTER)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Who is very excited, and literally here just for this specific topic. Because we do want to figure out solution of how to mitigate this together. But again, you know, you stated... we just we've learned... we were just brought into this conversation.

When did ACS reach out to the State? And how long ago? I know you said you've been in talks with the deputy commissioners and the commissioners. Has ACS been working with State partners to ensure adequate funding is provided to the City to meet the full demand of the child care vouchers? What was the result of those conversations? When did OMB, the deputy mayors, and the mayor become aware of this? And are they also advocating to the State for additional funding for child care?

Because, like I said, we just learned about it. And I know we've been, myself, and Lincoln's been doing it, I know the Woman Caucus put us together letter. So the Council's really been trying to scramble to really push this in the forefront, but, know, we want to know what has been going on the other side, since we were not brought into the conversations until late.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So all of those things, the answer is, yes. There's conversations at every level. There's conversations from City Hall to the Governor's Office. There's conversations between OMB and DOB. There's conversations between us and the Governor's Office— in addition to OCFS. So it is unequivocally a very high priority for the Administration that we are able to maintain the gains that that we had. As I earlier... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I just, uh, I would like to go on record by saying, when I reached out to the Governor's Office, they were not as aware. And then when I reached out to the State Legislator, they also weren't aware. So I know that there was some... there's clearly some disconnect, because I know I reached out to State members individually, and I

reached out to the Speaker, and they were ,like,
"This was not on our radar."

So I'm not really sure how or who specifically
you guys were talking to, but there has been some
disconnect.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So there's a, you know,
this has been a real priority for both the Governor
and the Mayor with a lot of resources put into it.
It's been a collaborative process with Office of
Children and Family Services at the State level where
they've encouraged this growth.

Our hope is that we can have this funding put in
so that we can continue these gains and meet our
requirements to the mandated population.

We have great partners at the State level around
this and we have been engaging with them all
throughout. I don't know how to sort of connect the
dots that you're not seeing, but I can assure you
that there's been very, very frequent conversations
with the State.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: If the State does not commit
to filling this gap, is the City's plan? Would ACS
need to rescind childcare vouchers that have been
granted to families? How would ACS go about doing

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So if we're not able to secure the resources needed to continue the program, and the mandated population continues to increase as expected, we will have to no longer take applications for child care assistance. No one will lose their voucher until a recertification date. So everyone who has a voucher, that has been approved for that year, keeps it until the end of that period. But we would have to begin to deny recertifications.

If we get into a place where the resources are not fully there, and we have to determine how to manage that priority, we're going need some support from the State. Because the State holds the levers around setting priority. So we also have had some discussions with them around there. Our priorities

are continuity of care and to making sure that the lowest income families have this support.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: This is very concerning. I am going to stop there on that part. Like I said, I know Council Member Restler is here, and he is going to ask a number of questions in a couple of minutes.

Let me just ask a couple of questions, and then I'll turn it over to you, Council Member.

Foster care... so I'm gonna move to foster care.

The Preliminary Budget includes an additional \$138.8 million in City funds for foster care in Fiscal 2025. Only the State mandated reimbursement rates for foster care, kinship, and adoptive parents. How was this funding amount determined, and how was the funding... and how will this funding be utilized?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So this is really filling the gap that was created when the State approved new rates for foster parents, uh, adoptive parents as well, kinship guardianship payments as well. When they approved new rates, they did not increase the funding. So each year, depending on the number of children in care, the specific rates that play out, we work with OMB to try to fill that gap. And that's what the number was for FY25.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What metrics are used? And does ACS find those metrics to be significant for the reimbursement rates?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So ,you know, we look at a number of things as it relates to our performance in foster care— reunification with families, the safety of those reunification, adoption numbers, the safety of children in care, the stability of children in care— all of the funding that goes into foster care, it's a pretty, there's several funding streams that support it, relate to those key outcomes that children are safe and that they're achieving permanency.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Why was funding added for only one year and not baselined?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Because it's sort of a moving target. We're not... depending on the... it all depends on the census, so there's different types of rates. So there's an exceptional rate if a young person has a significant developmental disability, as an example, and it's a special medical foster parent. There is rates for a sort of more standard level of care. So depending on what those rates shape out to

be, and the number of young people in care, we fill that and work with OMB to assess what that gap is.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How much is the full budget for foster care in FY25?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The full budget for 2025 is \$670 million, I believe— 600... and for 2025?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I believe it's \$682 plus the \$183 that was added. So a little under \$800 million.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What is the baseline budget for foster care in Fiscal 2026 and in the out years?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: \$682 million.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does the Agency plan to adjust the baseline budget to be more aligned with the current levels of demand and the requirements... required reimbursement rates?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes. We are in conversations with OMB, again, sort of looking at that analysis.

There's... we'll also look at the IV-E rates, as we were discussing, earlier from the federal government. All of those come together to identify what services... the total cost.

The commitment that we have to our providers is already in the contracts. We have no cuts that we're announcing to that, so providers can be assured that our commitments will remain.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The Preliminary Plan added funding from a combination of city, state and federal funding sources across the years of the plan for youth programs.

In Fiscal 2025, \$7.2 million was added; \$22.3 million in Fiscal 2026; and \$43.7 million in Fiscal 2027; \$44.8 million in Fiscal 2028; and \$44.9 million in Fiscal 2029. What specific programs will this funding support? Please provide a breakdown by program.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes. We're very, very excited about the Youth Safety and Success Initiative. Thank you for your advocacy for young people.

On a total, it'll allow us to serve about 3,000 more young people, up to 8,000 from 5,000 now.

For Fair Futures, it'll take us from about 4,000 to 5,000 and make sure that the full model for Fair Futures, which includes coaching and tutoring and

other things, is available to young people all the way to the age of 26.

The College Choice goes from 400 young people to 500 young people. We actually extended beyond the existing budget, so part of that is to meet the need of the 400 that we've had enrolled this fall.

Career Choice is a new program that is building on the success of College Choice for young people who want to take a career pathway, want to go to an apprenticeship, to give them that same stability during that period— which is some of these apprenticeships take time and are challenging.

It'll allow us to provide 232 new stipends to young people, that's \$60 a day. It also allows us to purchase, from DYCD, the 80 Advance and Earn spots.

The Girls JustUs Program, that we mentioned earlier, will go from 48 slots to 72. And the ACES program will go from 160 to 600 and be citywide. So overall, 3,000 additional young people will be reached.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What's the timeline for implementing this expansion?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So in the... between now and Fiscal Year 2027, we'll be fully expanding. So

1 we... there's about a half of the budget for 2026 for
2 Fair Futures and then it goes to the full \$23
3 million. We have to do a procurement around the ACES
4 model so that will start in Fiscal Year 2027. Much of
5 it, including College Choice expansion, can happen
6 relatively immediately— starting in 2026, but will be
7 fully implemented in 2027.
8

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You know, we just had DYCD
10 here earlier and they were talking about CRED, their
11 new career program. When I was talking to the
12 chancellor, she was talking about Futures Ready and
13 CTE, expanding CTE programming. And now you guys have
14 Career Choice and Workforce.

15 How are you guys all collaborating so we can be
16 maximizing the resources that we have?

17 I know workforce development has been a top
18 priority, not only for myself, but a lot of council
19 members. So I think, as we're building this out, what
20 have the conversations been like with all these
21 entities to make sure we're maximizing these
22 resources?

23 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you, absolutely.
24
25

We very specifically we're working with DYCD around the Advance and Earn program and have funding in that to utilize that model.

We of course, as you know, have over 1,000 young people in SYEP and work very, very closely with them and New York City Public Schools.

We are not adding any Career Pathway money to Career Choice. What's really here— other than the Advance and Earn. Because we want to take advantage of what the City offers across New York City Public Schools, DYCD as you mentioned.

What this really does is allow for the stipends for young people in foster care. We have found that that has really given them the space to focus on their education and college choice. And we don't see any reason we shouldn't be providing that to young people who are on a career track.

So we're trying to create the space for them to engage in it, not worry too much about whether they're gonna be able to make ends meet while they're doing that, and put some money in their pocket.

And so to really encourage them down that track, too, we want reward young people who are able to pursue a track and keep them on it.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. I mean, as we're just building it out, I just hope that we continue to have these conversations.

And again, just it's about maximizing the resources. Because, you know, again, one of the things I said in the last hearing, was just young people are saying what they want, they want jobs.

And I see that we're trying to ,you know, create, uh, we're trying to fill that gap but I just want to make sure that we're maximizing it.

So I'm gonna move on to... the Preliminary Plan included an additional \$27.5 million in State funds for Fiscal Year 2025 only for the expansion related to foster care services. How is this funding amount determined? How would it be utilized towards foster care services?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: \$27.5 million for foster care services? Can you repeat the question, Chair, sorry?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The Preliminary Plan includes an addition of \$27.5 million in State funds for Fiscal Year 2025 only related to foster care services.

How is this funding amount determined? How will it be utilized towards foster care services?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I believe this is just an analysis that we will... that's how much more we'll be getting in State funds given the current funding streams. It will be... go ahead?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: That's the increase on the Foster Care Block Grant.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: And we only put it in one year, because the allocation is just for one year only.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So this is the same block grant where we're short as a result of the MSAR payments. So it'll go into the analysis of what the gap is there for 2026 that we were talking about earlier.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, so how was the funding, how was that determined? Was it just that that's what was...

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: That's what State the funded...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What is the budget for foster care services for Fiscal Year 2025, and how has that been spent to date?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So we've, uh, for Fiscal Year 2025 to date, we have sent \$496 million and for FY26 it's \$682 million.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does ACS anticipate an increased need in funding for foster care services? If so, how much, and when will funding be added?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We're assessing that, it's really around two areas of risk for the City, one is the reimbursement rates, and the other is the Title IV-E reimbursement. So we're working with OMB around those.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So I'm gonna move on to Close to Home.

The number of youth entering Close to Home programs totaled 43 in the first four months of FY25, an 8.5% decline compared to the 47 entered during the same time period in FY24.

The average number of youth in Close to Home placement rose from 65 in the first four months of FY25... I mean 2024, to 92 in FY25, an increase of 41%.

The average number of children in Close to Home aftercare increased by 55.2% from 29 in the first four months of FY24 to 45 during the period in FY25.

What is the total number of budgets slotted for Close to Home? How many of those slots are being used? How many are vacant?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Today it's about a 174... Today it's 174. We'll get you the exact census numbers for today. I believe it is around 100 and... we're using about 90% of the NSP and around that for LSP as well. We'll get you the exact numbers.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: In November 2023 plan there was a baseline PEG of \$6.8 million due to underutilization. How has that PEG impacted programs? Now that the participation has increased, does ACS need additional slots for Close to Home?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So we started in 2022 with about 301 slots for Close to Home. We wanted to make sure that those... and there was very few, there's 50 or 60 young people in Close to Home at that time.

We initially reduced it to 135 for the new RFP. During the RFP process, we noted an additional need for about 12 beds. So OMB supported us to increase it

to 147. They've subsequently supported an additional 27 beds. So we currently have that 174. We are in conversations with them, we're assessing the ongoing need for the census. We're in conversations with providers. So we keep a very, very close eye on this, and the track record is there that if we need the capacity, we'll develop it.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Is ACS aware of Close to Home providers without capacity to take on new youth? Have any had to put youth on waiting lists?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: No. Yes, we are aware that there are some providers who are at full capacity. We get the numbers three or four times a day. And there are no waiting lists for Close to Home.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So if it's at capacity what do we do with the kids, then?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We need to have the capacity, and we'll make sure we do.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How so?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So what you're... what you're describing, Chair, is that a particular program... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, I know, one particular...

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Then you'll shift them around and things. But the point of the Close to Homes is for them to be close to home. So if we're shifting them to other places, and that's kind of defeating some of the purpose.

Obviously it's not Upstate, but it does, if you are at capacity— let's say in Queens, and you put them in the Bronx, you might as well put them Upstate, because sometimes it takes two to three hours to get from Queens to the Bronx. So that's what I'm really asking. Yes, you might find another location, but, obviously, there's some gaps here. And this was one of the things that we were saying a year ago, when we were saying we were rightsizing it, and now we're seeing the numbers go up.

Can you to us talk about what that plan looks like?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So we are focused on stability for young people. And when a when a group home is filled, we are not trying to move kids out of there to put other kids behind them.

But, I will say that the system is tighter than it has been. We are looking at a variety of options. We have a site that is coming online soon. We had to do some renovations to that site. So we'll be able to add those beds soon. And we're talking to OMB about other possibilities.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What is the budget for Close to Home in Fiscal 2025 and in Fiscal Year 2026 and out years?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Give me one second. Go ahead.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: FY25 Budget is \$63.5 million. We are working with OMB to determine the budget for FY26. But the current budget...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How much has been spent year to date?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: Yeah, it's baselined at \$63.5 million

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. What educational opportunities are available to Close to Home locations? Has ACS considered expanding educational instructions to Close to Home locations? And can you give details?

Because one of the things that when talking with providers, this has been a huge concern, just around... especially, when they're going to the facility... I mean going to the schools to get the education, they're not getting their IEP, they're hearing that some of their IEPs are not being met. Some of their IEP's are not being met or they're just being put on a computer.

So could we talk a little bit about some of the educational opportunities that we're offering at the Close to Home locations?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So young people who are in nonsecure placement in Close to Home go to either Belmont or Bronx Hope, which is run by the Department of Education, New York City Public Schools, and they get a full set of services. Their IEPs are absolutely prioritized, they can get reassessed there.

We have heard from providers as well that they'd like additional academic supports. We have older young people and Close to Home than we did, so every young person has graduated, and we are looking into ways that we can support that.

We have added Fair Futures to Close to Home, so that they can be supportive of academic and career pursuits as well.

For young people who are in limited secure placement, the school is on-site. And so limited secure placement includes the Children's Village, they have a school on-site, as well as Rising Ground.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Would ACS be open to partnering with providers to expand vocational training opportunities? Does ACS have the funding to support this? If not, how much additional funding would be needed?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We are absolutely interested in increasing vocational opportunities. Close to Home young people are also connected with SYEP.

To your earlier point, we'll work with both DYCD and New York City Public Schools to hear what providers are seeing and what they need and make it happen.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many female Close to Home facilities are there? Does ACS see an increase in need for female facilities? If so, how many are you needing to meet this demand?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We have... let me get through the exact number. It's one site for 12, right? Yeah. It's a 12, one, twelve-bed site... Close to Home.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. I'm going turn it over to Council Member Restler for his questioning.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so much, Chair Stevens. And thank you for your smart questions and thoughtful advocacy around the looming crisis that we are facing for child care vouchers in New York City.

I firstly just want to say that, you know, in an administration that has been hobbled by dysfunction and corruption, one of the few bright spots has been the fact that ACS and your team has enrolled, you know, 55,000 additional families, some 62-63,000 families in child care vouchers to ensure that they have free, affordable child care, and high quality providers in their communities. It's been a major achievement of this Administration, one that's gotten far too little attention.

Yet, it's apparent that we are barreling toward a reality where many tens of thousands of families are about to lose their child care.

So I'd just like to ask plainly for a number.

Barring additional State support, how many families... how many children do you expect to lose their child care voucher in the coming fiscal year?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It is possible, if nothing were to change, Council Member, that between 4,000 and 7,000. So... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I'd just like a number for the year.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I can try to get you that number. As you know, a lot of this relates to what the mandated population...

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I know the issue well. I'm looking for a number.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We'll work on getting you a number, but, it's... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I don't understand why it's complicated. You've been supposedly working really hard on this issue. Your team is focused on it. What's the estimate for how many families are going to lose their child care if we don't get an additional penny of funding?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It's possible that all low income vouchers could be...

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Sixty-two-thousand families?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It is possible.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And... okay.

So we're talking about 62,000 families at risk of losing their child care vouchers if we don't see action in Albany in a matter of days.

That is larger than the entire UPK population in New York City losing their child care (SNAPS FINGERS) overnight.

We have been instructed by folks in the Governor's Office that OMB has directed ACS to no longer recertify vouchers starting April 1st, that families will lose their child care in the middle of this school year. Have you received that directive from OMB?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: No, what we have... in conversations with OMB, the City has already hit its funding amount for this (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But you're continuing to enroll new families today.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes, so... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So you've already hit your funding amount, but you're enrolling new families... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: That's right. The City is putting itself in further, putting in further investment to make sure we can work fully with the State to try to see if there's a solution here.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So we've been told by folks in the Governor's Office that OMB has directed the City to stop recertifying voucher holders, to lose their child care, this current school year.

You have received no such director from OMB? Have you had a conversation with OMB for when you will stop recertifying vouchers barring new funding?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: OMB has approved us to continue to issue vouchers- to keep applications open to April 1st- so that we can work with the State to try to develop a solution here. We have to see what that solution (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: That's not my question. I appreciate the comment, but that's not what I asked at all.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: But that's exactly what's happening. That's... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But what's the... you have had zero conversations with OMB about when you're gonna no longer be able to recertify vouchers?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: You're telling me that it has not been discussed, that you have only discussed what could happen until the March. And you have no idea what's going happen April 1st?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: No... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I just want to make sure you're being as transparent as possible.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I am being as transparent as possible. We went to OMB, made sure we were clear about what we see the funding implications are here. We made a request to be able to continue to provide... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yes...

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: this is exactly what happened, so that we get a time for... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I'm talking about the recertifications. I am not talking about new families you're enrolling today. (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: for recertification as well. But, we would like... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Starting only through April 1st. So we... you have no idea what the policy of the city of New York will be in twelve days about whether a family is gonna be able to have their child care voucher renewed on April 1st.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The policy will be shaped by what happens in the State Budget.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay. So now let's shift to what we have done to make a difference for the State Budget.

I'll share my analysis plainly, and then I'm going to ask a bunch of questions. Well, you know what? Why don't we start with the questions, and then I'll give a speech at the end about how pissed I am that 50,000 to 60,000 families are about to lose their child care vouchers.

ACS has been in communication with OCFS, I appreciate that. That's your job to coordinate with the state entity that has oversight of you all. And I'm sure you've been regularly communicating with them. They provide resources and oversight of everything you do.

When was the first outreach that ACS made to the City Council on this topic?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I believe it was very recently.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Within the last week, two weeks?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So we have a looming child care voucher crisis that's going to kick 62,000 of our children off of their child care, and the first communication with the City Council was in the last two weeks?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We're working hard to avoid that scenario.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Kinda.

Next up, when... how many members of the State Legislature has the Administration met with on this topic?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I don't know the exact number. We have met with... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Chair Brisport and Chair Hevesi, for sure, there's two. (TIMER CHIMES) Have there been any additional members?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: There have. I can get you the exact... the exact... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Three? Four? Because I've spoken to now over a dozen assembly members and senators who have thousands of kids in their district that are at risk of losing their child care, and they have not heard a peep from the Administration on this topic. Radio silence.

Do you think this is a major priority of this administration in the State Budget?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It is absolutely a priority of this administration... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Why then... Okay. So why then when Director Jiha met with the Assembly and Senate, with the with the State Legislature, prior to the release of their One Houses and made... shared priorities for the City, was this issue never mentioned whatsoever?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I know that OMB has had a lot of conversations... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay...

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: (INAUDIBLE) about it... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I would like to... for you to walk through with me what conversations they've had. Because if they didn't share this as a priority in the One Houses, that was the single most important moment that they could have said to the State Legislature, this mattered. They didn't. They didn't advocate for one more penny of funding for these child care vouchers. They are supporting us falling over this fiscal cliff, and 60-odd-thousand families losing their child care vouchers over the last year.

The amazing work that your team has done, over these three years, to enroll all these families is going to go up in smoke (SNAPS FINGERS) because they have done nothing to advocate for this. City Hall is asleep at the wheel. Nobody is home.

I cannot be more angry about what is about to happen— the destabilization we are going to see for child care providers across the city of New York, the low income communities across New York City that are going to suffer unnecessarily, because nobody is advocating for this issue. I am livid.

I don't know if you can hear in my voice just how angry and disappointed I am. Please cite for me one

example of a meeting that OMB has held with state leaders and walk me through exactly what meetings have occurred so we understand. If any advocacy has happened, tell us.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I'm not privy to what those conversations look like, but I... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Have you spoken to the Mayor about this issue?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I've... The deputy mayor has reached out directly (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Have you spoken to Eric Adams about this issue? No. Have you spoken Jacques Jiha about this issue?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: How many times?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Several.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Has he... what is the position of the Administration?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: They want to make sure that the money is there to maintain the gains that we have made (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Then why wouldn't they advocate for it? Is this... Is this...

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: They... They are advocating for it. The Deputy Mayor has spoken directly (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Which deputy mayor?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: the Governor's Office... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Who's the deputy mayor?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It was top priority for (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: For Anne Williams-Isom?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes, and that's a top priority for DM Suzanne as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: What has she done to advocate for the issue? I... I just... I mean, I... If you're saying... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Let's make sure that we stay focused. Because I don't think the commissioner can speak for what other people are doing. So let's just ask what advocacy they've done and then we can move on. Because I don't want him to be having to speak for his boss technically, so...

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I appreciate that.

But if you can cite any examples of meetings that have taken place, you claim it's a priority for the

Administration, but from what I can tell, the only people that are making a push for this at all are you and your staff.

And I value you, and I think you do a great job. I'm screaming at you because you're the only person I have to scream at about this. Your staff does great work under your leadership. You care about this. You've been pushing for this, but ACS to OCFS is not going to solve for a \$900 million gap in the State Budget.

That is not how we solve massive problems like this. It requires leadership from City Hall, and it's squarely lacking.

So I'm just asking, can you cite any examples, specific meetings that have been held, that the Mayor's Office has engaged in to push for funding for this issue and what their request has been?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I'd be happy to get you that. I know of direct phone calls, I know of direct meetings between the First Deputy Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, the Governor's Office. This has been a priority.

The OMB has supported us in creating a budget gap so that we can continue this service while we work

1 with the State. The State has been very supportive of
2 us growing child care. We are trying to direct dial,
3 be very clear about the implications. I share your
4 passion. I appreciate how much you care for child
5 care and making sure that families have it... (CROSS-
6 TALK)
7

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: We are barreling toward a
9 reality of 60,000 kids losing their child care
10 vouchers. That is where we are heading. There has
11 been no advocacy of substance beyond ACS talking to a
12 handful of people about this issue.

13 It was not in the Senate One House, because
14 nobody had talked to the senate about it, and when
15 they did, it wasn't raised as a priority.

16 The Assembly only put \$200 million into this at
17 the very last second. And if it weren't for the
18 leadership of Chair Stevens, the Speaker of the State
19 Assembly wouldn't have known about this issue.

20 So I just want to be clear. No one is doing
21 anything of consequence from City Hall and OMB to
22 advocate for this issue. We are trying our best, but
23 we found out about it in the last two weeks. You all
24 reached out to providers in February but didn't reach
25

out to the breadth of elected officials whose families are going to be impacted.

We are facing an absolute catastrophe. We are days away from it. We are not... if we do not get \$900 million, 60,000 thousand families are going to lose their child care vouchers. And it is going to have a bigger impact on... more negative impact on child care than anything I can remember in a very long time.

And all of the phenomenal work that has happened by you and your team is going to disappear. It's going go up in smoke. And I appreciate that you all's job is to execute with the resources you're given, to implement the policy directives that you receive. It is not your job to find \$900 million in the State Budget. It is the Mayor's job, and he has failed.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I respectfully disagree with your characterization, Council Member, but I share your passion to try to solve this and we are... that is where we're focused.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Commissioner, with all due respect, you could not cite an example of substance where this... where the Mayor's Office and OMB has actually advocated for this issue. So if this

was a priority for them, then you would be able to say, this is what ACS and City Hall have done together to try to fight for this funding. But there's been...

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: (INAUDIBLE)...

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: radio silence up in Albany. You can't speak to how many legislators your team has met with. The State Legislative Affairs team has not made this a priority for the Mayor's Office.

This has fallen to the wayside, and you're trying your best, and your team is trying your best, and I respect your team. They have done amazing work to enroll an additional 55,000 families and child care vouchers. It's phenomenal. This is literally one of the top five things this administration has done in three+ years, and it is all about to disappear because nobody at City Hall is pushing.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you Lincoln- I mean, Council Member Restler. We appreciate your passion. And listen, I am a little bit frustrated, but we have to figure out how to work together, which is why as soon as I was notified, I went to work.

I mean, the providers were the first people who rang the alarm for me- so, again, I said this at the

top, that we have to make sure that we are a team and we're using all our collective tools. Because this is something that means a lot to people and understand how this is gonna affect the city.

I have a couple more questions on the child care vouchers also. One, I want to start with, uh, is why the child care voucher enrollment has risen significantly over the past few fiscal years. I know some of it is because... I know the cliff we're looking at because of the increase in providers. But there are also some requirements— I know when HRA was here they kind of spoke about it, but I just want to make sure we have it on record of ,like, what's the totality of this huge cliff?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So the Child Care Block Grant funding supports, uh, first the mandated vouchers, ACS low income vouchers, as well as some of the DOE contracts, New York City Public Schools.

We are looking at about \$125 million gap in this Federal Fiscal Year and about an \$860 million gap in next Federal Fiscal Year should there not be an additional allocation in Albany.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know Council Member Restler already asked this, but if you guys can get

back to the committee staff, could you provide a breakdown total number of vouchers that child care, uh, the vouchers that are child welfare and the number that are low income? If you have it you can share it, but if not you can send it in.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And could you provide a breakdown by borough and both child welfare and low income vouchers?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So as of 02/28/25, there were nearly 8,000 children enrolled with child welfare voucher, which is supported by State reimbursement and 62,500 supported with low income voucher.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. What resources and assistance is made available to families who child welfare cases have closed and are no longer eligible for child welfare vouchers?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes, we've been working with their providers and providing the families information to be able to apply for vouchers through the Child Care Block Grant.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Like I said before, this obviously is a serious issue for all of us. And as

you can see, I have colleagues who are very passionate about this subject.

And let's just continue to work together to advocate— and at the State let as many people know. Like I said, I already started to reach out to folks. And I know Speaker Heastie has ,you know, briefed his entire body on this. We're gonna continue to advocate, because we know how important this is and just really work together to get this solved. I truly believe we're gonna get it solved.

So we're gonna keep fighting, and I know Lincoln comes off crazy sometimes, (LAUGHTER) but his heart is really in the right place. And he's really fighting for people who typically don't have a voice and a seat at the table. So I just want to make sure we highlight that because his passion is the same as mine. Everybody knows I fight hard for our kids, and so I actually appreciate in this moment to have someone else fighting just as hard as I am. Because that's what it's really about, making sure that everybody's voice is being heard.

So I appreciate your passion and your commitment to this. And, honestly, it's important so that when we go to the State, don't worry, he's gonna give them

the same smoke. So everybody gets in, and I tell everybody that everyone gets in.

So this is really important to us, and we're gonna keep fighting. And I know we've been working on some plans as well together, so thank you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We look forward to it.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: As ACS continues to assess its budget and determine where gaps are, it is critical that there is a consistent communication with the Administration and OMB to ensure funding is added where is needed. It's also crucial to ensure that new needs requests to OMB are calculated accurately with the use of appropriate metrics.

Can ACS provide the Committee with any funding requests made to OMB and the Mayor this fiscal year?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The major one was around the Youth Safety And Success Initiative that the Mayor announced in the State of the City. Obviously we've been in ongoing conversations about some of the risks to the budget including childcare, including the rates, but the big investment was around the youth work.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. The Preliminary Plan included an additional \$6.5 million in City and State funds for Fiscal Year 2025 only to support the programming for juvenile justice involved youth.

How is this funding amount determined and why is it not baselined?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Sorry, Chair, give us one second.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm. No, worries, we've got time.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So \$6.5 million for juvenile justice specifically you're saying?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, an additional \$6.5 million in City and State funds for Fiscal 2025 only supports programming for juvenile involved youth.

How is this funding amount determined and why is it not baselined?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We'll get you that answer. I don't have it off of...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Look, Stephanie's up here.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Oh, okay.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Y'all don't ever want Stephanie to just sit at the table. Poor Stephanie, running back and forth.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: One time funding for STSJP (Supervision and Treatment Services for Juveniles Program). We put that in the budget on an annual basis.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You put it in an annual basis?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does ACS see current demands for preventative and supportive services for juvenile justice involved youth that exceeds the baseline budget? If so, how much additional funds are needed?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: That's really what we asked for in the Youth Safety and Success Initiative. So that includes the expansion of ACES, the expansion of the Girls JustUs Program. We're really excited about both of those. There's also Fair Futures dollars that go into the juvenile justice work as well.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The Preliminary Plan includes an additional \$3 million in City and State funding for Fiscal 2025 only to support the Nurse-Family Partnership Program, which supports low income family, first time parents with pregnancy, and child care, child health and development services. How was

this funding amount determined? Why is this not baselined in the out years?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: This is a pass through to the Department of Health to support their maternal work. We've actually been doing a lot of work with them to explore additional ways to partner together around maternal health and attachment for young children and their parents.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I mean we were just talking about this in the last hearing around parenting. And I know DYCD is doing some stuff around the Fatherhood Initiative.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Mm-hmm

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And they just said that they're looking to possibly expand to motherhood.

I think this is something that can be a continuum for people who ,you know, the maternal health and then going into getting parent support and they were talking about co-parenting.

So, honestly, this is something that I would love for us to continue to look at— expand and make sure we're collaborating with other agencies. Because it is a much needed support, especially when we're thinking about a lot of times when parents have

(INAUDIBLE) warrants, and it's just... they don't have support. So any supports that we can give parents I think is going to be essential.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We agree.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. So I'm really excited about some of the stuff they were talking about and how we can marry it with the work that is happening on your side.

How does ACS coordinate with DOHMH to administer this program and what role does ACS play?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So it's strictly a pass through, we don't oversee that. We are in conversations with our partners at the Health Department around some of the other work that they do— Nurse-Family Partnership (INAUDIBLE) which has a broader criteria so we can get more families the support that they need. And we'll be continuing that planning in the months ahead.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The Primary Plan includes savings of \$14.9 million in City funds for Fiscal 2025 only in relation to asylum seeker respond efforts. What are those savings for and how were those amounts determined?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So ACS has taken on responsibility for some of the language access work—Stephanie and her team lead. And so with the decline in that need, that's coming down. And we're also working with a program to do some resettlement for families who have been new to the city.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What other current amounts of asylum seeker related funding has ACS budgeted for Fiscal 2025?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Just those, there's no other additional resource.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The Proposed State Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget was released in January. State funding plays a critical role in ACS programming as it supports \$24.5 million of the Agency's budget for Fiscal 2026. Were there any proposals in the government's budget that ACS expects will impact the Agency either positively or negatively?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The big one is child care. And we obviously would love to see the Foster Care Block Grant grow to be able to cover the rates and the increased costs around the foster parent

rates. We'd love to see some support as it relates to Raise the Age, but the big one is child care.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. ACS contracts with various providers for services administered across the City. Many of the providers' facilities may often require improvements or repairs that can be done through the City Capital Program. How many capital requests has ACS received so far in Fiscal 2025? What kind of works are those requests, and how many were received in Fiscal 2024?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah, I don't believe we received any such requests in 24-25. For us, in 2025 we've been working on the ACS headquarter relocation, which has been a big one— the move into 2100 Bartow Avenue— and some technology related efforts.

For 2026 and forward, between 2026 and 2035, we have over \$500 million allocated to capital— the biggest of that is the Horizon Annex.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: ACS commitment to Fiscal 2025 through 2029, as presented in the Preliminary Capital Commitment Plan totals \$476.3 million, 2.3% less than the total for the same period presented in an Adopted Capital Commitment Plan released in October. ACS largest project includes \$78.1 million

in Fiscal 2026 for new construction and expansion of Horizon— which totaled \$240.8 million for Fiscal 2025 to Fiscal 2029. What is the current status of the new construction of Horizon? What is the estimated time and completion of this project?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The estimated time for completion is early 2029. We have begun work to have some trailers put in to be able to move, create swing for space staff. Then the first part of the work is to build an outdoor exercise platform with several layers so there's a lot more outdoor space for young people. We're working with some public artists who are gonna beautify it, and we're really looking forward to getting that piece of it up. The entire project is scheduled for completion in early 2029.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I would just say, my hope in 2029, we won't need the space...

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: because we should have had a plan to make sure that the census is going down. That's just my hope and that's what we should be aiming towards.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We share it, Chair. And the hope would be for the young people who are there, that they get to use the new space and so...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I don't want them to be there, though.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah, I'm saying, well we have 48... There's only 48 in the... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: It's 2025, I don't want them to be there... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: If we have 48 kids there in 2029, I think we'll be happy.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Ugh, it stresses me out.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: You and me... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And the expansion, it's gonna be about 40 new beds, correct?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes, 48.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Forty-eight.

Child protective specialists are often one of the first intersections with family with ACS, and it's critical to ensure those specialists are attentive and aware of each individual case. Part of making this happen is tied to their caseload and ensuring Child Protective Specialists are not overwhelmed.

What is the current caseload ratio per Child Protection Specialist?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Just got the report as we walked in— 7.1

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, 7.1.

What is the additional ratio for ACS preference? How is the ratio determined?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So the national standard is 12, and our job is to keep it below so they can do more thorough work. We have... in March of 2023, we had 936 active CPS, case carrying CPS, for both protective diagnostic and cares. As of March 2025, we have 1,127, so nearly a 200 CPS increase in active.

So we're continuing to make sure that the services that are there, the support is there, that we're both supporting families and making sure we're protecting children.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does ACS collect information on how many hours are spent on each case?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: There are time studies that are done to allocate, but we don't look at it per case. There is, uh, part of supervision and management is looking at our pending rotation.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So when a Child Protective Specialist is up for the next case assignment, if they have a very, very complicated case, or they've had to do a removal, then they might be skipped on that pending. So it's actively managed at the borough level.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. Well, I want to say, thank you to you and your team for hosting myself, Council Member Joseph, and Council Member Nurse at Crossroads.

But ,you know, one of the things I just want to say, I know one of the young people spoke to us about access to college. And I know they talked about the BMCC partnership, but he told us about the challenges- so I just want to make sure that on record, and somebody please relay a message to him, I have already spoken to the Chair of Higher Education, and he was unaware. And he was, like, "Whatever you need, Althea."

So we'll be meeting, and we'll be pulling you guys in to meet with CUNY, and thinking about how we can not only just serve that young man- who said he is working on his dissertation by the way. But it was a priority. So as soon as I left the facility, I

called him immediately, and we are going to schedule some time. Because we want to make sure that we're listening to the young people. And that was what he said, so that's what I did. And I'm working on getting them their puzzles.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I am sure Nancy is letting them know as we speak.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (LAUGHS)

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Responsive government in action, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's what we're here for, right?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yep, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And, y'all know if the kids ask, I'm gonna try to make it happen.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Amen.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So...

ACS saw a 31.8% increase in admissions to juvenile detentions in the first four months of Fiscal 2025 when compared to the same period in 2024. So it was 833 youth and in 2024 it was 632 youth.

The average daily population in juvenile detentions increased by 22.4%, totaling 318.4 for the first four months of Fiscal 2025 compared to the 260.1 for the same period in Fiscal 2024.

In conjunction with the increase in admissions, the average length of stay in secured and non-secured detention declined by 10.3%, going from 43 days in the first four months of Fiscal 2024 to 39 days during the same period in Fiscal 2025.

What factors contributed to the increase in admission to juvenile detention facilities?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you for that, Chair.

So ,you know, as you can tell from those numbers, lot of young people spend a day or two, and then are released by the judge or either make bail or some other arrangement is made. So the averages can confuse us a little bit.

For the young people who are with us today, as we discussed earlier this week, about half are there for a year or more. This is as a result of very complex cases. We're grateful to CJI for, earlier this week, convening us with the Office of Court Administration, the judges in the youth parts, the lawyers in the

youth parts, the service providers— to look at ways at which we can lower length of stay and make sure that young people understand their case, are actively engaged in their case, and have the opportunity to consider their options fully.

We have also seen an increase in admissions. You know, most of the young people who are with us are there on serious felony offenses, often related to gun violence. So we want to make sure that they get the best representation and also that we move those cases along so that they... we don't want our kids to be uncertain about what's next. It is one of the most difficult things for an adolescent, as you know well, to not be sure about what's coming next. So we try to fill those gaps for them.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know in your testimony you talked about the workforce partnerships with BPI and the Children's Village, BPI being at Crossroads and Children's Village being at Horizon.

Can you talk to me a little bit about those partnerships and what are some of the active activities or workforce activities that they are doing with the young people in the facilities?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Absolutely. So one of their biggest activities is tutoring. So we have thousands of hours of tutoring. As you see they come onto the halls, they go into the classrooms.

In addition we have young people who are doing OSHA training, we have the barista program, we have the spackling work that we talked about, they're actually painting their living spaces.

We're always sort of thinking with them as Elise (phonetic) mentioned to you yesterday, we want to keep it fresh and so we're trying to bring in new programming with them. Those contracts are about a year old so we are looking at sort of what comes next year and engaging young people around what that would look like.

Space can be a challenge to create some of the vocational programming, but we really... the kids love it, they engage with it, and we're grateful for both of those partners.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I would love to, I mean, and this is one the things was in my head yesterday, but I know we were at a time constraint, but definitely thinking about what are some of the STEM components, right? Like, especially for the young people there

1 who are longer stints, like how do we make sure that
2 they are up to date with the technology that's going
3 on and understanding that? Also we know that AI is
4 moving us along. And we do not want to have these
5 young people behind the curve. So we definitely need
6 to be thinking about how we include some STEM
7 activities, you know, AI, robotics and all those
8 things. And that actually doesn't take up a lot of
9 space.
10

11 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, just some of the
13 suggestions that I have. And also just thinking about
14 workforce development, I know you guys talked about
15 the painting and the spackling which is absolutely
16 necessary, but, you know, I think that there's a
17 whole host of careers we can try to be getting young
18 people certified for when they get out as well.

19 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: And I just will add
20 that, you know, the arts is a great pathway to STEM
21 as well. There's a lot of interest in arts of all-
22 kinds, music, drawing, and so we've created a lot of
23 programs for that as well, and those can be pathways
24 into the... some of the things you're talking about.
25

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely. I mean, you know, we were talking to one of these young people who's clearly a botanist, and a yoga instructor, and all the things, but you know especially...and I know it gets hard with the provider, because they don't necessarily have the manpower to be able to create such a wide variety. But we do need to think about maybe we have smaller contracts, so we can have more people, more providers there, so we can have... offer more. Because, let's say if you're there for a year, you don't want to keep taking the same thing over and over again. So I do think that we do need to be a little bit creative about this. So if these two organizations can't offer a wide variety, which they probably shouldn't, I just want to say, because we don't want them to overextend themselves, maybe we should be thinking about contracts— either on like rotated based or things like that. Because we do want to be able to offer the kids as many options as possible, so that when they are released, they do not come back. Because that needs to always be the goal.

Like, when they leave, they should have a set of skills that they can rely on to translate back into society. So definitely would love to continue to have

So speaking to those young people yesterday, just seeing the brilliance that's locked behind a wall is heartbreaking because those are literally brilliant young men. We didn't get to meet the girls, but don't worry we're coming back. But they were a bunch of brilliant young men who had some of the most creative minds and were just excited about showing us the work that they were doing, the puzzles that they were creating. And that to me is what the young people are, and we need to make sure we're creating those opportunities and setting them up for success.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We agree. We agree.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: You know, I think

there's been a lot of work that Nancy has been doing
directly with some of the courts, with the DA's

office, we partner with MOCJ and others to try to make sure that that's on folks' radar. It's a modest drop, so we feel like we got a ways to go. There's also a slight uptick in some of those short stays, which will drive down the average length of stay.

So we have lot of work to do with our partners, and we're really grateful that the courts and the attorney organizations came together with us this week to kick that off.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. You know, it's one of those things where it's, like, you guys don't necessarily have control over the length of stay or any of those things. Your job is to just house and keep them safe when they get there. But, obviously, I'm happy to hear that you guys are part of the larger conversation, because I think it's important and essential.

The PMMR metrics show an increase in the number of youth admitted into juvenile detentions. What are the current populations at both Horizon and Crossroads?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Combined it's 275 today.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What's the breakdown between the two?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Uh, 137 and 135.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The 137 is at which one?
Horizon?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I'll get it for you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh...

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I should have just given
the numbers I had from a couple of days ago...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (LAUGHS)

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Crossroads is the 137?
Crossroads has 137.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: One-thirty-seven and then
135.

What is the percentage of young people at
Crossroads and Horizon that are going to school each
day?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So there's... of the
group that's compulsory, I think we were around,
somewhere around 80% that are going to school every
day.

You heard from the school liaisons, the work that
they're doing, some of the young people, engaging
them when they're newly there to be able to come in.
That includes, you know, we've got court dates that
young people have to miss school for, they have

1 medical appointments they have to miss school for,
2 but we're really working in coordination with, not
3 only with New York City Public Schools, but we've
4 dedicated staff, who you met yesterday, too, right...

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm

6 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: uh, who are responsible
7 for going out in the halls, getting young people
8 engaged, and getting them to school and it's working.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. We definitely saw
10 that. But I know some of the issues that the
11 providers talked about, even with the education
12 piece, was, you know, they travel by... I think what
13 is it called bunks or groups?

14 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Halls.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, their halls, that
16 they're not getting the needed attention, whether
17 it's around like the IEPs, and you know, being able
18 to have distinguished education.

19 So, definitely, would love to talk further about
20 some ways that we can help improve that- which was
21 one of the reasons why we had Chair Joseph on the
22 visit yesterday- to kind of see how we can get some
23 suggestions.
24
25

I know the superintendent came in at the end, but we're gonna meet with her as well to kind of talk about some of the suggestions as well.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Great.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What percentages are participating in non school activities or other scheduled programs each day? What's the percentage of youth who don't participate in school or programs?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I'll get those percentages for you. We are constantly trying to... if they're not in a formal program, if they're not willing to go that day, we are working to bring stuff onto the halls to work with them to provide tutoring.

I would say it's a very low percentage, but we'll work on getting that to you. And the calendar that's available for each and every day, a lot of the tutoring is important here. I mean, you saw yesterday the brilliant puzzles that they had done.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Uh, 3,500 pieces.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I can't do it so...

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, we are trying to engage them any way we can, but we'll get you more information on that about percentages.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many hours of programs does each young person detained in Crossroads and Horizon receive?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We'll get that to you as well. We're working on at least a few hours a day.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And I know I started at the top of this around some of the higher education stuff and working with the chair, but after the GED what are some of the opportunities that we have for young people? I mean even further than just higher education, what other options do we have for them?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah, this has been a real focus. The DC Ginsburg has brought in CUNY to be able to provide those college opportunities. In the summer we do SYEP, and they have different jobs via the SYEP work. We are looking at ways in which we can help them sort of understand career pathways.

The college, we really want them to be engaged there, and the young people really enjoy it. So we're grateful that we've been able to add that dimension.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The number of children who moved out of foster care placement to another increase for the first four months of Fiscal 2025 to 1.4 per 1,000 care days, compared to the 1.3 per

1,000 care days in Fiscal 2024; the number of youth entering foster care totaled 1,081 in the first four months of Fiscal 2025, 4.1% more than the 1,038 who entered foster care during the same period in Fiscal 2024.

In the first four months of Fiscal 2025, the percentage of children entering foster care who were placed with relatives was 42.2%, a decline of 4.7% compared to the same period last year when it was 48.9. This is below the target of 54%, and ACS has not exceeded that target since Fiscal 2022 when 4.8% of foster care placements were relatives.

Why did the number of foster care moves increase?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So around the kin work, this is really important to us, look at it by borough. We have seen a major increase. We've set very aggressive goals around the 54%. We were in the low 30s and now have sustained to be the active population in care is around forty four percent.

Some of the decline we've seen on the front end, we hypothesize is a little about having more teens that are coming into our care. It's just a slight increase, and we did see some families, more families

than before, that were coming who were new New Yorkers and did not have local kin connections.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The providers continue to work on that. So another 10% or so are converted to kin during the time that children are in care. And so we never stop trying to engage kin.

We've also increased the reimbursement that we provide to kin providers right away, even before they're connected to a provider agency. So that night we're able to provide them resources and supports.

We also asked our Child And Family Specialists, who are social workers, to engage in the kin process to try to move this in the right direction. So we're very, focused on that.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Why does ACS think... Well, I mean, you kind of already talked about why you think the percentage has dropped.

How's ACS working to better placements for foster care youth initiated to the needs to move youth from home to home?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah, and this is very, very important. Young people need to be stable.

We are historically at a lower level this move, from 1.3 per thousand care days to 1.4, means that a few of kids were not stable. I believe the number is about 80% in a given year do not move. We do not want kids being bounced from home to home.

And the work of TRIPP, the TRIPP training model that we have now rolled out to all foster parents, it's trauma informed, making sure that they can meet the needs of young people.

We've allowed for... we used to have a small therapeutic program and then a larger regular program. We've combined those two so that agencies can move resources around. So if they need to add a therapist, a sociotherapist, quickly to support the young person and the foster parent, they can do that.

You know, these numbers are better than historically, but we don't want any time for a young person to be moving unnecessarily.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What factors are considered when evaluating if a young person should be placed in the home of a family member?

What supportive services and guidance is provided to family members who are new to foster care but have

the potential to provide more stability and familiar home settings to youth?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So the initial assessment is really a safety assessment. We do a local clearance, we talk to the child, understand if they feel safe in that home, we talk to and assess the home. And then there's the ongoing-- once they're there, there's ongoing training and support.

As I was mentioning earlier, we have enhanced the support that we're providing in those early days. Additional resources so that they can make ends meet. We have made fixes to apartments where necessary. Providers have some budget dollars related to that as does the ACS folks. So we really try to reduce the trauma to young people coming into care.

We have seen a fairly important downtick in the census at the Children's Center. We have a ways to go, but we're really trying to make sure young people are not stuck in situations where they don't have placement. We see sort of horror stories nationally in that regard. But we have given the child and family specialist, that social worker, more responsibility and tools to support families upfront.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And the Preliminary Plan includes 7,028 budgeted positions for Fiscal 2025, decreasing to 7,027 position in Fiscal 2026 in the out and in the out years.

As of January 2025, 6,417 positions were filled at ACS leaving 611 vacancies. What type of positions are vacant? Which program areas are those positions in?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So we have about a 9% vacancy rate. I want to just give you some overall numbers. In 2023 our attrition rate was 17%, in 2024 it was 14. The attrition rate for CPS has declined, its 20% this past year, and the YDS attrition is around 34%.

We have increased, I mentioned earlier, CPS about 200 additional active. We also have over 105 additional YDS active compared to two years ago. So we've been shrinking the vacancies and shrinking where folks are on leave.

So for Family Court Legal Services we have about 38 vacancies— we have that class that starts over the summer. In CPS there are just around 33 vacancies out of the total; DYFJ forty five. And at the Children's Center, there are three, but we've worked with OMB to

increase some support there. So they're allowing us to hire an additional 30 Child Congregate Care Specialists at the Children's Center.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How's ACS actively working to build those positions?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: In every way possible—we've done new ads for YDS and for CPS that have been in a variety of places. We have also been doing hiring halls and hiring pools. Our HR team has... every month we have a YDS class. We have four CPS classes. We've been able to make... we expanded the CPS classes and have been able to fill them.

So our HR team, along with our program folks, have been working really hard on that and very successfully.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Please send over any vacancies that you're trying to fill. I get calls all the time in my office for people looking for work...

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So we're always willing to share. I will also employ, send this to all my colleagues too.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Great.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yes, I be (sic) volunteering them to do stuff all the time.

Are there any areas where ACS is having difficulty filling these vacancies? If so, what is being done to address this?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: You know, in every area, we've been able to identify strong staff, so we... it's hard work, but we aren't having any particular difficulties.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well that is the conclusion for ACS. Thank you guys for being here today. We appreciate all your hard work. And this part of the scheduled programming will now be over. We are going to take a quick recess.

Providers are... the public testimony is up next. Please know that we will be enforcing the time limit, because we have a number of folks who are here to testify. I am asking that people please listen to each other, let's all stay on queue, and let's get through this together.

And so we'll be taking a quick recess, and I will be back in 10 minutes.

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I now open the hearing for public testimony. I remind members of the public that this is a formal government proceeding and that decorum shall be observed at all times. As such, members of the public shall remain silent at all times.

The witness table is reserved for people who wish to testify. No video recording or photography is allowed from the witness table.

Further, members of the public may not present audio or video recordings as testimony, but may submit transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant at Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms and wait to be recognized.

When recognized, you will have TWO minutes. I'm going to repeat, when you are recognized, you have two minutes to speak on today's hearing topic: *The Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2026*.

I am going to repeat it again: You have TWO minutes. If you have a written statement or additional testimony you wish to submit for the

record, please provide a copy of that testimony to the Sergeant at Arms.

I will now call the first panel. All right, we have Ira, we have Kate— Kate Connolly, Ira Yankwitt, Dr. Charles, Jeremy Kohomban, CEO of The Children's Village. Oh, Hi, Jeremy, I messed up your last name, sorry about that. Caitlyn Passaretti from Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, and Michelle Avila from Children's Aid.

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No particular order.

CAITLYN PASSARETTI: Hello, thank Chair Stevens and all the members of the Committee for hosting this hearing. My name is Caitlyn Passaretti; I use she/her pronouns, and I am the Senior Policy and Advocacy Associate with Citizens' Committee for Children of New York.

My testimony will address the needs for Afterschool, Runaway and Homeless Youth, alternatives to incarceration, and needed State advocacy.

Afterschool programs provide vital supports and care for our city's young people. To ensure programs are robustly funded and providers are paid what they are owed, we must adjust the rates for COMPASS and

SONYC. In partnership with the Campaign for Children, we urge the City to increase base rates for COMPASS elementary to \$4,900 and for SONYC middle school programs to \$4,150— this year— with the end goal of fully funding elementary and middle school programs in a new procurement in FY27.

Regarding runaway and homeless youth, we are grateful for the 100 beds funded in last year's budget. However, we also need the City to increase the rates for providers, have not been updated since 2017, to \$70,000 per bed. This investment will provide safe, temporary housing for youth who otherwise would be without a stable option. We also urge you to restore and baseline the \$1.62 million for Peer Navigators and \$1.5 million for the Housing Specialists. Having a trusted support person to offer advice, resources, and answers for young people experiencing homelessness is an invaluable resource.

Additionally, we urge you to support investments meant to prevent justice system involvement for young people. Extensive research demonstrates the positive impacts of ATI and reentry programs, including lowering recidivism and crime. However, the Administration has cut \$6 million to these programs

since 2023. We are therefore asking for a restoration in baseline of \$3.3 million for the Impact Program, \$2.6 million for Next Steps, \$3.8 million for the Office of Criminal Justice for Alternatives to Incarceration Programs, and \$8 million for reentry programs.

Finally, we urge you to work with the State to secure additional funding for the City's Child Care Block Grant. According to ACS, New York City is on the verge of exhausting available CCBG funds. This would result (TIMER CHIMES) in 4,000 to 7,000 children losing childcare assistance each month.

It is urgent that city leaders work with the State to ensure City...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirty seconds...

CAITLYN PASSARETTI: receives to prevent a dramatic drop in access to affordable childcare.

And then very quickly, the Commissioner of ACS mentioned the increase in young people in secured detention centers, and we just urge that ACS needs to continue their advocacy for a waiver of hardship to the State. Because there is \$1.5 billion for Raise the Age funding New York City is ineligible for

unless we submit a waiver of hardship, which has not ever been done.

And so we're urging the Council and ACS to work to get that hardship submitted. Thank you for the extra time.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

IRA YANKWITT: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens and staff of the Committee. My name is Ira Yankwitt, and I am the Executive Director of the Literacy Assistance Center, as well as a proud member of the New York City Coalition For Adult Literacy.

As you know, there are currently over 2.2 million adults in New York City with limited English language proficiency or who do not have a high diploma. Yet combined City and State funding for adult literacy education is so limited that fewer than 3% of these New Yorkers are able to access adult basic education, GED or ESOL classes in any given year.

The overwhelming majority of the New Yorkers in need of adult literacy classes are poor and working class immigrants, women and people of color.

And while the need for adult education classes has only grown over the past two years, in FY25 the Adams' Administration inexplicably cut funding for

community based adult literacy programs funded through multiyear contracts with DYCD from \$17 million to \$12 million. This reduction in funding has been maintained in the Mayor's Preliminary Budget for FY26.

Last week, the Trump administration dismantled the federal Department of Education's Division of Adult Education and Literacy, foreshadowing an anticipated cut, elimination or significant restructuring of the federal funding stream that currently provides approximately \$24.6 million a year in ABE, GED and ESOL funding to New York City. The loss of all this funding would eliminate seats for well over 20,000 students. According to the PMMR, there were over 18,000 students served in DYCD funded adult literacy programs in FY 24. Yet the \$12 million in funding for FY 25 and \$12 million proposed in funding for FY26 is slated to serve only 9,118 students, just half the number of those served in FY24. Fortunately, this year the Council restored the Administration's cuts to services through its discretionary funding. But discretionary funding is never guaranteed, and it shouldn't be incumbent on the Council to subsidize the Administration and cover

it for its failures to invest in core community needs.

We're calling on the Administration to double its baseline funding for adult literacy programs funded through DYCD from \$12 million to \$24 million, and we're deeply (TIMER CHIMES) grateful to the Council, and ask that you maintain your funding for discretionary contracts at the \$16.5 million level from FY26.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. And you guys are doing a great job with the speed reading.

(LAUGHTER)

DR. CHARLES: Great, good afternoon, Chair Stevens. I'm Dr. Sophie Charles from the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies, also known as COFCCA. We have the most of the foster care, child welfare, prevention services, juvenile justice agencies serving New York City families and children.

Five high items are on our advocacy priorities: Workforce, procurement, underfunded prevention contracts, liability insurance, and community based services for our youth.

On the workforce area, our turnover is 40%, sometimes higher. And we're looking to get the City

Council to invest in our workforce. We need pay parity, and we also need career development support. All of this is already on your agenda.

And on the procurement side, our agencies are struggling to keep the doors open, to keep... to make payroll. At this point, the City delays and delinquent payments, you know, more than \$800 million for some of our providers.

And on the prevention contract side, underfunded. Right now, we're five years into a 10-year contract, and the agencies absolutely cannot keep up with inflation, the cost of rent, the cost of personnel.

And on the liability insurance side, our child welfare agencies are... many of them are under threat of losing insurance. They are either faced with, uh, sometimes as high as a 70% increase in premiums or just not having their premiums renewed at all. And so that creates major crisis that we're in right now. And our city will have to pick up on agencies that are not... the cost for agencies that are not able to get insurance, especially on the foster care side.

(TIMER CHIMES) And last, our youth in our juvenile justice programming, they need community based aftercare services to help with their

developmental supports, GED, counseling, vocational training, and overall development services.

So we need your support on all of those. Thank you.

KATE CONNOLLY: Hello, and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Kate Connolly; I'm a Senior Policy Analyst for United Neighborhood Houses, an umbrella organization that represents settlement houses across New York State.

I'd like to highlight three issues today:

First, Afterschool. This morning we delivered over 2,300 signatures, largely from parents, but also including afterschool participants and DOE teachers to the Mayor's Office, calling for a commitment to additional investments in this year's budget. As DYCD said earlier today, the last five years have been eventful, and afterschool providers have provided child care, academic support, mentorship, career development, mental health support, and more without fail during these eventful years. However, not only has afterschool been cut in recent years, as with the COMPASS Explore program, but they're also operating on budgets negotiated in 2011 and 2015. During this time, there have been no increases to the after

1 school base rates. This has created a crisis in our
2 system. Staff recruitment and retention have
3 struggled from stagnated wages, rising OTPS costs
4 have put programs in an impossible position, and it's
5 threatening the stability of afterschool programs
6 across the city. And for the record, the COLA is not
7 meant to be a substitute for increased rates.
8

9 In November 2023, UNH released the True Cost of
10 Afterschool Report with model budgets that reflected
11 the real amount of funding needed to run afterschool
12 programs. We're asking the City to commit to funding
13 elementary school programs at a rate of \$6,600 per
14 participant and SONYC programs at a rate of \$5,500
15 per participant, with a down payment of half this
16 year.

17 Number two, Summer Rising. I appreciate the
18 question from Chair Stevens and Joseph during today,
19 and last week's Education Hearing. Last week, during
20 the hearing DOE released a review of the academic
21 impact of the Summer Rising program. It showed that
22 even for middle school participants who attended
23 Summer Rising programming for 20+ days, there was no
24 statistically significant impact on math scores, and
25 they actually fared worse in reading scores than

students who did not attend Summer Rising. DOE's data supports our recent report based on middle school focus groups in a survey of families and providers that Summer Rising is not an appropriate model for all middle school youth. We urge the City to offer choice by providing alternative summer programming options for middle school young people.

And third, payment delays. (TIMER CHIMES) Real quick— Earlier we heard from Council Member Avilés about the millions of dollars owed to Center for Family Life. I wish I could say that this was a unique experience. We've heard from many of our members that they're owed millions of dollars for FY24 and 25. And no provider that I've talked to has been paid out for Summer Rising programming in 2024. This should not be treated as a side problem, but a critical issue threatening the nonprofits in our city.

And I look forward to your hearing in April.
Thank you.

MICHELLE AVILA: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens and members of the Children and Youth Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Michelle Avila and I'm the Director of Public Policy at Children's Aid. At Children's Aid, we're committed to ensuring that young people in New York City have no boundaries to their aspirations and no limits to their potential. We know a thriving city requires a strong ecosystem of programs that support children, youth, and families. We hold nearly 50 contracts with the Department of Youth and Community Development for programs ranging from COMPASS, Summer Youth Employment, Adult Literacy and more. These programs are critical to the success of New York City's youth and families and continued investment in these services is essential.

For the FY26 Budget, we are calling for the reversal of a \$6.9 million cut to the COMPASS Afterschool system, and for the City to baseline \$19.64 million to the DYCD portion of Summer Rising programs for middle school youth.

To stabilize the afterschool system, we joined providers in urging the City to begin a phase-in process for higher per participant rates in the FY26 COMPASS and SONYC contract extensions by including the total of \$154,324,800 in the budget.

We also urge the City to release a concept paper for COMPASS and to commit to fully funding both elementary and middle school programs in the new procurement process.

As both a summer program and Summer Rising provider, we urge the City to meaningfully partner with providers to address and resolve operational concerns with Summer Rising.

We also urge the City to address disparities in funding across summer programs, especially for center-based programs, include Beacons and Cornerstones. These community hubs often face lower reimbursement rates and limited slots despite high demand. It is crucial to increase funding for all summer programs and expand program slots.

With respect to child welfare, we want to highlight the importance of prevention services in the child welfare system. We know these programs prevent families from entering the (TIMER CHIMES) foster care system, and that 99% of families engaged avoid... at Children's Aid avoid foster care system involvement.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirty seconds.

MICHELLE AVILA: However, these services are growing fiscal deficits, and we urge the Council to ensure providers are paid the true cost of these services. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, let's start off by saying you guys did an excellent job of trying to stick to your two minutes.

Also, I wanted to just give a special shoutout to all of the providers that have been here since nine o'clock this morning, who were out at rallies, who were delivering petitions to the other side. You guys have been with me all day. So I really appreciate you and your stamina. So I hope you guys went out, got food, and all the things. So I appreciate you guys all being here. It's really necessary.

I just have one question for this panel and it was for the young lady at the end. You talked about the hardship waiver for... that ACS needs to apply for? Could you just tell me a little bit more about that, because when the DAs were here as well, they were talking about Raise the Age and how we have not received adequate funding from the State. Just tell me a little more.

CAITLYN PASSARETTI: Definitely. So, Raise the Age was passed in 2017...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm!

CAITLYN PASSARETTI: Cuomo and di Blasio. There was...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, I know the issue...

CAITLYN PASSARETTI: Yeah, okay...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The hardships, yeah...

CAITLYN PASSARETTI: The tax cap makes us not eligible.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

CAITLYN PASSARETTI: So New York City has 50% of the young people incarcerated, and yet we received no funding at all from the State.

So there's an opportunity that you can submit a waiver of hardship, which is a letter to the Governor, OCFS, OMB, and DCJS to express that even though we have this tax cap, we still would benefit from the resources coming down from the State to support all of the continuum of programs that Raise the Age offers— whether that's prevention, whether that's Close to Home or detention and also reentry and aftercare.

We have not submitted a waiver. Will they approve it? I do not know, but we cannot get the money at all if we do submit this waiver... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Submit this waiver...

CAITLYN PASSARETTI: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. We will definitely follow up with that. Because even when, like I said, when the DAs were here last week, they also spoke about after Raise the Age was passed, there was funding that we were supposed to get that we still haven't gotten. So I want to make sure that we are doing our part to ensure that we are getting all of the resources that we need to continue to do the work that we see as necessary.

But, with that, I do not have any more questions for this panel. Because I think addressed a lot of it today during the hearing. Didn't I? All right, well, great. Look at that, look at that.

All right, so we are going to get ready for our next panel. Let's call on down Shakeema North-Albert, Covenant House; I'm messing up these names and I apologize, Kha'ja Mendheim, sorry, guys, CDAF, DYCD; Tricia Mullen, Lehman College; Galloway, well, I know

she just put Galloway, but I know her first name is Lauren; Paula Magnus, Northside; Carlina...

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I think we need another chair.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, I think we need another chair. Carolina Laise-Chong, Northside.

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Anyone can start.

(PAUSE)

DR. SHAKEEMA NORTH-ALBERT: Good Afternoon, Chair Stevens, members of the Children and Youth Committee, thank you all for the opportunity to testify today. I am Dr. Shakeema North-Albert, Chief Executive Officer at Covenant House New York.

I am here today to address a critical issue impacting the sustainability of our programs and services: the underfunding of current contracts that we have been told are now being extended for another two years and the failure to fund the citywide cost-of-living adjustments, as promised, at a compounded rate of 3% year over year from FY25 to FY27.

For years, Covenant House New York, and our sibling Runaway and Homeless Youth agencies, have partnered with the City to deliver essential programs that benefit our communities. However, the persistent

underfunding of these contracts has significantly strained our ability to maintain the high-quality services that youth and young adults in need depend on. And this challenge is further compounded by the heightened fear and uncertainty surrounding the future of the federal grants we rely on to fund key programs within our continuum of care. With potential cuts or delays in federal funding, we are facing an even greater risk of service disruptions at a time when our communities and our young people, especially, need stability and support the most.

Extending our current contracts without addressing the funding gaps only exacerbates the challenges we face to keep our doors open and provide the quality of services our young people in our care deserve to have. As costs continue to rise— whether due to inflation, increased operational expenses, or the need for competitive wages— the funding we receive remains stagnant, forcing us to do more with less.

Currently, the City funds our contracts at \$49,000-\$52,000 per bed, while our actual cost of operations for Covenant House New York is \$74,000 per bed. The gap, which amounts to about \$5.5 million,

forces us to find alternative funding sources to maintain services, which, in today's climate, is not a sustainable, long-term solution.

Despite these challenges and the flat contract rates we have remained deeply committed to serving young people who come through our doors with quality programs and dedicated support.

Because of our staff's tireless efforts, (TIMER CHIMES) over 600 Covenant House youth engaged in mental health services last year.

Like many RHY providers...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirty seconds.

DR. SHAKEEMA NORTH-ALBERT: Covenant House has been asked to take on additional beds. While opening 100 new beds would undoubtedly provide more resources for runaway and homeless youth and young adults in need, it is simply not sustainable to expand the capacity when we lack the necessary resources to support the beds we already provide.

I urge the Council to ensure... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I see you turning pages. You are running over time.

DR. SHAKEEMA NORTH-ALBERT: Yeah, I, lastly...

(CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Wrap it up.

DR. SHAKEEMA NORTH-ALBERT: I just want to urge the Council to ensure that the current contract extensions come with appropriate funding adjustments to reflect what it costs to run quality programming that our youth deserve and that the COLA issued last year is funded in the way our staff deserves.

Specifically, I'm asking for an increase in the bed rate on the current DYCD contracts of \$70,000 per bed— this includes the 100 new beds— and fund the compounding COLA increases at 3% year over year as promised. Thank you for your time and your consideration.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

KHA'JA MENDHEIM: Hello, I'm Kha'ja, I'm with the Youth Advocacy Board at Ali Forney Center. I offer you my perspective based off of my lived experience and also informed by my peers based off the advocacy work that we do.

We believe that DYCD must approach youth homelessness, youth chronic homelessness, with a holistic lens. The truth is that 40% of homeless... people homeless youth are LGBT and many of them need mental health resources.

And also through navigating these ,like, Kafkaesque, bureaucratic systems, one, it increases and exasperates those mental health challenges, but also it makes it harder to navigate those systems in the future.

We know, like, from our pioneers that justice deferred is justice denied, and a dream deferred dries up like a raisin in the sun. And our youth are our dreams, and in this time, especially in this climate, we can't allow our social services to be under attack or fall under atrophy.

A lot of like 16 like... the 16 Housing Specialist providers are currently funded by a federal grant and that grant is soon going to be running out. And in this current climate, where our federal infrastructure is being dismantled in general, I think it's important that the City step in and not only fill the gaps that we are perceiving that the federal government might lack in, but also to take the chance to reinforce our social services network in general. So that's it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you, and you did great.

GALLOWAY: Good afternoon, Chair Stephens, and council members of the Children and Youth Committee. My name is Galloway, I'm the Advocacy Manager at the Ali Forney Center, and I stand before you today not only as an advocate but for a voice for the thousands of young people in this city that have been abandoned for far too long.

Right now across New York City, Black and brown trans and queer youth are being forced into homelessness, pushed out by families who reject them, by policies designed to erase them, and by systems that refuse to invest in their survival.

LGBTQ youth are a 120 times more likely to be put into these systems of survival as opposed to their non LGBTQ peers. This is not a coincidence. This is a result of systemic harm, disinvestment, and neglect, and this is a crisis we have the power to change.

New York City calls itself a sanctuary, but a sanctuary is not a word. It is a responsibility. That means taking real action to protect LGBTQ youth, especially those arriving here after fleeting anti-LGBTQ Executive Orders and violence. It means funding survival.

We need \$16.4 million added to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Budget, because our youth cannot wait. This funding will expand programs to meet urgent needs of newly arriving queer and trans youth, and we need those 100 additional beds— Shoutout to Chair Stevens for getting us those beds— we gotta make sure they're contracted, y'all, at that \$70K bed rate, because inflation is real, and the bed rates that are out right now are not working.

We need more of just things on the floor. We need solutions. But shelter alone is not enough. Housing is more than a bed. It is stability, safety, and the ability to build a future. This is why we must invest in Peer and Housing Navigators to help our youth through the system that was not built for them, financial coaches to help them achieve economic security, and wrap around services that support not just their survival but their healing and liberation.

The question before you today is simple. Will you fund survival or will you fund harm? LGBTQ youth are coming to us— we do not need more delays, we do not need more excuses, we need this investment and we need it now.

So thank you so much for your time, and I appreciate (TIMER CHIMES) all the others that amplified the runaway homeless youth needs.

PAULA MAGNUS: Good afternoon, I'm Paula Magnus, Deputy Director at Northside Center for Child Development, where we are a mental health and educational center serving at risk children in Harlem and throughout New York City. We know the stark reality, thousands of New York City children struggling in poverty, unsafe conditions, and all that you've heard thus far.

A health study revealed alarming rates of clinical depression, anxiety, and loneliness among young people with significant impacts on their daily lives. We witnessed this struggle firsthand in our ACS Prevention and DYCD Afterschool and Summer Programs, yet we face critical financial deficits in both programs. We urge the City to recognize that investing in the safety, the future, and the mental health support for the well-being of at risk children is not just a priority, it is a fundamental responsibility.

We respect and request that the City move towards a model of full-cost funding of programs providing

quality, efficient services ensuring that organizations, like those you've heard from today and Northside, is financially stable so we can continue to effectively protect and support our children.

For the last two years in our ACS program, we've served 570 at risk youth— 96 of them have stayed safe in their homes. The cost of the program, \$5.6 million— how much we were reimbursed— \$4.5 million, which meant a shortfall of \$1.1 million.

Similarly, our DYCD funded Afterschool Program, ages five to 12, urban children are at risk if they're unattracted with things to do that's beneficial for them, they're at risk. This program provides a safe, enriching environment for our children.

Again, (TIMER CHIMES) we're losing money on that program. So we request that the Council, and you Chair Stevens, as you go forward, to encourage that funding stays there and that we get the advancements and the increased cost to be covered as needed. Thank you very much.

TRICIA MULLEN: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens and other council members in attendance. My name is Tricia Mullen, and I'm the Director of the Lehman

College Adult Learning Center. Each year, we serve 1,000 of your constituents, employ 12 full-time, and 25 part time New York City residents who are also your constituents. As a member of NYCAL (phonetic), I implore the Administration to double its baseline funding for adult literacy from \$12 million to \$24 million, restoring last year's cuts, and maintain the \$16.5 million for the Adult Literacy Pilot and the Adult Literacy Initiative.

My center is not a beneficiary of those contracts, but I'm here as the canary in the coal mine, because of the \$24 million of federal adult literacy funding that comes to New York City, my center receives \$1 million. It is very likely that we will not get that million, or if we get that million, I won't be able to run my programs this year, because the money will be so late in the chaos.

So I'm here to just say that I was there in the Bronx four years ago when Lehman Adult Literacy programs were created. They were created by social workers to address the social, economic, and political inequity. If our center, excuse me, if our center is not funded, the extreme impact of the likely loss of federal adult literacy funds that will

fall on underfunded DYCD providers who serve our undereducated and unemployed New York City residents, will once again be in crisis.

These are underfunded City services— as we talked about today, they're very often... there are delays in their reimbursements. I lose my million, I'm very likely to lose my million, there certainly will be delays. (TIMER CHIMES) That's gonna cause constituents to suffer.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. I do not have any questions for this panel. So, thank you, at this time.

Right now I have— and I'm not sure if they're here, because this is the panel of young people, Ashanti Bennons from Groundswell, Brooke from Groundswell as well, Nate Duvall from Groundswell, are they here? No? All right, I don't think they're here, so I will put this panel on hold.

Oh, is that you? Oh, you are here! Okay, well, let me go back. All right, well, let's start over: Nate Duval, Brooke Fyffe, Ashanti Bennon from Groundswell, Rebekah Kwong from Lower East Side Girls Club, and Rebekah Dzah from Armory College Preparatory. All right, well, I have some more

students, Lady Beina from Armory College Preparatory, Journey Johnson from Armory College Preparatory, Yi Lin Zhou from Girls from Gender Equity, Jonee Billy from Power Play NYC, Mia Lema Lindao, and Vick from Row NY.

Whenever you guys are ready you can start.

NATE DUVALL: Hello, My name is Natalie Duvall Estrella (phonetic), preferably Nate, and I'm in Helping Artist in Groundswell. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the critical role about... nonprofits play in supporting mental health and why additional funding is essential for our communities.

As a working artist personally, I've been having, like, I've been seeing how society's been, like, getting a hard time... having a hard time with things such as jobs. And since it's hard to get a job nowadays as a young person, it's good to have these things such as Groundwell on my résumé. And working with other artists in the same position as I am is quite nice. This year I've been working on a project along with other young artists with the Visual AIDS Women's Empowerment Group to raise awareness about the ongoing epidemic of AIDS— fun fact, based off of

the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,
African American females were 10 times more likely
than non Hispanic, white females to have a diagnosis
of HIV infection in 2022— that's not a very unknown
fact... I mean, not very known fact, which is why
we're making a mural for those women. Not only that,
but I've been working with well, I just said it...
I've been working with young artists, and they...
they're actually very sweet people. I was... they're
like... they've been... I'm sorry. I've never done
this before. Okay. (LAUGHS) Yeah, but...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: All right, stop saying
you're sorry...

NATE DUVALL: (LAUGHS)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You're doing great. Calm
down, relax, you're doing great.

NATE DUVALL: Okay, working with young artists is
very fun and very nice, especially for the fact that
they are just as nervous as I am talking to people
(LAUGHS). And speaking with them was really nice,
because of the fact that we have all been able to get
more extraverted. And I have been able to get more
comfortable in myself while working with these
artists, because I have noticed that a lot of us have

amazing personalities, and we just don't show it off because we're so uncomfortable with ourselves. And with nonprofits you show yourself more with people that you feel comfortable with. So, yeah, that's why we should have...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Good job.

(APPLAUSE)

NATE DUVALL: Yeah.

(PAUSE)

REBEKAH KWONG: Greetings, my name is Rebekah, and I am a 15-year-old girl who is attending the Clinton School. I first want to thank committee members for the opportunity to speak today about the critical role nonprofits play in supporting youth development, youth mental health, and why additional funding is essential for our communities.

I have personally experienced the impact of nonprofits always being there for everyone, even if they're in need of support. I have been a member of the Lower East Side Girls Club for a fifth of my entire life, and I would 100% say I haven't regretted a second of my time here. I used to be isolated and lacked motivations or drive to do anything. I was failing classes and had only two other people other

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heard; I learned to be confident, how to maintain a good mental state.

Without these nonprofits, I wouldn't be standing where I am. Many women wouldn't be where they are today. (TIMER CHIMES) People have careers because of Girls Club and STARS. I can't repay them back other than being here today representing them. Even though I feel nervous and anxious, I want to be here, because these organizations matter to me— which is why I urge you to consider increasing funding for youth-serving nonprofits like STARS CGI and Lower East Side Girls Club. They are organizations committed to growing young leaders. They have helped people invest in their future, brought people together, and so, so, so much more. It is so important at this time.

In closing, youth well-being is not a luxury. It is a necessity. Initiatives like STARS CGI and organizations like the Girls Club play a vital role in ensuring young people like me have access to care and support we all need to make mistakes, learn, grow. With continued and additional funding, they can continue to provide safe spaces, mentorship, and critical resources that truly change lives.

I appreciate the opportunity to share my experience and advocate for increased support. Let me remind you, each one of us is a person, and we have different things that matter to us. These nonprofit organizations are a sole reason I stay standing up and many other people would feel the same. We young people are the future, and we need the help you can provide. Thank you.

JONEÉ BILLY: Good evening, Chair Stevens.. Gotcha, no problem (LAUGHS). I am Joneé Billy, I am here on behalf, I'm in a dual capacity, on behalf of PowerPlay and STARS CGI, and thank you for having us here, uh, as well as some of our young people from our organizations.

PowerPlay is now in its 27th year. It's dedicated to empowering thousands of girls across all five boroughs of New York City. We use sports to propel girls beyond circumstances, providing access to experiences, strong female role models, and a blueprint for opportunities. Moreover, PowerPlay serves as the lead agency for STARS CGI, a coalition of 10 nonprofits. Together, we serve the healthy... we support the healthy development of over 6,000 girls and gender expansive youth, helping them

overcome barriers and become leaders in their communities.

STARS CGI is deeply committed to addressing the social emotional needs of our city's youth. We have witnessed a significant increase in mental health needs, especially among young people of color. Recognizing this critical gap, STARS CGI has prioritized equipping youth with strategies for social and emotional well-being while empowering them to speak out on societal issues.

Funding restoration will be critical in our effort to continue to provide high quality youth development programming to the communities we currently serve. Today, federal directives against diverse, equitable, and inclusive organizations have left us in a tenuous position. Not only do we derive nearly 50% of our funding from federal grants, but we fear for the effect that this will have on all avenues of funding. A growing list of foundations and corporate donors have eliminated their in house DEI initiatives and all related giving.

PowerPlay's funding has already been impacted by the shift of foundations serving Black girls—rescinded \$25,000 of pledged funds in FY24—citing

the fact that funders have very abruptly shifted their commitments to us with little to no warning.

We cannot anticipate the duration or severity of this new public sentiment, and more so... now more so than ever, require New York City Council's support to continue operations. We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Currently funded at \$1.4 million, of which PowerPlay receives \$550,000, we seek full funding restoration and an enhancement to \$2 million to expand and deepen our impact. (TIMER CHIMES)

PowerPlay's portion would increase to \$600,000 ensuring we reach more young people in District 16 and beyond.

Thank you for allowing me this time to testify today.

MIA LEMA LINDAO: Hi...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You were here last year, right?

UNKNOWN: Yes, I was.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, I'm talking to the young person.

MIA LEMA LINDAO: Oh, yes, I was here last time.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I remember your face.

(LAUGHTER)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: See, I remember faces, I don't know names.

MIA LEMA LINDAO: So, my name is Mia Lema Lindao, I've worked... well, not worked, but I've been in Sadie Nash for two years. I joined my junior year, I'm currently 17 years old, and right now a senior at the Heritage School.

So joining Sadie Nash my junior year, I'll be honest with you, I had no idea what I was walking into. For starters, I didn't... I was top of my school, literally at top of my school, but yet I had no foundation, like, built for me. I had no... I felt like I wasn't being understood. I had no support, personally. And when I joined Sadie Nash, personally, I felt like I was being supported by not just the, like, the staff members there, but also my own peers. I was surrounded with people who thought like me and that were like me. Maybe they weren't Hispanic or my name, but they were definitely girls out there who shared the same interests, and definitely wanted to step out the whole... what's that word again? The whole stereotypical minority and not stepping out.

1 So definitely, Sadie Nash has taught me to step
2 out of my comfort zone and present myself more
3 confidently. They also showed me what I should stand
4 up for. I didn't know what I should stand up for, but
5 definitely, Sadie Nash has taught me and showed me
6 how communities like ours don't really get a lot of
7 support, and because of that, they led me to believe
8 in a good social justice. They led me to believe in a
9 good, equal school system, which I'm a be honest, I
10 wasn't very informed back in junior year, but now I
11 can say I have much more information, and I have more
12 of a passion to just stand with my foot on the
13 ground.

15 And transitioning that, because I enjoyed just
16 the junior year, was like, hey, kinda wanna do it
17 again, which is now I'm currently in Nash-U in Sadie
18 Nash. And like I said, all our peers will support
19 each other, and I feel like it's a great fundings
20 because we went to events with STARS CGI. We did
21 events like the City Hall one, where I met you, and
22 we did events like even outside of that. And I can
23 say that it definitely prepared me to feel more
24 comfortable and be confident. And not only that,
25 (TIMER CHIMES) they really set you up for the real

world experience, which I think a lot of people should experience, because I think a lot more people should join in and the funding, we need it. Okay? We need it.

All the all the good stuff. Okay? When I tell you, all the trips that we go to, it's not just a (INAUDIBLE) boneless of a with no foundation. Like, every trip has a meaning, and I feel like we should be able to join more trips. Not even that, for junior year, most of our courses online... were most of our courses in, like, the leisure scholar was online. So it got to the point where even all of us were like, hey, wanna meet up in person more. We wanna get to know each other. Matter of fact, I like seeing everyone's face because that's how comfortable we are. So this year, now that everything is more in person, I feel like we deserve that. And definitely deserve more people around because, yes, it's a small group, and we get to know each other, but why not make it bigger? Why not open everyone's eyes? Why limit ourselves? And that's what I can offer, so thank you.

ISABELLA PEREZ: Good afternoon, my name is Isabella, and I'm currently a student who's part of

the Armory College Prep Program, which aims to support students who plan on going to college as their post secondary path. And firstly, thank you so much for the opportunity today to speak to you about the fundamental role that nonprofits play in ensuring the success and development of the youth and especially students in our communities.

As a person of color who grew up in the projects and is from a low income household, going to college was never really in the picture for me, I thought it was too difficult, and I thought it was way too expensive. But through the networking opportunities that have been granted to me through this program, I was able to meet a Columbia Admissions Officer, and I was able to ask her all these burning questions I had about the admissions process. And I truly felt that I could have a chance to go to Columbia, one of the top universities in in the country. And I felt like I... I felt much more confident in my abilities, which is something I wouldn't have the opportunity to do if I weren't part of ACP or if I weren't part of a nonprofit in in general.

And I feel like the people that I meet in... that I meet, and the people that I'm around in those

1 programs, also have the similar... a similar goal as
2 me— which really just motivates me all the time to do
3 better, to perform better, and to ultimately get to a
4 good school— all those names on the on the wall of
5 these people who went to Yale, to Babson, to
6 Brandeis, and that really motivates me.

7
8 And through nonprofits that are geared towards
9 our youth, students are truly able to recognize their
10 potential and give their best performance, which is
11 always ideal in everything.

12 And I believe that with more funding, that
13 provides students with more opportunity to experience
14 what I... what I have, and also for them to
15 experience an environment that provides them with the
16 unconditional support that is truly necessary in able
17 to succeed (TIMER CHIMES) and that's it. Thank you so
18 much.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You did great. I wasn't
20 gonna cut you off, but thank you.

21 ISABELLA PEREZ: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I will never cut young
23 people off who have the courage to come and tell us
24 what we need. So I appreciate all of you powerful
25 young people to be here today. I know we have some

more young people in the audience. We are definitely gonna give it up to them. They had... I'm sure some of you guys are coming from school. So thank you for being here, and we really appreciate it. And I have no questions for this panel.

UNKNOWN: (UN-MIC'D) (INAUDIBLE)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You did?

UNKNOWN: (UN-MIC'D) (INAUDIBLE)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I love that. She just made my heart sing. So, I've been trying to get young people to join Community Boards, because that is a definite necessity. And she heard me. Look at that. I didn't even have to harass her. So she remembered. I appreciate that. That just made my heart sing.

We do have some young people on Zoom. And they are here, so we are going to transition over really quickly for remote testimony, and then we will come back to in person.

Please listen for your names to be called. Once your name is called, a member of our staff will unmute you, you may then start your testimony once the Sergeant at Arms sets the clock and tells you that you may begin.

So we have Aaisha (sic) Hernandez online, Alyssa Hernandez?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You may begin.

ALYSSA HERNANDEZ: My name is Alyssa Hernandez, and I've been in New York Edge for the last three years. I really had fun learning and getting the chance to spend time with my friends and the staff here. Some of my favorite activities/clubs have been creating a book when I was in sixth grade. Our book has been published, it is called "A Dragon's Tale". And I was also able to create my own video game in our coding club.

My favorite memory was last year's carnival. I was able to play with inflatable with fun games and chill with my friend... and have fun with my friends.

My entire time in New York Edge has been very fun, and I... and I enjoyed being able to spend time with my... with my friends and do cool activities.

I'm really... I'm always happy here, because I get to spend time with my friends and try new experiences.

While I'm in New York Edge, I feel happy because I get to spend time with my friends and try new experiences.

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's it?

ALYSSA HERNANDEZ: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, great, thank you. We have... I am going to really mess this name up, so I apologize in advance, Cheikhou Diouf online.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin when you're ready.

CHEIKHOU DIOUF: That wasn't a bad pronunciation, but let's begin.

Good afternoon, Councilmen and Councilwomen, my name is Cheikhou Diouf, and for the last two years I have been part of New York Edge. I'm a senior at the Community School of Social Justice, and thank you for your time.

New York Edge has been... has made significant impacts in my life overall by all the opportunities they've given me— such as going to trips to places like Baltimore, which I would have never gone to had it not been for them. We went to Morgan State and (INAUDIBLE) State, and being in these colleges has

Being a part of New York Edge has been amazing. It exposes you to different things that you would have never been exposed to in the first place, such as going to UConn. I have never gone to UConn, but because of them, I was able to go there. Being to... going to UConn, meeting the teachers, talking to staff members gave me the confidence to apply to UConn. And I was accepted to UConn, and it made me cry because of all the years of hard work and sacrifice, but the confidence to be able to do that came from New York Edge.

While in, CSJ at my school, they created a school store to help students have more options when it came to, like, food. They created perfect attendance incentives such as NBA games, Six Flags, and going to Medieval Times. They also created new clubs such as painting a mural, which we actually did, DJ and podcasting.

They've also given me the opportunity to apply for scholarships to help fund my college dreams, which I would have never known had it not been for them.

They've also created internship programs for me and seniors to work with elementary schoolers, middle schoolers, and even in hospitals, which has been... which has broadened my, just understanding of life, basically being exposed to new things.

And they've also done Google Certificate, programs to help me just broaden my range... my build up my résumé even more.

And throughout my journey, New York Edge has been a great support (TIMER CHIMES) from all the staff members to everyone who's here.

And, like, moving forward, I would feel very comfortable for kids from my school to have New York Edge support them. I think they deserve all the funding in the world, because they make so much happen with so little— rather than saying, "I'll do this," they actually do it— which is a life changer for some of us who don't actually see impact most of the times. So thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. Next we will have Hannah Comarao (phonetic).

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

NEOMI NEPTUNE: Hi, my name is Neomi Neptune, and I go to MS 127.

So, firstly, I introduced to New York Edge...

Yeah, I was firstly I introduced to New York Edge when I was a young girl, because my mom works in a public school, I used to go to Catholic school.

But firstly, I wanted to talk about how the New York Edge Afterschool Program provides many benefits that help students thrive both academically and socially.

The program offers a variety of experience that I look forward to every day, such as basketball. They help us do extracurricular work, like, workouts and stuff. They offer trips that make me exposed to different environments, such as, colleges or high schools and stuff like that.

So I attended Catholic school from Kindergarten to seventh grade until I transferred to MS 127. My mom is a teacher in the school, and I particularly grew up here wishing that I could take part of all these activities that go on during afterschool. My

old school never took us on trips or did fun activities, so all of this was something fun and exciting for me.

As a student, I have strongly believed that cutting the afterschool program would be a huge mistake. This program is not just an opportunity for fun, it plays a crucial role in our academic and personal development. Firstly, it provides us with the chance to engage in subjects we may not fully explore during regular school hours, such as leadership, art, or SEL through hands on activities and projects. These experiences reinforce what we learn in class and help us develop critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Additionally, the afterschool program offers a safe space for us to unwind and socialize with friends, fostering teamwork, and collaboration.

Beyond academics, we're we participate in sports, clubs, and creative activities that allow us to discover new passions and build confidence.

By nurturing our interest outside of this traditional classroom setting, the afterschool program helps us create well rounded individuals and encourages us to stay engaged in our education.

If this program were cut, we would lose valuable opportunities for growth, exploration, and connection with our peers, making school a less enjoyable place to be.

Lastly, (TIMER CHIMES) spending time with friends can reduce stress and anxiety, which are common among different students. In a safe environment, we can relax, have fun, and unwind from academic pressures leading to a healthier balance in our lives. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. Next, we have Isabella Navarro.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

ISABELLA NAVARRO: (NO RESPONSE)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Neomi Neptune? Danny Lam?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

DANNY LAM: Good afternoon, I am actually not a student, but I am with New York Edge.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Great, you will have two minutes...

DANNY LAM: Madam Chair, and members of the committee, I'm here today to ask that you prioritize New York Edge's FY26 funding request. We are seeking \$1.2 million under the Council's Afterschool

Enrichment Initiative and \$250,000 under the Council's Social-Emotional Supports for Students Initiative.

Our council citywide funding has remained at \$1 million for the past 15, even though we have tripled in size, and have significantly increased the number of students served.

New York Edge is the largest provider of school-based afterschool and summer programming in New York City, serving 33,000 students in over 100 schools in 37 of the 51 Council Districts. Our mission is to help bridge the opportunity gap among students and underinvested communities.

Core components of our programming includes STEM education, social-emotional learning and leadership, visual and performing arts, sports, health and wellness, academics, and career, and college readiness and summer programs.

We are identified by Mosaic by ACT, the largest afterschool provider in the nation offering SEL learning... SEL supports. We are also one of the city's largest providers of college access programs.

Council citywide funding has enabled us to enrich and expand our programs and has allowed us to develop

and implement new, unique engagement programs such as our award winning student-led podcast formative, our book publishing program, our Heart for the Arts program, our partnership with the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, and our Read Across New York Edge program.

New York Edge, its students, and families are extremely grateful for the Council's 33 years of support. Together, we are guiding students so they grow up healthy, happy, and empowered. Together, are creating the next generation of active and productive community members and problem solvers. Together, we are creating New York City's next generation of doctors, mechanics, chefs, writers, and so much more.

The time has come where increased funding is vitally needed. Unlike contracts with DYCD and other agencies, council discretionary contracts are not eligible for COLA increases. This is making it increasingly difficult for New York Edge to attract maintain quality staff and to continue to offer the wide array of programs we are known for. We're now looking to you to meet the needs of the next generation of young people by supporting our funding request. Thank you. (TIMER CHIMES)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And he was under two minutes, and we didn't have to cut him off. Great.

We will be moving back to in person panels. Thank you for those who waited. But it is always important to make sure that we are creating spaces for young people to be part of this civic engagement. So I did promise that as soon as they jumped on, that I would let them go. So, sorry for the delay. But I think we... We're all providers, so we know what that is, right? Thank you.

So, in person panel: Anthony Rowe from Center for Justice Innovation, Jazmine Reed from Figure Skating in Harlem, Rachel Walman from the Green-Wood Cemetery, Sebastien Vante from Safe Horizons, Illiana Santiago, Jason Alleyne from Exalt. And I apologize again for butchering people's names because I'm not really good at, so, sorry.

No particular order, anyone can start.

JAZZ REED: All right, good afternoon, you guys. My name is Jazz Reed, good afternoon, council members, and Chair Stevens.

I am honored to speak today as a Development And Communications Manager for Figure Skating in Harlem. Thank you for the opportunity to advocate for

increased funding for Youth Programming in New York City.

For over 28 years, Figure Skating in Harlem has empowered young girls of color through a unique blend of education and figure skating. We provide academic support, leadership development, and health and wellness programming ensuring our students gain the confidence and skills to succeed both on and off the ice. Our mission is not about skating, it's about breaking barriers and creating opportunities for young people who are under resourced.

The impact of our work is clear, our students maintain in an 100% high school graduation rate, all pursuing higher education. They develop critical STEM and financial literacy skills, receive mentorship, and build resilience and critical life skills through figure skating. Our 1,500+ alumni prove what's possible when we invest in our youth.

Women like Flo Ngala, the first Black woman to shoot the Met Gala, and Sherry McPherson, our first alumni board member, showcases the power of our mission. Our alumni also hosted our career panel this week at their respective locations such as Carnegie Hill Veterinary Center, MasterCard, and Paramount.

I know firsthand how life changing this program is. I was one of those girls looking for a space like this. Programs like these take young girls from Harlem, raised in a single parent, no income, disabled household, and helped me become a NYU Stern graduate, a city council staffer a couple of years ago, and an award winning mental health advocate now working for an amazing non profit in Harlem.

Despite our successes, financial challenges still persist, so today I urge the City Council to allocate additional resources to programs that empower and uplift young people. Too often we complain about kids on the streets, but not often enough do we meet with solutions to help. So here we are, including investments and enrichment programs like figure skating in Harlem and STARS CGI, strengthening these programs mean building healthier communities and brighter futures for the next generation.

So on behalf of Figure Skating in Harlem, STARS CGI, and the incredible young women we serve, I thank you for your time and consideration and I look forward (TIMER CHIMES) to working together to create a more equitable and supportive environment for all of New York City's children and youth. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. And I did just see the documentary that they did with the organization, so shoutout to you guys for that.

JAZZ REED: Thank you.

ANTHONY ROWE: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens, and esteemed members of the Committee of Children and Youth. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Anthony Rowe, and I serve as a Project Director for Neighbors in Action, a program of the Center for Justice Innovation, and we thank the Council for its ongoing advocacy and investments into programs like ours.

The health and well-being of our youth is at a crossroads. We are noticing that the ages of young people impacted by violent crimes are getting younger and younger. And the needs of our young people are increasing.

Since my arrival at the center, I've had the privilege of working alongside many invested colleagues, elected officials, and community stakeholders all with the purpose of improving the well-being of our children. The joint effort has led

to a decrease in violent crimes in the communities that we serve.

It's become increasingly clear that in order to create safer communities, we have to continue to be innovative and adapt in order to meet the ever changing needs of the youth and communities that we live in.

The continued investments we have received have allowed programs like Brownsville and Bronx Community Justice Centers, RISE (phonetic), and Neighbors in Action to continue to pour into our communities and provide access and resources to our youth.

Creating safer spaces with our communities that sent to youth creativity, the entrepreneurial spirit, economic development and workforce development has become very vital. Just this past summer alone, we were able to employ... provide placement employment for opportunities for over 165 youth across Central Brooklyn. The young people were able to receive training, counseling, and employment workshops assist with not only getting jobs but keeping them as well.

In closing, we strongly believe that furthering the investments in the programs like these will help to increase capacity and add to the variety of

programs that will hopefully minimize tragedies like the one that impacted 13-year-old Troy Gill and Crown Heights a little over a year ago. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Look at you with 20 seconds to spare. All right, (INAUDIBLE) we do it.

(LAUGHTER)

ILLIANA SANTIAGO: Hi, my name is Iliana Santiago and I'm a staff attorney at the Community Justice Unit.

I'm here today, because I'm asking for the Council to reinstate our state... our funding. Forgive me, I'm really nervous; this is the first time I'm here.

As the young lady who testified before me stated, people, forgive me... initiatives like CJU are not a luxury. They're a necessity. Cutting funding makes our cities less safe, our communities less stable, public safety that much more elusive.

This city has done amazing things. It has committed itself to the Cure Violence Model, to organizations who treat gun violence like a public health crisis, stopping violence before it spreads.

And we know that it works. Last year alone, there was a 19% decrease in gun violence. And this is an actual lifeline that our communities are using in order to empower our youth and most vulnerable populations— including our elderly and our disabled.

Historically we've learned that when we invest in justice we invest in safety. A lot of people don't think about me specifically, lawyers, in terms of how we fit into that puzzle, but they're wrong. CJU provides legal defense, housing protection, family support, crisis intervention in neighborhoods in need, because a person fighting eviction, a young person with no job opportunities, or a family torn apart by the system is more vulnerable to violence.

I'm gonna give you specific examples. Our team, when a mother lost her son to gun violence, our Housing Specialists fought to get her emergency housing so she wasn't grieving her child in the streets. When young people in East New York expressed fear of police interactions, our CJU organizers gave them tools to educate their peers on how to navigate these interactions safely, replacing fear with hope. When senior citizens face eviction, we've secured rent relief preventing homelessness for our elders.

Specifically, my team, we go at least two or three times (TIMER CHIMES) to these organizations. This is time that young people are not out in the streets. There was an idea, a statement before that talked about project-based learning. This is exactly what we're doing in our communities. CJU provided over 8,000...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirty seconds.

ILLIANA SANTIAGO: Eight-thousand...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, take a breath and wrap it up.

ILLIANA SANTIAGO: (LAUGHS) Absolutely.

Over 8,000 people with legal services, organized 111 community events, and reached 1.6 young people (sic) in legal education.

I'm asking you specifically to allow me not to say no. I'm much better at saying yes. I am a staff attorney at CJU, and I'm really lucky to have my job because I really think that this is the only path forward to invest in our communities. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And I agree, thank you.

RACHEL WALMAN: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens.

My name is Rachel Walman, and I am the Director of Education at the Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn.

Green-Wood is a 187-year-old active cemetery, so you might be wondering why am I here right now. Well, Green-Wood is in fact vital to the educational landscape of Brooklyn. Some fun facts about us: Green-Wood is the City's first large public green space before Central Park. We are a national historic landmark. We host an SYEP internship every summer. We're opening a new Education and Welcome Center in 2026, and we taught 299 school field trips to more than 9,000 students in 2024. Twenty DOE schools are within a half mile walk of a Green-Wood entrance.

And it's good that Green-Wood is so accessible, because this is the real fun fact, not so fun fact, we are the only major cultural institution in Brooklyn, south of Prospect Park. Self guided admission to Green-Wood is free 365 days a year, but we need funding to make guided programs more available to schools everywhere, even those in our own backyard. Teachers and students love Green-Wood—some classes come to visit the graves of fascinating figures from George Washington's dentist to Jean-Michel Basquiat. Others are exploring 478 acres of urban nature, or they come to study world class architecture.

More than 50% of visiting teachers have brought classes more than three years in a row. And we never forget that we're a cemetery. Green-Wood educators receive grief sensitivity training to help kids with big feelings during programs. And this is a key feature of our work. We have actually recently received funding from the New York Life Foundation and National Alliance for Children's Grief to build a free support program for bereaved children and their caregivers starting in 2026.

For this year's budget, Green-Wood is seeking \$50,000 from the Brooklyn Delegation, and this funding will help us serve more Title-I schools and offer free professional development with CTLE credit to local teachers, and most crucially, it will help us normalize conversations about death and grief for more students.

Thank you for listening, and we look forward to working with the City Council toward our shared goals.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Look at that, you had three seconds to spare! (LAUGHTER) Sebastien, can you do it? He had 20, she had three. Where do you fall in between?

SEBASTIEN VANTE: (LAUGHS) Good afternoon, Chair Stevens. My name is Sebastien Vante and I'm the Associate Vice President of Streetwork programs at Safe Horizon, the nation's largest nonprofit victim assistance organization. We help 250,000 New Yorkers each year who have experienced violence or abuse.

Streetwork Project works with homeless and street-involved young people to help find safety and stability. We provide essential resources at our drop in centers, at our overnight shelter, and through our street outreach teams.

I've submitted my full testimony but want to emphasize a few points.

First, we urge the City Council to restore and expand City Council initiative and discretionary funding that organizations like Safe Horizon rely on. Specifically, we are seeking enhancements to the Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault, which supports our Child Advocacy Centers, and Support For Persons Involved in the Sex Trade Initiative, which supports Streetwork. We are also requesting new Speaker's Initiative funding to enhance our ability to respond to the increase in undocumented and new arrival youth

seeking our support and address their complex immigration and social services needs.

When young people are connected to legal assistance, long term representation, and wraparound services, we help to prevent them from experiencing further exploitation, trafficking, and violence.

Second, we join with other RHY providers to urge the Council and the Administration to make additional investments to our RHY continuum.

Our recommendations include increase the bed rate for crisis sheltering services to \$70K per bed, rightsize RHY residential contracts, restore and baseline Housing Navigators and Financial Empowerment, fund youth specific immigration legal services, fund 16 Housing Specialists and 16 Peer Navigators.

Third, we must, and we have, to ensure that youth experiencing homelessness can access CityFHEPS (TIMER CHIMES) Vouchers without barriers. This is especially critical given the news we received yesterday from DYCD that we will be losing the ability to refer clients for NYCHA HCV (Housing Choice Voucher) Section 8 Vouchers and that our clients who previously received HCV...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirty seconds.

SEBASTIEN VANTE: Section 8 Voucher holders might lose their vouchers because of federal budget cuts. This is a crisis moment and our city and state must step up to ensure that young people have safe and stable housing.

Lastly, the City must ensure that nonprofits are paid on time. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. And you did not do the 20 (INAUDIBLE) seconds. No, I'm just playing. Guys, I'm sorry, I'm tired, so I get a little silly at the end.

But I am happy you brought up the voucher thing, because, as you heard today in the questioning with DYCD, they made it seem like I was making it up around the meeting that they had providers around losing the vouchers and NYCHA access.

So, if you don't mind sharing, if you can tell us a little bit more of the details about what was expressed to you? Because I feel like what was expressed to me was different than what they said today in the hearing. So I just would love some clarity, very succinctly too.

SEBASTIEN VANTE: I'll try to be quick, but there's a standing meeting that we always have with DYCD around housing related to vouchers. And in that meeting that we had yesterday, it was told to us that... initially, it was told to us that we had until 4:30 that day to refer folks through the NYCHA portal for HCV. You know, we really pushed back, and they gave us an extension until today, 5:00 p.m.

But it was such a last minute thing. And right now, why a lot of my colleagues are not here today is because we're...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Trying to get the young people...

SEBASTIEN VANTE: we're doing the outreach right now...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: In...

SEBASTIEN VANTE: We're trying to get young folks in, because we don't know how long the portal will be closed or what are other options. Which is why we are really urging the City Council to really lean on getting us access to the CityFHEPS Vouchers. Because EHV (Emergency Housing Vouchers) seems to be running... going to be running out in January 2026.

You know, there's not many rapid rehousing programs that have vacancies.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm

SEBASTIEN VANTE: So, like, what other resources do our young people have to connect to housing? So we are really concerned about that. So we are doing our best, we're...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, we're all concerned about it. And, again, I am happy you brought it up, because, again, what you're saying, what I heard, and what was said here, are all very different— because it was said that that was not happening, and that they were just alerting you guys and not that it was actually happening. So thank you for being able to clarify that for us on the record. I am very concerned about this, because I got a bunch of frantic text messages and calls yesterday after that meeting— because of what you guys were told. So let's continue to have conversations, because this is something that we do need to find a solution for. So, thank you. Thank you to this panel, I appreciate you guys.

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, Jane Dacosta from Metropolitan Equestrian, Joan Kanarkiewicz, sorry, please say your name when you testify, because clearly I am messing up everybody's name, such a butchering. Robin Veenstra-VanderWeele, I don't know what that last name is, but they're from Queens, Queens Community House; Moomina Rahman, Groundswell; Feliz (INAUDIBLE), that's also a student, from Center for Family in Sunset Park, Emily Versen from Center for Family Life.

So, there are two young people here. And we know I'm not going to stop them, but everyone is not... Oh, I know, and I can see... But we can go. No, you can do it whatever way you want. You guys want to start with the young people, you want them to end, whatever. Dealer's choice.

JANE DACOSTA: Okay, My name is Jane DeCosta. I'm the Executive Director and Founder of Metropolitan Equestrian, established in 2010 to provide access to equestrian sports and education programs from all across New York City.

I am Brooklyn born and raised. I'm a proud U.S. Navy disabled veteran, and I've been an equestrian for 35 years. My journey began at 12, made possible

by the mentorship of a female New York City police officer who guided me while my immigrant Guyanese mother, single mother, worked multiple jobs. That mentorship shaped my life— to my even recent achievements at NYU Stern, as a scholarship recipient, and a graduate from the MBA of the Executive MBA program.

Those experiences are the foundation of MET. Since 2010, MET has been a New York City based nonprofit organization servicing New York City children and youth citywide. For more than a decade, MET serviced a maximum 50 New York City youth in Brooklyn, but due to space constraints developed on wait list, MET is now has the opportunity to expand programming in New York City.

Outdoor sports and activities are crucial for city youth providing them with physical, emotional, and cognitive benefits. Equestrian sports fosters discipline, responsibility, and confidence while exposing students to a world of opportunities beyond the traditional urban recreation. MET is unique in youth development and is the only nonprofit in equestrian sports that provides integrated academic

support, life skill training, and college preparation alongside equestrian instruction.

MET more than just a horseback riding lesson program. We offer access to resources to pay for all programs. MET provides access to grants, scholarships, and work study programs. Currently, the majority of the participants taking part in resources helps them subsidize access to the sport.

Throughout the years, MET students have received over \$2 million in college scholarships, ranging from beginner to intermediate levels from New York City. These children were never exposed to horses in the same way that I was as well.

We are asking for a very small amount compared to the many that have asked today of a \$25,000 citywide grant. MET can expand programming, (TIMER CHIMES) provide recreational experiences, and cultivate inner city talent like myself. I stand here as a proof of what's possible for young people who are given the opportunities.

We urge New York City Council Committee on Youth to support MET in ensuring all New York City children, regardless of socioeconomic background, to

have access to transformative, equestrian, and educational opportunities.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

ROBIN VEENSTRA-VANDERWEELE: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens, and members of the Committee. Greetings from your friends at Queens Community House. My name is Robin Veenstra-VanderWeele, I'm the Associate Executive Director for Youth Services at Queens Community House.

I'm here today to talk about a crisis for community based organizations like ours regarding the funding provided for afterschool programs across the city.

The Department of Youth and Community Development, DYCD, COMPASS and SONYC programs are funded to provide afterschool and summer programming to thousands of school aged youth across the city. These hours of learning and growth and development are an essential investment in equity for our youth, and they also provide the critical child care that working families need in after school and summer hours.

In January of 2025, afterschool providers received communication from DYCD that their current

COMPASS and SONYC contracts would be extended through the summer of 2028.

While this is good news for current providers across the city to see contract extensions, it is a devastating blow to see contract extensions without any increase to the rate per participant.

Those rates for participants were agreed to by CBOs over a decade ago. This contract extension would include no increase to the rate per participant, leaving the programs across the city stuck with a funding formula that has not kept up with inflation or the actual cost of running an after school program in 2025, much less an after school program in 2028.

Today, over 60% of the City's COMPASS contracts provide a rate per participant of \$2,800 per participant. In order to assess the true cost of providing afterschool services, that both meet the contractual requirements of DYCD, as well as the realities of providing afterschool programming in this post pandemic era, United Neighborhood Houses engaged in a citywide assessment of how providers are funding their afterschool programs and what the costs are that are not covered by contracts with DYCD.

Based on this assessment, the City would need to increase COMPASS elementary school programs from (TIMER CHIMES) \$2,800 to \$6,600 and middle school programs from \$3,200 to \$5,500.

Across the city, CBOs are coming together to say that we cannot sustain our programs without an increase to these rates. We cannot afford to cover these costs with other funds, and the rate... the distance between what the City funds and what we need to run these programs is growing every year.

You heard from my colleagues from other organizations and from our member organization, United Neighborhood House...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirty seconds.

ROBIN VEENSTRA-VANDERWEELE: the new funding, and we're respectfully requesting an increase in funding to the COMPASS contract in this budget year to meet us halfway to the funds that we need. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

JOAN KANARKIEWICZ: Hi, good afternoon. My name is... Good afternoon, Chair Stevens, my name is Joan Kanarkiewicz, and I'm an Adult Education and Admin Coordinator at Make the Road New York.

So on behalf of our 28,000+ members and staff, I thank the Committee for the opportunity to share our concerns with the FY26 Budget and its impact on adult education programs for immigrant New Yorkers.

Make the Road firmly believes in safeguarding dignity and fairness for all New Yorkers. Over the years, the Council has done so much to ensure that New York continues to be a city that welcomes immigrants. Part of this is ensuring that ESOL classes are available to the 2.2 million New York City residents with limited English. Yet combined City and State funding for adult literacy education is so limited that fewer than 3% of these New Yorkers are able to access adult basic education, GED or ESOL classes in any given year.

In the face of horrifying anti-immigrant attacks and potential cuts to adult literacy funding at the federal level, our communities need the City's support for these programs. Unfortunately, in FY25 the Adams' administration inexplicably cut funding for community based adult literacy programs funded through multiyear contracts with DYCD from \$17 million to \$12 million. This reduction in funding has been maintained in the Mayor's Preliminary Budget for

FY26. This combined with likely federal cuts will be devastating.

Make the Road stands with allies in the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy and calling on the administration to double its baseline funding for adult literacy programs funded through DYCD from \$12 million to \$24 million. We also ask the Council maintain its discretionary funding at its current level of \$16.5 million in FY 26 for the Adult Literacy Pilot and Adult Literacy Initiative.

We are extremely grateful to the Council, as this funding is currently ensuring that many thousands of working class immigrants are getting the adult education services they need in order to help their kids succeed in school, get civilly engaged, and improve their employment outcomes.

Make the Roads New York's adult education program serves over 800 (TIMER CHIMES) adult literacy students a year.

We are fortunate to have received discretionary funding this year through the Council. And, for example, one of our participants who arrived in New York two years ago and did not speak English, proudly shared how the program helped her develop English

skills. At a recent medical appointment, she was able to communicate and ask questions without the support of a translator.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirty seconds.

JOAN KANARKIEWICZ: Make the Road respectfully requests the renewal of the \$449,000 from the Adult Literacy Pilot, as well as \$150,000 from the Initiative to enable us to sustain our own ESOL classes to some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

JOAN KANARKIEWICZ: Thank you. (TIMER CHIMES)

SILAS DUPIGNY: Hello.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Hi.

SILAS DUPIGNY: Thank you to Chair Stevens and the City Council for your support for children and youth across New York City. My name is Silas Dupigny, and I am currently a senior at Sunset Park High School.

For the last three years, I was a participant of the COMPASS Explorer Program with Center for Family Life at my school. Now I am a staff at CFL's afterschool program at PS 971, where I am an Assistant Group Leader for fifth grade children.

I am calling on the City to invest in afterschool and create a funding opportunity to replace the

former COMPASS Explorer contract that DYCD ended in June 2024 with no replacement.

COMPASS Explorer allowed Center for Family Life to provide opportunities each year for 75 high school students, like me, to engage in leadership development and activities that developed our social and emotional well-being while building real skills for the future.

COMPASS Explorer was open to all students, regardless of their documentation status or academic standing, and welcomed students from other schools serving the wider Sunset Park community.

During my time at CFL, I grew more than I knew possible. When I started high school, right as schools were reopening after COVID, I learned new skills and improved as a musician, dancer, and actor. By my last year, I was incorporating music of my own, writing an original piece, and accompanying a cast of over 60 performers as they sang for an audience of almost 2,000 people.

Now I spend my time afterschool using those same skills at PS 971 helping elementary school children build relationships in a safe and supportive environment.

This job has helped me grow, and it's shown me that I really want to use my skills to support the community and become a teacher, a music teacher.

Talking more about these kids— this is going off script, but...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You're okay. Don't be nervous, you got it, I hear you.

SILAS DUPIGNY: Seeing these kids a lot of the time reminds me of when I was a kid, and they're young, they're unprotected, they're the youth. And they're growing, they don't know themselves, and sometimes they need more support than what is seen.

In schools— there's how many hours in a school day? Eight maybe, I'm not sure. But you would think that's enough, but when these kids come to us in afterschool, there's a lot of times when they're lacking things that they should really honestly have. Like my class, for example, during homework time, sometimes kids will come to me, I have fifth graders lacking the skills to do basic, maybe, like, subtraction, maybe multiplication, and they're behind for a fifth grade level. And CFL, and other afterschool programs like this, gives these kids, who don't have enough time in school to learn, more

opportunities to further their growth— so that when they go on to middle school, and to high school, they won't be seen as a child who's behind and needs more work. But they'll be seen as someone who can keep up with their peers and even exceed.

This program...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (UN-MIC'D) You need water?

SILAS DUPIGNY: I'm okay, thank you.

This program allowed participants to turn their afterschool involvement into meaningful employment opportunities. Other than me, there are 22 former COMPASS Explorer participants that have gone on to become CFL staff members.

By ending this funding with no replacement, Center for Family Life and providers across the city have lost a crucial opportunity for high school students.

I urge the City to fully invest in afterschool programs, so future generations can experience the same transformative impact that COMPASS Explorer had on me and other students also in Sunset Park. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I just want to say thank you. Because I think we have been talking a lot about

the Explorers Program last year, and your testimony is just evidence of what we were saying, in real time, around how this program was super necessary—and even to hear how it's helping to fill some of the employment gaps and shortages that they have to be able to turn over to now work in the program. So, thank you, and I am very proud that you were able to come and do that for us today.

SILAS DUPIGNY: Thank you.

EMILY VERSEN: Thank you, Chair Stevens, and the City Council for your support for children and youth across New York City.

My name is Emily Versen, and I am a Program Director at Center for Family Life in Sunset Park. I am calling on our City to prioritize fully funding year round, afterschool and summer programs for elementary and middle school youth and high school, and to advocate for prompt registration of contracts and timely reimbursements for services rendered.

For over 45 years, the Center for Family Life, a settlement house, has provided a comprehensive range of neighborhood-based family and social services.

We intentionally base our K through 12 programming in 11 of Sunset Park's public schools,

enrolling over 3,600 youth in free, year-round, high quality afterschool and summer programs— made possible through DYCD funding— that save our working class immigrant families over \$15 million per year in child care costs. However, we simply cannot continue to deliver these services if DYCD does not recognize and fund the true cost of programming— which according to the comprehensive analysis conducted by UNH that several people have mentioned today— is over \$6,000 per elementary aged youth for a school year and over \$4,000 for the summer. The decade old contract that we are currently operating under, which the City has extended multiple times, rather than issuing a new concept paper an RFP for, funds us at less than half of that.

It is unconscionable to under invest in our city's children in this way, and it is unsustainable for providers who want to deliver the high quality programs that the children of New York City deserve.

Additionally, across the city, CBOs have faced untenable delays in contract registration and budget and invoice approvals. These hardships have been compounded by the City's migration from HHS Accelerator to the PASSPort system. At CFL, we are

unable to voucher for expenses already incurred this year, as we are still awaiting FY25 five contract registration and approval in PASSPort— totaling over (TIMER CHIMES) \$1.9 million. Additionally we're awaiting reimbursement for outstanding FY24 invoices totaling more than \$500,000, and FY25 outstanding invoices totaling over \$980,000. That is a total of over \$3.4 million for Center for Family Life alone, and we are not the only CBO weathering these funding delays...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirty seconds.

EMILY VERSEN: that affect essential cash flow.

Streamlining and prioritizing prompt contract registration and reimbursement should be a top priority for DYCD, so CBOs can focus on directly serving their high need communities. And we urgently need this addressed. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely. Thank you, and I believe Council Member Avilés asked about you guys today. And she definitely wanted to make sure we highlighted that.

And I want to say, it's not just DYCD's responsibility. I'm putting this off as everyone's responsibility. Because we are seeing this not only

in DYCD contracts, we're seeing across contracts, including DOE. So this is a systemic issue that needs to be addressed ASAP.

And we have our last person on this panel, thank you so much.

MOOMINA RAHMAN: Hello, my name is Moomina Rahman, and I am a participant in Groundswell Community Mural Project. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the critical role nonprofits play in supporting mental health and why additional funding is essential for our communities.

I have personally experienced the impact of nonprofits like Groundswell in helping students like me find confidence and sense of belonging.

Before joining the program, I felt like my voice did not matter, but working on murals with other young artists gave me a way of expressing myself and connect with people who truly understand me. The mentorship and support I've received helped me realize that art is more than just painting, it's healing.

Without organizations like Groundswell, many students wouldn't have access to creative spaces that support their mental well-being. I urge you to

consider increasing funding for youth-serving nonprofits like Groundswell Community Mural Project.

Investing in mental health support through nonprofits is an investment in the well-being and future of our communities. Thank you for your time and commitment to support young people.

In closing, mental health support is not a luxury, it's a necessity. Nonprofits like Groundswell play a vital role in ensuring young people have access to the care and support they need. With additional funding, we can continue to provide safe spaces, mentorship, and critical resources that truly change lives.

I appreciate the opportunity to share my experience and advocate for increased support. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you to this panel. I don't have any additional questions.

I believe this is Jasmine, Ysmerlyn Murshed, I don't know, it's M U... I don't, the last name, the Center for Family Representation; Nila Natarajan, Brooklyn Defenders; George Kottas; the Bronx Defenders; Piyali Basak, Neighborhood Defenders; Mr. Wilson, Youth Represent; Carlos C., Youth Represent.

(PAUSE)

PIYALI BASAK: Okay, great. Thank you, Chair Stevens, and the members of the Committee for this opportunity to testify with my colleagues here from Bronx offenders, BDS, and CFR, and I know Youth Represent is here as well.

My name is Piyali Basak, I'm the Managing Director for the Neighborhood Defender Services of Harlem. Our offices are the primary providers of mandated legal representation to eligible parents in Article X proceedings, or what we call Family Policing Cases filed in Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Staten Island, and Queens.

Since 2007, when we first received the first contracts, we have represented more than 50,000 parents in Family Court, close to... Over 100,000 children, the vast majority of whom are Black and brown and live in the most marginalized, low income communities.

I say, "family policing", because we have followed the leadership of directly impacted parents who replaced the term "child welfare system".

I know you support us, because our work goes beyond litigating in the courtroom. Through our

interdisciplinary model, we work closely together to address the underlying systemic barriers that drive families into this system— such as lack of access to healthcare, mental health treatment, and appropriate educational services for children with disabilities. And we are also addressing the collateral consequences from criminal charges, to housing, to educational issues, and inability to adjust immigration status.

You've read the research, listened to our testimony, you know that Black and brown children are separated from their parents by ACS and placed in the foster care system at rates hugely disproportionate to their presence in the total population of New York City.

Ultimately, the system harms children, even noted by the U.S. Commission of Human Rights, a harm that can last through life. We're especially concerned by this federal administration's targeting of immigrant communities, which is additionally placing strain on our early defense resources in the way that the immigration... in the way that non-citizen (TIMER CHIMES) parents are targeted.

So we thank the Council for your support, and my colleagues will elaborate on what our ask is. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

YSMERLYN MURSHED: Thank you, Chair Stevens, and the members of the Committee for taking the time to hear our testimony.

My name is Ysmerlyn Murshed, and I am the Director of Early Defense at the Center for Family Representation.

CFR's mission is to defend the rights of parents and youth through free, holistic interdisciplinary legal and social work representation. In partnership with the other defender services, and with the City Council's support, we are able to think creatively and connect families to community supports that are not connected to the "family policing system" and its various systemic failings, but rather to walk hand in hand with parents as they navigate traumatic ACS investigations.

Early Defense is providing what all New York City parents want when their family is experiencing ACS's course of tactics of interrogation, child strip searches, and home inspections. Much of our work is

centered on providing families with advice about what an ACS investigation is and what their rights are as parents.

Our goal is to minimize the harm of that ACS investigation— which can be terrifying for children and parents alike, because of the threat of family separation— while giving some sense of agency to parents.

Without the threat of parental prosecution and punishment that a full fledged Article X case invokes, our clients, the majority of which are Black and brown parents, who are already targets of systemic injustice, can be honest with us and voluntarily ask for support in different settings.

We advocate directly for our clients with ACS at their children's school, and with preventative and other service providers, all while centering what our clients identify as their needs.

Additionally, our goal is not to wait for an ACS investigation to begin before arming parents with information about their rights through various community events and through public facing materials.

Thank you for your ongoing support, and for allowing us to defend and uplift the hard work the

New York City parents we represent do every day. As public defenders, we work in community to ensure that all of our offices can together meet the needs of our clients.

In closing, (TIMER CHIMES) consider this testimony an invitation to come to our office and get to know more about our work.

GEORGE KOTTAS: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens, members, and staff of the Committee. My name is George Kottas, I'm Director of Early Defense of the Family Defense Practice at the Bronx Defenders.

The funding we seek today for the Family Advocacy Initiative provides much needed and otherwise unfunded legal representation during OCFS hearings.

Legal representation for parents in these hearings ameliorates one of the most unfair and harmful consequences of an ACS investigation. At the conclusion of each investigation, it's ACS— and only ACS— that determines whether the report against a parent should be indicated. If ACS indicates, the name of the parent is placed on the SCR is a person who has maltreated a child. This is true regardless of whether the case is ever brought to court and the evidence is ever even reviewed by a judge. The

consequences are enormous and the record remains for years.

Consequences include preventing parents from entire categories of employment and the ability to support their families, all based on unproven accusations. Listing on the State Central Registry can bar individuals from becoming custodial parent of their own children. They can bar relatives from becoming caregivers to children who need them, causing them to be passed to strangers and often ending up in the foster care system.

The only way off the SCR is to challenge the listing through an evidentiary hearing. Representation is critical to the hearing being fair because ACS is always represented by counsel.

The legal standards, the advocacy, the preparation required for these hearings means any unrepresented parent faces a serious disadvantage against a city agency that always has a lawyer.

Without this program, parents have no access to counsel and SCR hearings unless they are wealthy and hire their own.

This is a matter of racial justice. It's Black and brown New Yorkers who are most disadvantaged by

the SCR process. In New York City, Black and Latinx children represent 83% of all SCR reports and a shocking 86% of all indicated cases.

With the funding through this initiative that we've already received, thanks to the Committee, we've been successful in amending and sealing records 93 to 97% of the time. This funding allows hundreds of parents to regain the ability of access to employment and restore custody rights for their children. It is crucial to those parents who, under the law, should automatically have these cases unfounded.

Current law creates an automatic presumption that certain cases dismissed in Family Court should be amended and unfounded. However, parents (TIMER CHIMES) request these hearings, and representation makes sure the law is actually followed as written.

This advocacy is a crucial part of a parent's way to clear their name, and it's a lifeline from some of the most impacted and disadvantaged New York. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

NILA NATARAJAN: Good afternoon, my name is Nila Natarajan, and I am the Associate Director of Policy

and Family Defense at Brooklyn Defender Services.

Thank you, Chair Stevens, and the Committee.

As my colleagues have expressed, we are grateful to the Council for your ongoing commitment to the Right to Family Advocacy Project. This work is critical in preventing prosecution in Family Court, traumatic family separation, and harmful foster system involvement.

As my colleagues have testified, New York City's Right to Family Advocacy Project enables our offices to empower parents and caretakers under investigation by ACS by informing them of, and protecting their rights, and assisting families with ACS involvement to clear their records, so they have every opportunity to obtain secure employment and income.

We are also deeply connected with our communities and work to educate community members about their rights.

While the Council has recognized that this work is essential to minimize the harm of ACS investigation and prevent family separation, the program has been chronically underfunded. This strains our ability to meet growing program costs. Insufficient funding forces us to choose between

fully compensating our incredible staff and fully staffing these vital programs.

Funding for the Right to Family Advocacy Project has remained flat since 2019. This program has never been fully funded. And without any adjustment for inflation or cost of living, flat funding amounts to a fiscal loss.

We are here to request that the Council fully fund the Right to Family Advocacy Project. At \$3.3 million, this request is a modest increase over prior funding, which has, again, remained stagnant for six years.

For years, our offices have been forced to absorb rising costs for salaries, healthcare, utilities, and office space without additional funding. We are asking you to meet our funding request recognizing that, in addition to the incredible human impact of our services, we save the City money by avoiding court filings and foster assistant placement.

New York City's Family Defense organizations are essential to ensuring compassion, dignity, and justice (TIMER CHIMES) for parents navigating ACS investigations and Family Court prosecution

regardless of their ability to pay. Thank you for your time and we welcome any questions.

PSYCO WILSON: Peace everybody. My name is Psycho, from Youth Represent. It's an acronym in the essence of time. I'm not going to get into too much of what that means.

I'm from Brownsville, Brooklyn. I'm currently 30 years old, and from what I understand crime is going down. I feel like one thing that's not... or I guess it literally has been said here by the providers, that it is going down, because of all the efforts in the community. Right?

Kids are starting to step up and come out to places like hearings. They're starting to go to things like Know Your Rights trainings, and they're starting to organize Know Your Rights trainings.

Programs— crime prevention programs— are starting to enter the communities with credible messengers that are actually ,like, doing... that are actually not only deterring crime, but also helping meet the needs of community. Yet, also at the same time, we're seeing these programs being inexplicably underfunded, we're seeing them being cut, and we're seeing other

budgets, namely the police budgets, get raised over and over and over again.

If New York City is committed to keeping people safe, if it's committed to the development of the youth, if it's committed to a holistic approach to bringing the city to being one of the greatest cities in the country, then we need to continuously invest in these program... in these social, economic, and developmental program— social and emotional developmental programs, that help young adults and youth be the people who they want to be in life.

We need to stop wasting our time, we need to stop over criminalizing them, and we need to stop cutting the services in the places where they're at— schools, community services, mental health programs, literally all spaces where youths are at need to be funded and instead they're being cut.

We need to not only ask why, but really just cut it out, and that's all I gotta say on that. Thanks for hearing me out.

CARLOS CAIZA: Good afternoon, thank you for having me. My name is Carlos Caiza, I'm currently enrolled in Arches, an alternative incarceration program at Youth Justice Network. I'm also a member

of the Youth Committee hosted by Youth Represent, and I'm a senior at Humanities Preparatory Academy High School. I'm graduating this year.

I'm here today to testify about a budget that invests in youth. New York currently spends \$900,000 per year on incarcerating a single young person. In New York City, \$10,000 could fund an afterschool program for one year. That \$900,000 can be reallocated to those afterschool programs that can also serve as an alternative to incarceration and a way to keep kids out the streets.

In 2001, the budget for the detention centers and other services was a \$110 million, and in 2020, it rose up to \$285 million.

The real question is now, what exactly are the other services this money is going to? Not only is this budget being wasted and handled wrong, but there's youth out there that are finding themselves in trouble because they don't have anything to keep them from engaging in negativity.

Teens that are arrested often have to deal with repercussions and end up in the detention centers in a space that's overcrowded and where they are

mistreated. This can affect them mentally and continue the cycle of them being lost.

These are all reasons why we need more money into alternative incarceration programs and programs where young people can spend their time doing something positive.

Two programs that personally helped me are the Arches Program, a Youth Justice Network, and a Youth Committee at Youth Represent. These programs allowed me to learn more and helped me grow up. They have given me a second chance, and allowed me to change into a better version of myself and become a Youth Advocate and a Youth Mentor.

Other programs that will benefit youth include programs that offer support with substance abuse, mental health, workforce development programs, and mentoring programs.

I'm asking the City Council today to listen to youth like myself, and invest in our futures right now, through this budget, so more youth all over New York City can have the same opportunity to programs that help me. Thank you for listening. (TIMER CHIMES)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Look at that, right under time. Thank you to this panel, I don't have any questions.

Joshell Lawrence, from the Alliance; Roberto Rodriguez; Constance Lesold; Gregory Brender; Grace Wang; Betty Garger, Junior Achievement of New York.

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Faith Behum? Is there a Faith Behum, UJA Federation of New York Afterschool Funding? Okay.

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You guys have been with me all day, so make it good.

(LAUGHTER)

GRACE WANG: We'll try. Thank you, Chair Stevens. Thank you for the love and support you are showing to our young people in this room. It is very inspiring to witness.

My name is Grace; I'm a youth worker at Chinese American Planning Council, known as CPC, the nation's largest Asian American social service organization.

I've been working directly with high schoolers and college students for the past seven years. And just over last year, a 1,000 students participated in

my afterschool program, and 100% of our seniors graduated.

I have witnessed how funding for community based organizations, like ours, has been life changing for our young people, especially when they're coming from low income and immigrant families.

We urge the City to expand funding for programs like the Summer Youth Employment Program— we heard from our young people how hard it is for them to get a job— because SYEP helps undocumented students who otherwise could not work. SYEP helps struggling NYCHA families to keep food on their table. And SYEP helps immigrant youth work at a small business where their colleagues speak their home language.

Two years ago, a student came to my office for help. He gets into trouble in and out of school, and he was failing his classes. But there was one thing he really wanted for himself, a paid job. I started preparing him for the school-based SYEP program, where a paid internship is guaranteed when a young person is successfully enrolled. He started participating in our afterschool work readiness workshops. He participated in CPC's advocacy events, and he traveled outside the city for the very first

time on our overnight college trip. Today, he has successfully worked for two summers, contributed to his household financially, and he's preparing for college, something he never imagined. This is just one success story, and there can be so many of them with proper funding. (TIMER CHIMES)

We urge the City to expand fundings for community based organizations like CPC and programs like SYEP. Thank you so much for your time.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

JOSHELL LAWRENCE: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens, and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on the critical need for continued and enhanced funding for programs that support children and youth across our city.

My name is Joshell Lawrence, and I am a senior at CUNY Baruch College, and I am also a Youth Assistant Coordinator at Project DOT (Project Dream, Own, Tell) a youth focused sexual violence prevention and leadership program developed by the New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault, the Alliance.

The Alliance's mission is to prevent sexual violence and reduce the harm it causes through education, prevention programming, and the pursuit of

legal and policy change. Project DOT is a key pillar of this mission and is funded by the City Council through the Young Women's Initiative.

We are asking for an enhancement from a \$100,000 \$125,000 to expand our program's reach. Project DOT has served as a vital resource for young people who often face systemic barriers to accessing comprehensive, sexual violence prevention education and leadership opportunities since 2014.

I'm here today advocating not only as a Coordinator of the program, but also as a young person who was once a beneficiary of Project DOT. I joined Project DOT during my senior year of high school as a youth participant in 2020. Project DOT didn't just change my world view, it opened me up to a new understanding of myself and the systems that shaped my daily life. At the time, I didn't fully grasp what a healthy versus unhealthy relationship looked like or understand the importance of consent. Yet, Project DOT provided me with the knowledge as well as it gave me, and so many others, a voice conversations we were often left out of.

The need for programs like Project DOT is urgent. Young people continue to face high rates of sexual

violence and harassment. Nationally, one in nine girls and one in 20 boys experienced sexual violence before the age of 18; 49% of LGBTQ+ youth ages 13 to 18 report experiencing some form of sexual violence, with rates even higher among Black and Indigenous youth. These statistics unfortunately prove that programs like Project DOT are essential to the safety, well-being, and support of youth.

(TIMER CHIMES) To conclude, we are seeking an enhancement of our funding to \$125,000 to expand our program's reach and impact.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to ensuring the well-being and safety of New York City's children and youth.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

GREGORY BRENDER: Good afternoon, thank you so much for opportunity to testify, and thank you for your questions to ACS about the budget deficit facing the voucher system.

I'm Gregory Brender from the...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And thank you for actually bringing it to my attention.

GREGORY BRENDER: Of course.

I'm Gregory Brender from the Day Care Council of New York. We're the membership organization of early childhood education provider organizations.

And yeah, just wanted to highlight that this is a situation where 4,000 to 7,000 families a month could be denied recertification, and that this is going to affect low income working families, people who need child care in order to go to work.

We have been up to Albany to communicate this urgency to state legislators, and where we know we need the State to act, we really need both the State and the City to work together. Both have a role to play in averting this crisis.

And I'll just also point out, and it goes into much more detail on the written testimony, but this is on top of a City Budget that cuts \$222 million from early childhood education from programs including 3K, School Day Plus, preschool, special-ed and others. So it's crucial that we invest in early childhood education in this budget. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (INAUDIBLE) minutes to spare, I think you won so far.

GREGORY BENDER: (INAUDIBLE)

(LAUGHTER)

UNKNOWN: (INAUDIBLE)

(LAUGHTER)

FAITH BEHUM: Thank you, Chairperson Stevens, and members of the Committee of Children and Youth Services for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to testify. My name is Faith Behum, I am a Manager of Government and External Relations at UJA Federation of New York.

Established more 100 years ago, UJA is one of the nation's largest local philanthropies. We support an expansive network of nearly a hundred nonprofit organizations, serving those that are most vulnerable and in need of programs and services.

Many of those nonprofits contract with New York City to provide services to children and youth including afterschool programs, summer youth employment programs, and programming at Beacons and Cornerstones.

On behalf of the nonprofits in UJA's network, who oversee afterschool programs, I'm urging the Fiscal Year 2026 Enacted Budget to include additional investments in the COMPASS and SONYC programs.

First, we're asking for \$6.9 million to be included for the COMPASS Explorer program. This

funding was cut last year. Two nonprofits in UJA's network lost funding for 72 youth to attend their after school programs. One of these programs had a lengthy wait list, both provided services to communities that had limited access to other affordable after school options.

Second, we are asking for an investment over a \$154 million in the FY26 Budget to begin a phase-in period of increasing rates for COMPASS and SONYC programs. These programs have not been re-procured in over a decade, leaving providers with outdated reimbursement rates that do not reflect inflation.

Providers were expecting DYCD to reissue an RFP in 2024. They were actually expecting that RFP for quite a long time. However, Compass and SONYC contracts are extended through Summer 2028 by DYCD and rates were not enhanced.

The increased investment we and other advocates are proposing would result in higher per-participant rates for COMPASS Elementary and SONYC middle school programs in their FY26 contract extension. The goal must be to fully fund elementary and middle school programs and a new procurement in FY27.

COMPASS and SONYC programs continue (TIMER CHIMES) to provide services to children and youth regardless of how much or when they are reimbursed to do so. Increased financial investment must be made to better support these programs so providers can continue to serve the communities for years to come. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

ROBERTO RODRIGUEZ: Hello, thank you, good afternoon, Chair Stevens, and members of the Children and Youth Committee. Thank you for your time and attention today.

My name is Roberto Rodriguez, and I am the Teen Center Program Director of Kingsbridge Heights Community Center in the Bronx. I'm here today to urge the City to increase funding for COMPASS and SONYC afterschool programs in the FY26 Budget.

These programs are a lifeline for tens of thousands of New York City youth, providing them with safe spaces, academic support, and enrichment activities that keep them engaged after school.

However, due to the stagnant based funding rates, these programs are struggling to stay afloat. Despite a contract extension through 2028, no additional

funding has been provided, leaving programs unable to keep up with the rising cost. Low wages have made it nearly impossible to recruit and retain staff, and background check delays have left positions vacant.

Without enough staff, programs are forced to limit enrollment or reduce quality, leaving kids without the afterschool support they need.

This funding crisis isn't just about budgets, it's about the kids. If we could hire more staff, we could serve more children, fill all available program slots, and ensure that every child who needs a safe, engaging place to go after school has one.

More staff means smaller group sizes, more individualized attention, and the ability to offer higher quality programs from academic enrichment to arts, sports, and mentorship. It means kids who might otherwise be left unsupervised after school have a place to go where they feel supported and empowered to succeed.

This investment isn't just about numbers, it's about real children and families who depend on these programs, our programs. The City must act now to fully fund afterschool programs and ensure that every child has access to the opportunities they deserve.

Thank you again for this opportunity to speak on this very important issue that we are facing today.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Close, 19, but, Greg is still winning.

(LAUGHTER)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Last panelist?

CONSTANCE LESOLD: My name is Constance Lesold, and I am a retired social worker who has worked extensively with summer youth programs over the years to successfully set up at least one community garden that's lasted about 50 years— with no expense to the City, except that we have had to work hard to keep that garden over the Franklin Avenue shuttle, not to go for something else.

I hope that your committee can get all your funds restored for families and children. It's so it's so important. They make up an essential part of the city. I'm here especially, too, to call your attention to an event that I witnessed on February 3rd on Rutland Road, near Schenectady Avenue, where an ordinary looking family, probably African American, was accosted by a huge group of the 71st precinct and possibly other agencies. They were... looked like an ordinary, well-dressed middle class

group. The father was carried off in a Fire Department Ambulance, 1377, and I bring this to your attention, that he had no medical or psychiatric problems going on. He was trying to find out why the police had stopped him. He was yelling, that's why I saw it from my 4th window on (INAUDIBLE) Street.

I bring to your attention the AM Article about the cuts well, not cuts, but how desperate the situation is for EMS. (TIMER CHIMES) And not only did they put take the father off improperly in a Fire Department ambulance, but they took the mother, put her in handcuffs, put her in one car, and put two different children, her two small children, their two small children, in a separate police car and off they went.

Now, since February 3, I have tried to find out what was going on because I'm a...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (INAUDIBLE)

CONSTANCE LESOLD: citizen.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirty seconds, if you can make your conclusion.

CONSTANCE LESOLD: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh? Okay, thank you, I have no questions for this panel. Thank you.

The last panel will be Christopher Leon Johnson and Sharon Brown.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Ready?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, whenever you're ready.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Hello, yeah, hello, Chair, Chair Stevens, my name is Christopher Leon...

UNKNOWN: (INAUDIBLE)

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: No problem... Hello, My name is Christopher Leon Johnson, Thank you for having this testimony today.

I'm here calling on the defunding of all Cure Violence nonprofits in the city of New York. I'm calling on the defunding of Life Camp. I'm calling on the defunding of Man Up Inc.

I'm calling on an investigation of that \$1.6 million contract that was given to the Flossy Organization via Man Up, Inc. that was given in the FY25 budget. I'm calling on investigation to Mercedes Narcisse for her allocation of \$1.6 million into Man Up, Inc. for the Flossy Organization. I'm want to know what justified of getting \$1.6 million contract for FY25. I'm calling on the City Council to look to ask Jibreel Jalloh from the Flossy Organization to have a special hearing and ask him what justifies him

to collect all that money from \$1.6 million for a contract. And he needs to start answering, like, what justify him to what... why he can't get money through his own organization through... only he had to go to Man Up, Inc. to get that money.

One more thing is, I'm calling on the... I'm calling on the defunding all Cure Violence organizations in New York City because they do nothing for the city. This is nothing but a taxpayer scam. And all they do is recruit these guys who come first out of jail to keep these guys compliant with the Probation Department and the New York State Parole Department. Majority of that money goes to the executive board members, and while the members get paid \$20 an hour to do basically nothing, and just so-called... so-called "stay out trouble", none of these guys get in trouble with even guns (INAUDIBLE)

One more thing is that the City Council needs to allocate money to the Deliveristas and the Street Vendor Project for cure for... like... because of the youth, because they have young members in their organization for OSHA trainings and OSHA trainings and job trainings for Workers Justice Project and Street Vendor Project.

And by the... before, like I said before, again, the City Council, before they allocate money to man... I know they might do anyway... before they allocate money to Man Up, Inc, they need to have a special hearing with, (INAUDIBLE) Mitchell and Jibreel Jalloh asking, what is going on? What justified them to get all that money? Because what's going on here is that (TIMER CHIMES) Man Up, Inc. is getting the money, and that money is going to Jibreel Jalloh Organization. And Jibreel Jalloh used to work for public the Public Advocate.

And they need to put a bill in the City Council to prevent anybody that you work for Public Advocate Office from working a nonprofit sector for at least 10 years. So thank you so much, and have a great day.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

SHARON BROWN: Thank you. Hello, My name is Sharon Brown. Before I get started, remember the hostages, release the hostages, let Yahweh's people go.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Please stay on topic, thank you.

SHARON BROWN: Defend Israel. Okay. So, ACS was here. A prior time they were here they had determined that foster parents and adoption should not be done

by homosexuals. I believe that should be reinforced and reinstated and made sure that that's followed. It is unbiblical and it is proven harmful to children biblically and in real time. Fun (sic) parents keeping their children where it's a problem with money causing their separation. The monies that are being put into the ACS can be used for the... reunite the parents and the children. And the same money that the foster parents would get, the parents should be able to get that funding so that they can raise their children if it's only a money issue.

We need to implement Jewish and Christian bible based counseling and teaching. I myself, was a teacher in a church, Sunday school teacher, I worked in the youth department in the church, and we have a lot of things that we do with children where they're not in the streets, they're not going to jail. Over many years, I have overseen, working with children, taking them out on outings, and we don't have a high crime rate in the churches that I've been involved with the youth ministry, the children's church, the little babies, these things aren't happening in the church settings. If we bring the church setting into the school, which we are doing now, Texas has just

okay prayer in school. This is something that we have been working with. We are also getting the Ten Commandments in school, and we are getting (TIMER CHIMES)... in different states. And we want that here in New York City, so that we can make a difference, and the children in the schools can be like the children in the church that I taught.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. I will be taking a five-minute recess and will be right back.

(PAUSE)

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now be moving to Zoom testimony. First up, we are going to have Alejandra Ng.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

ALEJANDRA NG: Great. My name is Alejandra Ng, and I am the Assistant Director of New York Junior Tennis and Learning's NYJTL's Community Tennis Programs. I want to thank Chair Stevens and the members of the youth... Children and Youth Committee for allowing me to present today.

We are seeking an increase under the Council's Physical Education and Fitness Initiative, which would be our first increase over 17 years.

In the past 17 years, things have gone up— costs such as labor, permits, equipment, minimum wage have all risen, and we are currently struggling to continue providing the level of tennis programs that we are known for.

We... to keep up with these costs, to continue to pay our staffs a livable wage, and prevent cuts to any programming, we are asking for an increase in funding. It is our belief that talent is universal, but access and opportunity are not, and that is why we have strived over the last 50 years to continue to provide the sport of tennis to all children, including those with special needs.

With the Council as our partner, we have become the largest tennis and education organization in the country. Through our community tennis program, we enroll over 10,000 kids every year. Over 70% of our participants are under the age of 10; 75% of our youth identify as Black African American, Latino, and or Asian; 80% of our families report as low income based on the New York City AMI.

I was a product of this organization. I started when I was 10 with my with my younger siblings, and it was a free program that my parents could afford.

More than 75% of our coaches are alumni of the program. We hire... we have about a 100 coaches working year-round, and 50% of these coaches are also in high school or college, so we also are their first time for employment.

Again, we are asking for a \$1 million on the Council's Physical Education and Fitness Initiative, which is an increase of \$200,000 from last year. If allocated, we would be able to provide additional hours, increase enrollment, increase accessibility to these kids, and continue providing the product that we have. Again, we thank the New York City Council for all their support over the past couple of years.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.

Next we will have Daniele Gerard.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

DANIELE GERARD: Thank you, Chair Stevens... Can you all hear me?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yep.

DANIELE GERARD: Thank you, Chair Stevens and committee members.

I'm Daniele Gerard, a Senior Staff Attorney at Children's Rights. We are a national organization

that advocates on behalf of youth and state systems here in the city on behalf of young adults on Rikers.

As the Progressive Caucus states, "Living with mental illness is not a crime." In June 2024, we submitted a public comment to the Board of Correction regarding the law banning solitary confinement, which includes a great deal of research regarding youth brain development and the criminalization of mental health. We would like to highlight one of the points we make and some of the accompanying data.

Mental health is integral to overall health and well-being, especially for adolescents, shaping their development and influencing their responses to stress and social interactions, and supporting healthy decision making.

The lack of investment in community mental health services results in police and agents of other punitive systems responding to children and youth experiencing psychiatric distress rather than trained behavioral health personnel.

As a result, youth with mental health conditions are more likely to be arrested and incarcerated than those without mental health conditions.

Nationwide data show that 70% of incarcerated young people present with a diagnosed mental health condition compared to 18 to 22% of all children.

Once involved in the child welfare or juvenile legal systems, youth who are Black or brown, LGBTQ+ and or living with a disability, disproportionately face the most profound mental health challenges.

Young people themselves describe the child welfare and juvenile legal systems as traumatic, and youth who experience these systems often have poor mental health outcomes.

The criminalization of mental health is a direct result of the lack of investment in community mental health services. We urge the Council to stand firm in supporting our communities, especially when it comes to the health and well-being of *all* our children and youth incarcerated or not.

We refer you to our written testimony for ways to reallocate the Mayor's Proposed Budget for Rikers to work toward achieving this full... Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I know it's been a long day, especially for you, Chair Stevens.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will have Allison Hollihan.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

ALLISON HOLLIHAN: Hi, my name is Allison Hollihan, and I'm the Director for the New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents, a statewide partnership coordinated by Osborne Association.

I will highlight the need for city agencies to better support the one in 14 children who experienced the incarceration of a parent.

Parental incarceration is an adverse childhood experience linked to long term negative health and mental health outcomes. Sorry, I just came out of the subway. I'm out of breath.

Some key recommendations included in our written testimony are as follows:

Money is needed for community based organizations to provide tailored services to support the unique needs of these children.

Collecting data on how many children experience the arrest or incarceration of a parent is needed to inform service delivery and cross-systems collaboration. Local data is limited, but we know from a 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey that one in five New York City high school students experienced

the parental incarceration, and it's vital that this question be continued in future surveys.

We urge NYPD to collect data on how many children are present during a parent's arrest and for ACS to collect data on how many children experience parental incarceration.

We urge DOC to expand video visiting to include weekend and evening hours, so the children don't have to miss school to visit, and we ask for Rikers to reinstate Saturday visits for ACS Children of Incarcerated Parents Program. Currently, these visits occur only on a school day.

Funding must be fully restored for community based providers to deliver services to Rikers including family focused reentry.

We recommend that ACS and its provider agencies have designated staff liaisons who are familiar with the criminal legal system.

Children of incarcerated parents should be considered as a priority population for the Summer Youth Employment Program.

And finally, the Interagency Coordinating Council On Youth should create a Children Of Incarcerated Parents Working Group.

Taking steps to identify and support these children sets up children for success, rather costly involvement in the mental health, homeless, and criminal legal systems. Thank you for your time today. I know you've been there forever.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony. Next we have Liangliang Han. I'm sorry if I mispronounced your name.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

LIANGLIANG HAN: Good afternoon everyone, my name is Liangliang Han, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

I'm a social worker with the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, working on the ACS founded Family Enrichment Center, FEC Project.

FEC's are more than just the spaces. They are community homes that promote connection, empowerment, and prevention.

Our Sunset Park site is the first FEC in South Brooklyn, playing a vital role in supporting immigrant communities. Culturally inclusive spaces like the FEC builds trust and resilience.

Community members have shared that prevention is crucial. Addressing needs early prevents small challenges from turning into crisis.

We urge ACS to continue investing in proactive community driven initiatives, increase funding for programs like FECs where expanded services prevent issues at their root, and reach more families before problems escalate.

Strong empowered communities are essential for children and youth's well-being. Let's pay attention to upstream investments that create lasting, meaningful change. Thank you so much, everyone.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much.

The following witnesses were also signed up to testify remotely, but I don't see them online. So raise your hand if you're online: Ashley Jones; Glendaliz Valdez; Sierra Kraft; Jeremy Kohomban; Alex Stein.

(NO RESPONSE)

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: If there is anyone else in the room that did not have the opportunity to testify, please raise your hand. Seeing no one else, I will turn it back to the chair.

1 COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH 384

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's all folks. (GAVEL
3 SOUND) (GAVELING OUT)

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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 April 26, 2025