

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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March 24, 2026
Start: 9:37 a.m.
Recess: 3:11 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Gale A. Brewer
Tiffany L. Cabán
Oswald J. Feliz
Frank Morano
Mercedes Narcisse
Yusef Salaam

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

Sharun Goodwin
Department of Probation Commissioner

Robert Eusebio
Department of Probation First Deputy Commissioner

Wayne McKenzie
Department of Probation

Shamria Gambrell
Department of Probation Acting Deputy
Commissioner for Juvenile Operations

Antonio Pullano
Department of Probation Associate Commissioner

Razwan Mirza
Department of Probation Chief Information Officer

Paul Richards
Department of Probation Director

Joshua Young
Department of Probation Deputy Commissioner

Stanley Richards
Department of Correction Commissioner

Margaret Egan
Department of Correction First Deputy
Commissioner

Sherrieann Rembert
Department of Correction Chief of Department

Charlton Lemon
Department of Correction Bureau Chief

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

James Conroy
Department of Correction General Counsel

James Boyd
Department of Correction Deputy Commissioner of
Strategic Operations

Faizan Zubair
Department of Correction Assistant Commissioner
of Budget and Finance

Nell Colon
Department of Correction Deputy Commissioner of
Programs

Kevin Doherty
Department of Correction Deputy Commissioner of
Facilities

Kathleen Zadzora
Department of Correction Assistant Commissioner

Alexandria Maldonado
Department of Correction Assistant Commissioner

Jasmine Georges-Yilla
Board of Corrections Executive Director

Melissa Cintron-Hernandez
Board of Corrections General Counsel

Tiana Betancourt
Board of Corrections Deputy Executive Director of
Administration

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

Navena Chaitoo
Board of Corrections Assistant Executive Director
of Research

Benny Boscio
President of Correction Officer Benevolent
Association

Dalvanie Powell
President of United Probation Officer Association

Dejon Williams
President of Local 299 of DC37

Michael Klinger
Brooklyn Defender Services

Karen Adelman
NYC Bar Association Corrections and Community
Reentry Committee

Julia Davis
Youth Represent

Caprice Jefferson
Office of Appellate Defender

Damon Gilbert
NYLPI

Stephanie Taylor
Volunteers of Legal Services

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

Zachary Katznelson
Independent Rikers Commission

Megan French-Marcelin
NYC ATI and Reentry Coalition

Amanda McCarthy
CASES

Reginald Chatman
Fortune Society

Luisa Taveras
WPA

Benjamin Heller
Vera Institute of Justice

Magaly Melendez
Center for Justice Innovation

Melanie Dominguez
Katal Center for Equity

Jennifer Parish
Criminal Justice Advocacy at Urban Justice Center
Mental Health Project

Darren Mack
Freedom Agenda

Tammy Reed
Freedom Agenda

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

Joseph Soto
Freedom Agenda

Victor Herrera
Freedom Agenda

Alice Hamblett
Worth Rises

Tanawah Downing

Vidal Guzman
America on Trial

Alicia Thomas
Freedom Agenda

Jesse Taylor

Naya Williams
Osborne Association

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3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and
4 welcome to today's New York City Council hearing for
5 the Committee on Criminal Justice. At this time, we
6 ask that you please silence all cell phones and
7 electronics, and at no time are you to approach the
8 dais. If you have any questions or like to sign up
9 for in-person testimonies, please see one of the
10 Sergeant at Arms around the room. Chair
11 Brooks-Powers, we're ready to begin.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Good morning
13 and welcome to the Committee on Criminal Justice
14 hearing on the Fiscal 2027 Preliminary Budget and the
15 Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report for
16 the Department of Correction, the Department of
17 Probation, and the Board of Correction. My name is
18 Selvena Brooks-Powers, and I am the Chair to the
19 Committee. I would like to acknowledge my fellow
20 Council Member that is here with us today, Council
21 Member Morano. Today, we'll hear testimony from
three agencies, the Department of Correction,
Department of Probation, and the Board of Correction.
I'd like to welcome the Department of Correction
Commissioner Stanley Richards, Department of

1 Probation Commissioner Sharun Goodwin, and Jasmine
2 Georges-Yilla, the Executive Director of Board of
3 Correction, as well as any other leadership who have
4 joined us today. I look forward to speaking with
5 each of your agencies about your role in
6 transitioning to the borough-based jail system, while
7 focusing on holistic criminal justice reform policies
8 and ensuring people have adequate diversion
9 programming to reduce recidivism and keep people in
10 their communities. In the Fiscal 2027 Preliminary
11 Plan, these three agencies have a combined total
12 budget of \$1.3 billion which supports 9,913 budgeted
13 positions. The plan includes minimal changes,
14 including funding for overtime and cost of living
15 adjustments. First up today is the Department of
16 Probation whose Fiscal 2027 operating budget is
17 \$116.2 million. I would like to explore the
18 transition of leadership at Probation and how recent
19 organizational changes have affected programming,
20 staff, and policies in place throughout the
21 Department. Then we will from the Department of
Correction and discuss a range of issues including
the rising incarcerated population and chronic
under-staffing and coupled with overspending on

1
2 overtime. The Department of Correction has a Fiscal
3 2027 expense budget of \$1.26 billion, the majority of
4 which is used for day-to-day jail operations. I look
5 forward to hearing about plans that have been set in
6 motion by new leadership to improve safety within our
7 jails- within our city's jails for both incarcerated
8 persons and the Department of Correction staff. As
9 we move closer to the 2027 deadline, I will be asking
10 for updates concerning the status of the
11 borough-based jails plan, in particular, the staffing
12 and transition plan which is necessary for a smooth
13 transition into the neighborhood facilities. I will
14 also ask questions to understand how the
15 newly-appointed Remediation Manager impacts the
16 budget on Rikers Island as it pertains to its
17 day-to-day operations. Finally, we will spend some
18 time discussing the Board of Corrections \$4 million
19 budget and looking into the resources needed to
20 provide charter-mandated oversight of the City's
21 jail, and to maintain minimum standards. Before we
begin with testimony, I would like to thank Council
Committee Staff for their hard work in preparing
this hearing, Casey Lajszky [sp?], Senior Financial
Analyst, Lindsey Wheeler [sp?], Finance Fellow, Jack
Storey

1 [sp?], Assistant Director, Jeremy Whiteman,
2 Legislative Counsel, Chad Benjamin, Policy Analyst,
3 and of course, my staff, Julian Martin [sp?], my
4 Deputy Chief of Staff, Kierra Powell [sp?], my
5 Communication's Director, and Renee Taylor, my Chief
6 of Staff. I will now ask the Committee Counsel to go
7 over some procedural items and swear in the
8 representatives from the Department of Probation.
9 But first, I'd like to acknowledge that from the
10 Department we are joined by Commissioner Sharun
11 Goodwin, Antonio Pullano, Robert Eusebio, Michael
12 Caputo, Jason Torres, Wayne McKenzie, Zenia Melindez,
13 Joshua Young, Paul Richards, Razwan Mirza, Dr.
14 Shamira Gambrell, Andrew Gonzales [sp?].

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: If you could each
16 raise your right hands? Do you affirm to tell the
17 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
18 before this committee and respond honestly to Council
19 Member questions? Noting that all witnesses answered
20 affirmatively. You may begin your testimony.

21 COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: Good morning,
22 Chair Brooks-Powers, Finance Chair Lee, and members
23 of the Committee. I am Sharun Goodwin, Commissioner
24 of the New York City Department of Probation. I am

1
2 joined today by First Deputy Commissioner Robert
3 Eusebio, General Counsel Wayne McKenzie, Deputy
4 Commissioner Joshua Young, Acting Deputy Commissioner
5 for Juvenile Operations, Dr. Shamira Gambrell,
6 Associate Commissioner Antonio Pullano, Chief
7 Information Officer Razwan Mirza, and Director Paul
8 Richards. Thank you for the opportunity to testify
9 today regarding the Department's Executive Budget and
10 our work to support public safety across New York
11 City. At its core, Probation believes people can
12 change. As I stated before, accountability remains
13 central, but it must be paired with support and
14 intervention. That is how we reduce reoffending and
15 help people succeed. Our responsibility is not just
16 to monitor compliance, it is to reduce reoffending by
17 changing behavior. And I want to be clear at the
18 outset, Probation is one of the city's most important
19 tools for preventing crime and avoiding the far
20 greater cost of incarceration. Before I turn to the
21 budget, I want to briefly speak to the direction we
are setting at the Department. My vision is to
restore Probation as a data-driven, evidence-based
agency that supports staff, strengthen
accountability, and expands meaningful services for

1 people we supervise. Since stepping into this role,
2 we have taken immediate steps to strengthen the
3 culture of this agency and better align our work with
4 our mission. We have updated our uniform policy.
5 Over the past few years, officers were required to
6 wear uniforms. We are now shifting to a more
7 flexible approach that allows for professional
8 non-uniform presence to better engage with the
9 clients and the community. We updated our firearms
10 policy so it's no longer a one-size-fits-all
11 requirement. We are restructuring the training
12 academy to get officers into the field faster. The
13 academy was approximately five and a half months and
14 now will be three and a half months while maintaining
15 all state requirements. And we are actively
16 rebuilding relationships with program providers to
17 expand services for the people we supervise. At the
18 same time, I have focused on people inside this
19 agency. Over the first few weeks, my focus has been
20 listening, learning, and engaging directly with staff
21 to understand what they need to do this job
effectively. We are advancing efforts- we are
advancing wellness efforts, strengthening
communication, and creating a more supportive

1 environment for our workforce, because if we expect
2 better outcomes for our clients, we must support the
3 people doing the work. This is a shift in how we
4 approach Probation. Accountability remains central.
5 Again, but it must be paired with support,
6 intervention, and a real path forward. This is how
7 we reduce reoffending. That is how people succeed,
8 and that is how communities thrive. Turning to the
9 budget. The Department operates with an overall
10 budget of approximately \$116 million. That
11 investments supports the system supervising
12 approximately 11,833 individuals across all five
13 boroughs, including 10,681 adults and 1,152 young
14 people. The needs of this population are
15 significant: 44 percent of adults are unemployed, 12
16 percent have identified mental health needs, six
17 percent are experiencing homelessness, 91 percent of
18 our youth are behind in school. These are not
19 abstract numbers. These are the conditions that
20 drive reoffending, and they are the reason why
21 supervision alone is not enough. If we want safer
communities, we must address employment, housing,
behavioral health, and education. That is why
programming and partnerships are central to our

1 strategy. At the same time we are operating within
2 real constraints. The number of Probation clients
3 have increased significantly, rising by roughly 5.5
4 percent over the last three years, while the number
5 of available officers have declined. That is the
6 course operational challenge we are managing. Today,
7 the Department has 255 vacancies including
8 approximate 210 in the Probation Officer title,
9 representing about a 23 percent vacancy rate. Since
10 Fiscal Year 2023, we have lost 405 Probation Officers
11 and hired 235. What that means in simple terms is
12 that we are supervising more people with fewer
13 officers available to do the work. This is not
14 because we are not hiring. The recruitment
15 environment for Probation Officers is increasingly
16 competitive with many law enforcement agencies
17 offering higher compensation. This reality makes it
18 more challenging to attract and retain qualified
19 applicants. The challenge is structural. The hiring
20 pipeline takes time while attrition has been moving
21 faster than that pipeline can replace. That reality
shows up in case loads. The average adult case load
is currently 54 cases per officer in adult, and the
average juvenile case load is 25 per officer. The

1
2 ideal case load depends on risk. Higher risk cases
3 should be around 20 to 25 per officer, moderate
4 around 40, and lower risk can be higher. The goal is
5 to focus resources where they have the greatest
6 impact. Case loads are not just an operational
7 issue. They are directly tied to outcomes. As case
8 loads increase, the quality of supervision can be
9 effective. Officers may have less time to engage
10 with clients, connect them to services, monitor
11 progress, and respond to needs in a timely way. When
12 that happens, the risk of reoffending increases.
13 From a budget perspective, that matters. Investing
14 up front in manageable case loads help prevent
15 reoffending which avoids significantly higher down
16 stream costs to this city. That is why we are
17 implementing a more focused risk-based supervision
18 model. Approximately 43 percent of our clients are
19 high-risk, and that group is responsible for nearly
20 60 percent of rearrests. At the same time, lower
21 risk individuals make up a large portion of the case
load but account for a much smaller share of
reoffending. We cannot treat those groups the same.
We are aligning resources so that officers' time,
attention, and programming are focused where they

1
2 have the greatest impact. We are strengthening how
3 we deliver and evaluate programs. First, ensuring
4 individuals can access programs by removing barriers
5 like transportation. Second, driving consistent
6 attendance and engagement. Third, ensuring
7 individuals are making progress while in the program.
8 And finally, tracking outcomes including whether they
9 secure employment and sustain those results over
10 time. We are using this approach to better align
11 resources to the programs that deliver the strongest
12 result. We are using data not just to track
13 activity, but to ensure our work leads to real
14 sustained outcomes, and we are seeing real results.
15 Approximately, 75 percent of adults on probation
16 complete probation. Approximately 92 percent of
17 juveniles complete probation. Adult rearrests
18 declined and adult violent felony rearrests declined
19 more significantly, even as the population we serve
20 increased. That is important progress. At the same
21 time, we are clear about where we must improve.
Juvenile rearrests increased by 50 percent. That is
unacceptable, and we are responding with urgency by
expanding targeted interventions and focusing
resources on the highest-risk youth. I also want to

1 take a moment to acknowledge the outstanding work
2 happening on the ground. We recently received
3 feedback from our law enforcement partner who visited
4 our Harlem NeON location and spoke very highly of two
5 of our probation officers, Probation Officer Lee and
6 Probation Officer Green. She described them as
7 exceptionally professional, respectful, and
8 approachable. She noted that they are offering
9 meaningful guidance, connecting individuals to vital
10 resources, and consistently treated people with
11 dignity and respect. And she said she wanted to make
12 sure their work did not go unnoticed. That is the
13 culture we are building, and that is the work our
14 officers are doing across this city every day. We
15 are also continuing to rebuild and strengthen
16 partnerships with providers, community organizations,
17 elected officials, and other stakeholders, because
18 Probation does not do this work alone. Finally, I
19 want to make one broader point. Probation delivers
20 value that is not always fully visible in our budget
21 lines. When we stabilize individuals in the
community, we are not just improving outcomes, we are
preventing future system involvement and avoiding
significantly higher costs to this city. This

1
2 Department plays a critical role in both public
3 safety and fiscal responsibility. Our focus moving
4 forward is clear, we are strengthening supervision.
5 We are supporting our workforce. We are investing in
6 what works, and we are building a probation system
7 that is more focused, more accountable and more
8 effective, one that helps people thrive, strengthen
9 communities and delivers real value for the City of
10 New York. Thank you, and I welcome your questions.

11
12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
13 Commissioner. And just for the record, I just want
14 to make sure that I re-emphasize the need to have the
15 testimony submitted at least 24 hours in advance of
16 our hearing. So, just to get started, in the few
17 months that you have been Commissioner what changes
18 have you implemented in relation to the allocation of
19 the Department of Probation's resources, and are
20 there any areas where you have reduced spending?

21
22 COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: So, the changes I
23 have made since being Commissioner is one, ensuring
24 that our agencies are evidence-based practice, that
25 we allow data to inform our policies, that we're
26 looking at our policies such as our uniform policy
27 which is being reimplemented, changing our firearms

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2 policy, placing the court liaison officers back in
3 the courts, meeting with all of my stakeholders and
4 my community-based organizations, judges just to make
5 sure that we are on the path of redesigning and
6 making sure that Probation delivers promise on our
7 neighborhood opportunity networks, programs, and
8 really wanting to broaden and build out the NeONs.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: There were
10 minimal changes included in the Preliminary Plan for
11 the Department of Probation, aside from the baseline
12 cost of living adjustments. Were there any requests
13 to OMB that were not reflected in this plan?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER YOUNG: Thank you for
15 that question, Council Member. You know, everything
16 was documented and submitted to OMB.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm sorry,
18 can you repeat?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER YOUNG: Everything
20 was submitted to OMB for our new needs. So, nothing
21 else was excluded.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So, the
minimal changes, that's all that you all needed based
on your assessment.

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2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER YOUNG: That's
3 correct. We have additional new needs that were
4 submitted, but what you said is absolutely correct.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. At
6 adoption, electronic monitoring capacity was
7 increased by \$5 million in a one-year funding to
8 purchase 200 electronic monitors, increasing the
9 city's monitoring capacity to 600 people at once. How
10 has this funding impacted the Department? Has your
11 agency, for example, seen an increase in people who
12 are released with an electronic monitor?

13 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER PULLANO: Thank
14 you for that question. We have not seen an overall
15 increase in individuals released with electronic
16 monitoring. However, I do want to make a
17 distinction. There was- there's an internal pilot
18 program for electronic monitoring, and then there are
19 other agencies such as the Sheriff and other
20 probationary agencies, federal probation, which do
21 monitor our clients which are two totally separate
issues. I believe you're referring to sort of a
combination of both. As far as our pilot program,
that is an internal enhancement to probation
conditions that we've used for existing clients. So,

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2 it wouldn't increase the number of clients since it's
3 only used for internal existing clients. That is a
4 pilot that's reaching its end and we're in the
5 process of assessing that.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: But
7 considering it's expanding a capacity, wouldn't it
8 increase the amount people able to utilize that
9 function?

10 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER PULLANO: Correct.
11 There is capacity, yes. As far as our internal
12 pilot, we're assessing kind of where- what direction
13 that's going. However, the overall city's capacity
14 has not shown a change. Meaning clients that come
15 from court with monitors for a number of reasons has
16 not changed in the last year or so which is separate
17 from our internal pilot program.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: But broadly
19 speaking for the agency, has there been an overall
20 increase in people who are released with an
21 electronic monitor, whichever way they're coming?

No?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER PULLANO: No.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. Also,
I'd like to acknowledge that we are joined by Council

1
2 Members Salaam, Cabán, and Feliz on Zoom. I'm going
3 to shift to programming. How does the Preliminary
4 Plan continue to place programming at the center of
5 the Department of Probation's role in the city's
6 criminal justice system?

7
8 DIRECTOR RICHARDS: Thank you for that
9 question. Programming remains at the top of our list.
10 We have- currently we have programming that we may
11 sunset. However, we also have programs that we're
12 looking to implement moving forward. Programming is
13 very important to the Commissioner. She has reached
14 out to various community-based organizations, also to
15 the Youth Coalition and also internal discussions
16 about where do we go next. And we want to make sure
17 that newer programs are able to benefit those
18 participants in probation as well as community.

19
20 COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: And we also- I'm
21 sorry.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Go ahead.

17
18 COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: And we also are
19 looking to have conversations with Columbia
20 University Justice Lab, and looking at a more
21 targeted program towards violent youth and their
arrests.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
3 that. How much of the total budget is dedicated
4 towards programming and should the amount be
5 increased or decreased in Fiscal 2027?

6 DIRECTOR RICHARDS: I believe it's
7 currently \$18 million.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER YOUNG: And Chair,
9 just one thing to add to that, we were looking to
10 expand our programming and we definitely see, you
11 know, approximately I think eight out of 10 of our
12 probation clients who are engaged in programming no
13 longer recidivate. So, we put in additional new needs
14 and grant opportunities to expand those programs.
15 So, we're hoping to get additional funding through
16 philanthropic organizations or federal grants to
17 expand our existing programming network.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
19 I'm going to just jump around a bit to be able to
20 yield to my colleagues momentarily. I wanted to
21 touch on the contracted providers. Where does the
Department see a need for outside programming
provided by nonprofits, and how does the Department
plan to continue working with the nonprofits?

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2 COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: Thank you for that
3 question. Within my first few weeks I've been
4 meeting with the Youth Coalition. I've met, like I
5 said, with Columbia University Justice Lab. I've met
6 with Osborne, Fortune, over about 15 organizations to
7 really talk about our programming and our
8 partnerships and taking about how we can better do a
9 better job at New York City Department of Probation
10 before a contract is about to end where we can all
11 get into the room and talk about what's next and what
12 we could do better or adding to our contracts that
13 are already present. And my focus right now based on
14 what the data is telling us is our focus is going to
15 be on the youth.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So, what
17 contracts in the Department is the Department
18 preparing to RFP over the coming fiscal year? And
19 also, if you can provide an update on your contract
20 with Work Plus?

21 DIRECTOR RICHARDS: Thank you for that
22 question. Pretty much all of the juvenile programs
23 that we have we plan to continue. We currently have
24 one-year renewals with all programs across all
25 programming which will give us an opportunity to

1
2 begin writing RFPs. On the adult side, we also have
3 one-year renewals for our NeON works and our Arches
4 mentoring program. So, as of now, the only program
5 that we're planning to sunset would be Works Plus.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So, you're
7 sunsetting- you are definitely going to sunset Works
8 Plus. What's the timeline on that?

9 DIRECTOR RICHARDS: So, Works Plus it
10 sunsets June 30th. The Commissioner- as I stated
11 before, the Commissioner has met with the providers.
12 She's also met with the Youth Council to let them
13 know that we will be sunsetting, and she also has
14 discussed with them our plans moving forward. So she
15 wants to collaborate with the community-based
16 organizations to figure out what works, which
17 programs, what makes sense, and how we can benefit
18 both community clients and probation.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Can you
20 explain why this program is being sunset?

21 COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: It's expired. The
contract expired and that's why it's no longer in
place. However, yes, he's right. I did speak with
the providers about us looking at what we learned
from the program and what we can add, and in talking

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2 about getting together and discussing what the RFP is
3 going to look like with the added new features to the
4 contract.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Now,
6 Commissioner, has the Department renewed some of the
7 programs that were preparing to sunset?

8 DIRECTOR RICHARDS: Yes. The programs on
9 the juvenile side were sunsetting as well, but we've
10 renewed every single one.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And then on
12 the adult side, are all the ones that are sunsetting
13 not being renewed?

14 DIRECTOR RICHARDS: So, on the adult side
15 out of the active programs which would be Works Plus,
16 that is the only program that will expire. The actual
17 expiration date was June of 2025 and we extended for
18 one more year. So the new date of expiration would
19 be June 30th, 2026.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What other
21 workforce programs will replace this need? Because
22 being that this is as you said the only one on the
23 adult side that is sunsetting, how is the Department
24 filling that gap?

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2 DIRECTOR RICHARDS: So, first, let me say
3 that currently we have at least 350 youth,
4 non-probation youth, that are currently enrolled in
5 Works Plus. The majority of them are scheduled to
6 complete the program, and those that are not, the
7 remaining will be transitioned to programs in DYCD,
8 also our NeON Works- work readiness program as well,
9 and resources within those community-based
10 organizations.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. I'm
12 going to pivot to staffing and overtime. I may come
13 back to that one. As of January, the Department had
14 a 23 percent vacancy rate, one of the highest in the
15 city. What strategies have you considered to fill
16 these vacant positions?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER YOUNG: Thank you for
18 the question, Chair Brooks-Powers. So, that is
19 correct. There is approximately a 23 percent vacancy
20 rate. That translates to about 250 probation
21 officers that we wish we had. And with that, we have
absorbed that work load and so then consequence there
has been higher case loads associated with that. So,
we've rededicated and provided an assessment right
now that's ongoing of how we could improve on our

1
2 recruitment and retention efforts. These are two
3 areas that I think are critical for us to address
4 holistically internally, then also working with our
5 partners such as DCAS. We have over 200 universities
6 that we're also working with to put out the message
7 about our hiring. It then goes to the realities of
8 why people aren't coming in the door fast enough, and
9 we're trying to figure out what those friction [sic]
10 points are. And then also, be able to keep our staff
11 once we have them. So, it gets into a retention
12 issue as well, and the Commissioner's intent on
13 working to improve our wellness and the wellbeing of
14 our staff. So, that's our current vacancy rate and
15 our plan moving forward.

16
17 COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: And one of the
18 things that we are focusing on is bringing forward
19 our probation officer trainees, because their
20 requirements is a little different. They just have
21 to have a college degree, and then we give them the
case work experience. So, we've been doing a huge
recruitment for the probation officer trainees that
are coming out of the universities and thus far since
our recruitment efforts, about 526 have applied.
We're in the process of actually interviewing the

1
2 POTs. So far, we've done 80 interviews of qualified
3 probation officer trainees.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
5 When is the next officer's exam scheduled for?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER YOUNG: Thank you for
7 the question, Chair. We have- [inaudible] gave a
8 schedule, but we have 591 applicants so far for the
9 upcoming exam. The date?

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER EUSEBIO: For
11 June 11th.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER YOUNG: June 11th.

13 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER PULLANO: June
14 11th. And the filing period is currently open.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm sorry,
16 can you talk into the microphone.

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER EUSEBIO: The
18 filing period is open until June 11th.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. June
20 11th.

21 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER EUSEBIO: So we
actively engaging with the recruitment process as we
speak.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
that. I'm going to yield to hearing next from

1
2 Council Member Morano followed by Council Member
3 Salaam. Just ask that everyone be respectful of the
4 clock. Thank you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you,
6 Commissioner. You note the average adult case load
7 is 54 while higher risk cases should be closer to 20
8 or 25. Can you tell us plainly are we currently
9 supervising too many high-risk individuals with too
10 few officers, and what does that mean for public
11 safety in neighborhoods around the city?

12 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER PULLANO: I can
13 answer that question. Thank you for the question.
14 So, currently, we have a mixed case load model. So
15 what that means is that both on the adult and
16 juvenile side we use validated evidence-based
17 assessment tools. So, we assess every case and we
18 give them a risk level. So, on the adult side, it
19 would be high, medium, low, etcetera. Currently,
20 that mixed case load model means that one officer has
21 all different risk levels. We are moving. We're
actually in the planning phases now of moving towards
an individual risk level model, meaning each officer
only gets a single risk level. So, to answer your
question about how many- you know, is it too many or

1 too few officers. This system will adjust for that.
2 When you have a single risk level, you have less room
3 for error, right? There's more consistency within
4 the officer, but then we can adjust the case loads
5 individually. High case loads will have fewer cases.
6 Medium case loads will have a little bit more. Low
7 will have a little bit more, etcetera. So, this
8 whole plan- and you know, our officers have been
9 working very, very hard these last few weeks
10 reassessing and re-engaging all these clients to have
11 clearly documented needs, and we really commend that
12 work so that we can make this overall plan to shift
13 these case loads and address exactly that issue.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: The Commissioner
13 mentioned a 23 percent vacancy rate and that we've
14 lost far more officers than we've hired. What
15 specifically is driving officers to leave, and what
16 would it take in your view, Commissioner, to actually
17 stabilize the workforce?

17 COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: I believe that
18 it's a competitive market out there. We're competing
19 with a lot of different criminal justice agencies and
20 social work agencies. And so for how we're looking at
21 it is maybe- is giving them a better work/life-

1
2 balance, thank you- work/life balance. And that
3 means looking at their schedules, maybe making it
4 monroe competitive in terms of their wanting to come-
5 you know, stay at probation, giving them- looking at
6 their wellness and what we're doing. We just
7 recently had staff appreciation breakfast where
8 executive team served them breakfast, and we thanked
9 them for their service. So, we're looking at even the
10 case loads, making the case loads more favorable to
11 them so they can do their work. So, we're trying to
12 do a lot of different things within the agency to say
13 hey, we can give you a better work/life balance.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: The thing that I
15 found most troubling about your testimony, and I'm
16 sure it's the aspect that you found most troubling
17 was the spike in juvenile reoffenders. You had said
18 that juvenile rearrests are up 50 percent which you
19 rightly called unacceptable. What are we doing
20 differently right now to reverse that trend? And how
21 quickly should New Yorkers expect to see some
22 results?

23 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GAMBRELL:

24 Thank you for the question. So, with regard to the
25 spike in juvenile arrests, obviously that is not the

1 direction we want to go in. One thing that we do
2 want to note is that over- since Raise the Age, over
3 70 percent of our clientele in juvenile is over the
4 age of 16, and so with that, they bring different
5 types of offenses that come to us. So, one of the
6 things that we are doing, the Commissioner wants to
7 use Credible Messengers on the juvenile side. That
8 was something that had been very effective in the
9 past with that population, 16 to 24, when they were
10 on the side of adult operations. And so, with regard
11 to juvenile operations, the idea and the plan is to
12 have a credible messenger assigned to each unit so
13 that this way they can work with our clients
14 throughout their time on probation. Another thing is
15 that the Commissioner just recently attended a
16 ribbon-cutting at Lehman for a new program that we
17 have that is called Light. And so what they're going
18 to be doing is they're going to be supporting youth
19 with tutoring throughout education. They're going to
20 show them a pathway to college if that's what they
21 want to do, perhaps vocational. They will have peer
mentors that are college students. So, we're trying
to do things differently, understanding that doing

1
2 the same thing is not going to yield different
3 results.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: One more if I
6 may? Commissioner, briefly, briefly.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: If you could
8 be really quick.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Yes, yes. So,
10 Commissioner, you emphasized that supervision alone
11 isn't enough and that services matter. But where
12 does one draw the line? How do we ensure that
13 accountability doesn't get lost in a service-driven
14 model?

15 COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: One of the things
16 that probation is and I love about this agency is
17 that we wear two hats. We wear a law enforcement hat
18 as well as a social work hat, and our focus more is
19 on a social work side, but we balance it out with
20 accountability. And so it doesn't get lost. It
21 just- it helps as a tool, as a- to strengthen what
the client needs.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

Next we'll hear from Council Member Salaam followed

1
2 by Council Member Cabán. Once again, asking everyone
3 to respect the clock.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Thank you, Chair,
5 and thank you, Commissioner. Question about the
6 rearrest rates for youth. I wanted to know what the
7 interventions- what interventions are failing for our
8 youth on probation, and what additional resources or
9 programming changes are needed given the fact that
10 they have gone from two percent to three percent, 02
11 percent and 03 percent between Fiscal Years 25 and
12 26?

13 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GAMBRELL:

14 Thank you for the question. I think what we're
15 seeing right now is unfortunately an increase in some
16 gun violence. And so one of the things that the
17 Commissioner has discussed is trying to find the
18 appropriate programming that would help us to combat
19 that particular thing. And so Credible Messengers is
20 one of the pathways to that, but we are open to
21 talking with our community partners and the different
providers just to really try to narrow in on that
particular issue to see what would be the best model
and what would be the best thing to keep our youth
from getting further involved into the system.

1
2 COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: And that is why
3 we're talking with Columbia University, Project
4 Restore, and really looking into partnering with them
5 as well. They have a really good successful rate with
6 their program with dealing with providers and youth.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Thank you.
8 Continuing with the youth in terms of youth at risk
9 and the funding source shifted, and how does this
10 affect the programming services instability given
11 that we- the Preliminary Plan, we allocated \$18.8
12 million of at-risk youth funding from the city to
13 non-city sources while also enrolling 20 percent
14 fewer DOP managed program participants.

15 DEPUTY CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER MIRZA:
16 while they're preparing for the answer, actually let
17 me just quickly- I know this question has come in
18 twice now. So, any decisions that we're making, as
19 Commissioner said in her testimony, that we are
20 leveraging data as the guiding principle for us. So,
21 we have set up benchmarks and keep performance
indicators that we have. So, any decisions we are
making either to sunset or add more resources to
anything is based on the data. So we're using data
as an infrastructure like we have roads and utilities

1
2 and all these other things to guide us actually what
3 decisions that needs to be made. So, anything based
4 on your question, any decision we are making is
5 data-driven decision-making actually.

6 DIRECTOR RICHARDS: Also funding, any
7 funding on a higher level, any funding decrease
8 doesn't affect the program-specific budgets, right,
9 on the ground level. So, there hasn't been any
10 change in terms of services with our programs, as
11 well. If there's a fluctuation with enrollment, that
12 wouldn't have anything to do with say the funding
13 aspect.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Adult
15 pre-sentencing investigation completed on time rates
16 dropped four percentage points from 98.4 percent to
17 94.4 percent despite an increase in volume of 2,392
18 to 2,601 PSIs. How are staffing shortages affecting
19 the quality and timelines of these critical court
20 documents, and what resources would address this
21 deadline? This decline, sorry about that.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER PULLANO: That is
the core of the challenge, everything you described
there. So, this is actually a good example. The
quality is actually being maintained by our officers.

1
2 In this example, the on-time- they're taking more
3 time. So, that is the trade-off. So, in order to
4 maintain the quality with your officers takes them
5 longer, and that's why our on-time delivery has been
6 reduced. Now, we're working on bringing that back
7 up. We have assigned some more officers actually
8 recently in the last few weeks. Two investigations
9 for that reason. There is some training. It is
10 somewhat of a specialized assignment so there's some
11 time for that to be realized, but this is the core of
12 the challenge that we're faced with and we're doing
13 the best we can. Our officers are doing their best
14 to prioritize quality over any other metric.

15
16 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Thank you. Thank
17 you, Chair.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
20 Council Member Cabán. Also, we've been joined by
21 Council Member Narcisse.

22
23 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you, Chair.
24 Thank you all for being here. That's it, I'm done?
25 Can you just briefly- I have- I'm probably going to
26 be doing more in commenting than questioning. But
27 briefly, what do you see as your mission and purpose

1
2 as it pertains to young people under your
3 supervision?

4 COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: It's to provide
5 them with the best service, resources and opportunity
6 that we can, and really doing a one-size-fits-one
7 approach with how we supervise.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: And what's the
9 purpose, right? Like, what is the outcome that
10 you're hoping for, right, when you're seeking the
11 best programs and services?

12 COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: For me- for youth,
13 my- the best outcome for us is getting them to
14 realize that they have something to live for, right?
15 And I say that in terms of a lot of youth come to us
16 not even realizing that they have tomorrow to live
17 for, and our job is to get them to realize that. So,
18 my main focus is changing behavior.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Yeah.

20 COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: And using all of
21 our resources in terms of Credible Messenger, using
22 our nonprofits, using my sister resources in other-

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: [interposing] And
24 I'm going to interject for a moment, because I know
25 you've spent time talking about that and I agree with

1
2 you, and I- you know, I want to hone in on what you
3 said about sort of changing behavior and having some
4 thing to live for. To me, that means recognizing
5 that you have options and opportunities, right?

6 COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: Right.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: And I want to
8 thank my colleague, Council Member Morano, for his
9 questions. I think they were thoughtful, and I think
10 it's interesting the use and the choice of the word
11 accountability, because accountability and punishment
12 are not synonymous. They have very different
13 definitions, and your mission I think incorporates
14 accountability and not the purpose of punishment.
15 Just for the record, the definition of accountability
16 is an active voluntary process of taking
17 responsibility, repairing harm, and changing behavior
18 that focuses on growth and improvement, and
19 conversely, the definition of punishment is passive,
20 often forced experienced focused on retribution,
21 control, shame, and results in isolation rather than
improvement. And so I think the latter is contrary
to what your goals are in terms of people having
something to live for and striving for something, and
the former is really key here. I point that out

1
2 because I just think some people think that like
3 something happens, and you need to be punished. But
4 we want want outcomes. We want changed behavior. We
5 want transformation. What recommendation or what
6 programs and interventions do you think promote
7 accountability, and what recommendations for you do
8 you have for diverting young people away from even
9 coming under your supervision? And an example I will
10 give and share to start us off is SYEP, right? We
11 know that it reduces youth arrest rates by 17
12 percent. I reduces felony arrest rates by 23 percent,
13 and it- I mean, those are hard concrete results. So,
14 what kind of programs and interventions promote
15 accountability, and what recommendations do you have
16 for diverting people from touching you in the first
17 place?

18 COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: Okay. This is
19 going to be a shared conversation-

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: [interposing] Let's
21 do it.

22 COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: with my
23 counterparts. First, probation, we do have cognitive
24 behavioral intervention tools that we use with the
25 youth as well with the adults that addresses

1
2 accountability and them looking at their lives and
3 their future. So, we do have tools in place called
4 the Carry Guides and the behavioral intervention
5 tools which is called BITs. So we do use them when
6 they come to probation and they spend time with their
7 probation officer or if an issue comes up about what
8 they're going through. We pull out the Carry Guides
9 and we pull out the tools to address- help them
10 address or look at what's going on in their lives so
11 they can make better choices. In terms of diversion,
12 I'm going to hand that over to Dr. Gambrell.

13
14 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GAMBRELL: So,
15 just-

16
17 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: [interposing] And
18 again, just to clarify, I'm hoping to hear about
19 things that you think would help prevent people even
20 from coming under your supervision. I'm talking
21 about that in terms of diversion.

22
23 ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GAMBRELL:
24 Okay, I think that that would probably be
25 collaborative effort with some of our sister
26 agencies, right, coming together, because all touch
27 the same populations, right? So, that means that we
28 need to, you know, be step-in-step with DYCD. We do

1
2 a big push for SYEP, right, for our kids. We need to
3 be step-in-step with New York City Public School
4 system, right? Just trying to figure out, okay, when
5 you see certain behaviors this might mean that this
6 kid might be coming this way, and so these are some
7 of the things that we need to do collaboratively. I
8 think that as a city we can come together more
9 collaboratively, pull our resources. And I just want
10 to add really quickly that one of the main tools that
11 we have at probation is our staff. They're change
12 agents. And so, you know, with Commissioner Goodwin
13 here, we're moving forward to making sure that we
14 provide them with retraining on motivational
15 interviewing, stages of change, because these are the
16 things that are really going to impact our youth.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you, Chair.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: And also,
18 Commissioner, I love your tie.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

19 We've also been joined by Council Member Brewer, and
20 we'll wrap up with questions with Council Member
21 Narcisse.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Good morning.

As a re-entry nurse- thank you, Chair and thank you for being present with your leadership here. So, I'm so happy to see you and congratulation and I'm hoping to look for the best. Like we say, the best is yet to come. I used to be a re-entry nurse, and it always bothers me to see how we have our children in that revolving door all the time. So, what do you think- I mean, why do you think we have such a high rearrest all the time? Can you prioritize the thing that you think is the most problem that we have with our youth in New York City?

COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: I think that our youth has more than one issue going on in their lives. They have- they're dealing with multiple issues and-

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing]
The top. Because I know we have a lot of problems. We all have a lot of problems.

COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: So, exactly. So, that's why, you know, as the Commissioner I'm looking at reinstituting how we look at our data and what is that data saying to us? How- you know, what are the top three concerns that our youth is going through in

1
2 order for us to really get to the heart of it. You
3 have- they may have family issues going on. They
4 have a little bit of- I don't want to even say mental
5 health or emotional issues going on, and who knows,
6 they could be going through homelessness. So, it can
7 be a number of things that are keeping them coming
8 through the door. And so they don't just come to us
9 with one problem. They come to us with multiple, and
10 so our job at Probation is really looking at what
11 that is and how do we target or really, you know,
12 help them get through all of the different stages
13 that they're going through or issues.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Do you think
15 that probation structured for rehabilitation in New
16 York City?

17 COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: I think we are
18 structured. If we are- really look at works. And if
19 we really look at what the data is telling us,
20 looking at what is actually going on environmentally
21 in our neighborhoods, what resources do we have. Are
we actually really tapping into them, you know? So,
we have to really look- and that's why it's important
for me to get out and really collaborate with all of
my nonprofits and my organizations, my elected

1 officials to really come together so we can have-
2 ensure that this young person has a continuity of
3 services. They're not just going from one or ACS to
4 us and we're doing something different, but if we can
5 get together and collaborate and make sure that they
6 get a continuity of service and that we don't disrupt
7 their lives and cause more harm.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Continuity of
9 service is so important, because like I said, I used
10 to be a reentry nurse. I could hear the stories and
11 some of the youth never had a chance in this world
12 from the beginning. So, one more thing then I'm
13 going to finish with that. Do the probation officers
14 have scheduled training on a regular basis to deal
15 with our youth? Let's say, to talk about what's
16 going on. Because themselves, the human being, they
17 have a lot going on. Do they have a structure to
18 allow them to talk about what's going on in the field
19 and how they can have someone to guide them too as
20 well how to best deal with those children? Because
21 we have to deal with that. We have to understand
what they're going through, and sometimes it can be
overwhelmed for even the probation officer, because I

1
2 have seen it, because I talk to all when I'm doing
3 reentry program.

4 COMMISSIONER GOODWIN: So, at Probation
5 we have a number of people that work with young
6 people, not just the probation officer, but the
7 parent coaches. We have the Credible Messengers, and
8 we're also looking at doing more, and for me, our
9 focus at Probation will be the youth, will be making
10 sure that we are connecting them with Credible
11 Messengers, because at this time that's not what
12 we're doing. And also, like I said, looking at what
13 the data is telling us. Where should we be
14 intervening? Is it early on when they get probation,
15 or the latter part? I- right now, I'm in the middle
16 of looking at with my few weeks in, but that is a
17 very- that's concerning for me as well, and I share
18 exactly-

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing] My
20 time is over, but the reason I talk about the
21 probation officers, because sometimes they go into
work and they miss by one hour and they go back in
the revolving door for no reason. So they have to be
sensitive to what's the situation. We cannot be just
one way, not seeing and assess and be sensitive to

1
2 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Good morning,
3 Chair Brooks-Powers and members of the Committee on
4 Criminal Justice. As noted, I am Stanley Richards,
5 Commissioner of the New York City Department of
6 Corrections, and I'm joined here by- with many of my
7 colleagues. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss
8 the Department's Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget
9 and the work ahead of us to strengthen safety,
10 stability, and accountability within our jail system.
11 I come before you today not only as Commissioner, but
12 as someone who has spent decades working in and
13 around the system, as an advocate, as a practitioner,
14 as a partner, and now as a Commissioner. I take this
15 responsibility seriously, and I approach it with both
16 urgency and humility. I want to start with this
17 simple truth. We have a lot of work ahead of us. As
18 I stated when I met before the committee last month,
19 transforming a system like ours is not like turning a
20 speed boat. It is like turning a cruise ship. It is
21 going to take time and sustained commitment, and I am
committed to that work, and I can say confidently
that the team I'm building is committed to that work
as well. We share this council's goal of creating a
system that is safe for staff and people in our care,

1
2 and holds people accountable while also creating
3 pathways for change and growth. In this new role, my
4 leadership philosophy is grounded in a simple idea,
5 people first. The people of this agency and the
6 people in our care ought to be seen, heard,
7 supported, and engaged. Our staff are charged with
8 caring for people with significant mental health,
9 addiction, and other challenges every day. The
10 people placed in our care are going through one of
11 the most difficult times in their lives, and they
12 deserve opportunity as well as programs and services
13 and an environment that will help transform- will
14 help them transform and succeed. It is incumbent on
15 this agency to ensure that our staff and the people
16 in our care go home to their people, to their
17 communities, and be a resource to them. My mission
18 as Commissioner is grounded in several core
19 priorities. First, safe and humane jails. Safety
20 must be the foundation of everything we do. Without
21 safety, we cannot accomplish what we strive to
achieve. Safety must extend to everyone in this
system, our correction officers, our non-uniform
staff, and the people in our care. Second,
strengthening partnerships. DOC cannot do this work

1 alone. Real progress requires strong collaboration
2 with all of our partners including all city agencies,
3 community providers, labor organizations, and this
4 very body, the Council. Real sustainable change only
5 happens when we work together. Third, supporting
6 responsible population reduction and strengthening
7 the continuum of care- strengthening the DOC, the
8 continuum of care. Sorry, skipped a page. DOC does
9 not control who enters our care, but we are committed
10 to working closely with our partners in the criminal
11 legal system to support policies and practices that
12 safely reduce the jail population while also ensuring
13 individuals are better prepared for when they return
14 to their communities. Fourth, preparing the
15 Department for the future, including the
16 borough-based jails and modernization of our
17 operations. These priorities are connected. When we
18 support staff, we improve safety. When we improve
19 safety, we can focus on rehabilitative programming.
20 When we improve our ability to deliver programming
21 and rehabilitation, we improve outcomes, and when
outcomes improve, public safety improves. That is
what putting people first looks like in practice and
what we hope to achieve in the coming fiscal year.

1
2 Let me speak candidly about where we are today. Our
3 jail population has increased year over year for the
4 past several years. In Fiscal Year 26, the average
5 daily population was approximately 7,100 people,
6 representing nearly a 10 percent increase compared to
7 Fiscal Year 25, and a nearly 43 percent increase
8 compared to Fiscal Year 21. We are seeing our
9 facilities operate at 92 percent capacity, the
10 highest level seen in more than a decade. These
11 numbers matter, because they create additional
12 operational pressure across housing, staffing,
13 service delivery every single day. I want to
14 emphasize something important. DOC does not control
15 who comes into our care or how long they remain, but
16 we are working closely with our partners across the
17 criminal legal system to support responsible
18 population efforts, including this body. This is
19 just- this is not just a DOC change, it is a systems
20 challenge. A system challenges require shared
21 solutions. At the same time, population pressures
are increasing, the Department continues to face
significant staffing challenges. This issue is not
unique to New York City. Law enforcement agencies
across the country, especially in the correctional

1 field as noted earlier by the Commissioner of
2 Probation, are all struggling with recruitment and
3 retention. Today, DOC employs approximately 5,600
4 uniformed members of service, a roughly 20 percent
5 net decline in average headcount since January 2022.
6 And we know that additional retirements are coming.
7 Over 800 uniformed staff are currently
8 retirement-eligible, meaning they could walk out the
9 door today and retire, 800. Another 235 will become
10 eligible next calendar year, and nearly 400 by the
11 end of calendar year 2028. Those numbers tell a
12 clear story. Despite what people may believe, DOC is
13 not operating with excess staff. We are managing an
14 increasing population through growing staff
15 attrition, and to meet this challenge, we are making
16 significant investments in recruitment. We are
17 expanding outreach to engage future officers and
18 running academy classes to ensure that we are
19 building a strong department that will serve them
20 throughout their career. But recruitment alone
21 cannot fully offset years of attrition overnight.
That is why retention matters just as much as
recruitment. If we want to retain staff, we must
support staff. That means investing in wellness,

1
2 strengthening professional development, and improving
3 morale. Being a correction officer is incredibly
4 demanding job, physically, mentally, and emotionally,
5 and if we want safe jails, we must ensure that the
6 people responsible for maintaining that safety are
7 whole and healthy. I also want to speak candidly
8 about infrastructure challenges. The facilities on
9 Rikers Island are aging and many critical systems are
operating beyond their intended lifespan, and that's
why we must close Rikers. We just must.

10 Infrastructure failures are not abstract risks. They
11 are operational realities we must face and manage
12 every day. The health of our infrastructure is
13 connected, deeply connected, to the health of our
14 staff and the people in our care. At the end of the
15 day, this is not about buildings. It is about
16 people. Putting people first means investing in
17 safety. Staff must be able to work in safe
18 conditions and people in our care must be housed in
19 safe and appropriate conditions until we can move to
20 the borough-based jails. We continue to make repairs,
21 maintain systems and address critical failures, but
because our capital funding is largely tied to the
borough-based jail program, we often rely on expense

1 funding to address urgent infrastructure needs.

2 There is a real opportunity cost to that. When we

3 use expense funding to address infrastructure needs,

4 those are resources we cannot use for staffing

5 support, programming expansion, or operational

6 improvements. The first borough-based jail facility

7 is not expected to reach substantial completion until

8 2029. That means we must have honest conversations

9 about how we maintain safe conditions on Rikers

10 Island in the years ahead. While we are honest about

11 the challenges, we are also focused on progress. We

12 are excited to continue expanding partnerships that

13 bring additional programming services into the jails.

14 Importantly, these services were shaped by the

15 feedback from the people who will use them, the

16 individuals in our care. That process reflects our

17 commitment to listening and improving how services

18 are delivered. We are also focused on modernizing

19 our technology and infrastructure. Modernization of

20 this agency's work is not a luxury, it is a

21 necessity. Outdated systems have limited efficiency

and coordination for far too long. There are several

new initiatives on the horizon that will improve

operations, communication, data use, and service

1
2 delivery and we are thrilled to be moving into the
3 21st century. Critically, we also continue moving
4 forward with the borough-based jail transition. The
5 Department has a team of dedicated public servants
6 who have worked on this effort for years. Their work
7 has positioned us to move into the next phase, the
8 next phase we will move into. Construction is
9 underway at multiple sites and planning and
10 coordination of this city project continues in
11 partnership with all of our sister agencies. This
12 project is one of the most significant operational
13 transitions in not just the Department's history, but
14 in the city's history, and we are all committed to
15 getting it right. Before I close, I will briefly
16 close to the Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget.
17 For Fiscal Year 2027, the Department of Correction
18 budget is \$1.4 billion. The vast majority of this,
19 86 percent, is allocated for personnel services, 14
20 percent for OTPS, other than personnel services. The
21 Fiscal Year 27 Preliminary Budget increased by \$58
million compared to Fiscal Year 2026 budget of \$1.34
billion. Some of the increases to the Preliminary
Budget including funding for expense opponents of
capitally approved technology projects with \$3.2

1 million allocated in Fiscal Year 26, \$3.5 million in
2 Fiscal Year 27, \$4.4 million in Fiscal Year 28, \$3.4
3 in Fiscal year 29, and \$2 million in Fiscal Year 30.
4 Laundry detergent, soap and cleaning supplies for
5 people in custody with \$8 million baselined starting
6 in Fiscal Year 26. The additional funding supports
7 increased needs for the Department resulting from an
8 increased population, as well as increase in prices.
9 Civilian-based funding- civilian-based salary funding
10 to close anticipated budgetary shortfall with \$15
11 million in FY 26 only, and uniform and civilian
12 overtime funding to close projected Fiscal 26 budget
13 shortfall of \$18 million in civilian overtime, and
14 \$150 million in uniform overtime. This Fiscal Year
15 26 budget and commitment plan totals \$14 billion
16 which covers Fiscal Year 26 through 36, and that's
17 the capital. As of the FY 26 Preliminary Budget, the
18 majority of capital funding as noted earlier is tied
19 to the borough-based jails program which totals \$13.9
20 billion over the 10-year plan and has allocated
21 Brooklyn facility \$2.3 billion, Manhattan facility
\$4.1 billion, Bronx facility \$3.1 billion, and the
Queens facility at \$4 billion. As we continue to
work diligently to attract and retain both civilian

1 and uniformed staff, the Department's total
2 authorized headcount is 8,811 which includes 7,060
3 uniformed positions and 1,751 civilian positions.
4 Our actual uniformed staffing levels remain well
5 below our authorized headcount, and the Department
6 plans to use funding for recruitment and advertising
7 to be aggressive with advertising and marketing
8 strategies to promote recruitment. In conclusion,
9 let me close where I began. This work is about
10 people. It is about the officer who deserves to work
11 in a safe environment. It is about the person in our
12 care who deserves dignity and opportunity. It is
13 about the communities we all serve. This is long,
14 hard work, and there are no quick fixes, but it is
15 well worth the effort. Progress is possible when we
16 stay focused, when we work together, and when we keep
17 people at the center of what we do. When we put
18 people first, safety, dignity, humanity all follow.
19 Putting people first means investing in them. People
20 in my life put me first and invested in me, and it is
21 what brought me here today before you. I am grateful
for this opportunity and I look forward to discussing
the Department's budget which is an investment the
city makes in this agency and its mission. Thank you

1
2 for your partnership and continued support. I look
3 forward to answering any questions or comments you
4 have. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
6 Commissioner. I'd like to acknowledge that we've
7 been joined by Council Member Restler. Also, I just
8 wanted to put on the record, just iterating the need
9 to have the testimony at least 24 hours in advance of
10 the hearing. So, let's jump into it. Commissioner,
11 under this new administration, are there plans to
12 significantly change the budget proposal for the
13 Department of Correction, and if so, can you share
14 some of the ways you expect it will change when the
15 Executive Budget is delivered?

16 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: We've worked with
17 OMB. We submitted our Preliminary Budget with our
18 new needs and what we need to stabilize the
19 Department now. So, as I stated in my testimony, the
20 budget we're proposing is the \$1.4 billion budget.
21 That will address the needs we have now and the
planning for the future we need to do.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And in the
same line of question, have you reviewed any of the
Board of Corrections reports published during the

1
2 prior administration to see if any further changes
3 and improvements can be made within the Department?

4 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: I haven't
5 reviewed the previous Board of Corrections reports,
6 but as a former Board of Correction member and Vice
7 Chair, I value that work. I value their partnership.
8 And what I am charging this department, my leadership
9 team with is looking at the future. Take the lessons
10 we've learned from the past, but build a path into
11 the future that is centered on hope, dignity and
12 humanity of the members of service, our officers and
13 the people who come into our care. And I'm very
14 particular about language, and you hear me say it
15 when I say people in our care. Just like our
16 officers deserve to be safe and to be valued and to
17 be heard, the people who are remanded to us, our
18 remanded to our care. And so we're going to have a
19 plan for the future of this Department building off
20 the experiences and concerns of our partners of the
21 past.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
19 that. In your testimony, you mentioned the
20 Department's goal of increasing safety for the staff
21 and the persons in custody as you just mentioned.

1
2 Can you expand on your strategies for these new
3 policies and how they'll be different from previous
4 Commissioners?

5 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Yes. You know,
6 as I said to my leadership team, we can't punish our
7 way into compliance. I think we have to start in a
8 different way, and as something similar to what the
9 Probation Commissioner started with, we need to
10 develop a system that when people come into our care,
11 people have something that they want to hold onto.
12 So, I'm sort of framing it as the way former
13 Commissioner Schiraldi and I framed it. People
14 coming into our system need to start with an A.
15 That's one strategy. So giving people something that
16 they want to hold onto as opposed to punishing at the
17 time of an infraction. The other thing we need to do
18 is to make sure our staff feel valued and
19 appreciated. So, we need to recruit to bring in
20 officers so our officers don't have to do doubles.
21 Thankfully, we're not doing triples. And do the
things that really communicate to our staff that this
city, this body, this leadership team hears you,
values you, and appreciates you. And I think when we
do those things, we can take a system that has been

1
2 traumatizing for those who work there and those who
3 are in our care and turn that into a system of
4 procedural fairness and justice, hope, and a bright
5 future.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
7 that. The Preliminary Plan includes a one-time \$183
8 million in city funding for overtime adjustments and
9 budgeting. Is there any plan in the works to adjust
10 overtime spending in future years?

11 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: In the budget,
12 that is addressing the FY 26 shortfall. I think we
13 adjust overtime is we have to recruit and retain
14 staff, and we have to reduce population. As I said,
15 we don't control who comes in our system, but we can
16 do the things necessary to provide people the support
17 and services that when they leave us, they can be
18 connected to services in their community and build a
19 brighter future for themselves and their family. So,
20 that budget request is to address the overtime for
21 this year.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
23 Commissioner. This plan includes a decreased cost of
24 living, technical adjustment, baselining a reduction
25 of \$546,698 in Fiscal 26 and \$832,000 in the

1
2 out-years. Most city agencies have seen cost of
3 living increases in this plan. Why is the Department
4 of Corrections adjustment such a large decrease?

5 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: I'm going to turn
6 it over to AC Zubair who handles our Finance to
7 answer that question.

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: Good
9 morning. Faizan Zubair, Assistant Commissioner of
10 Budget and Finance. This was a COLA adjustment
11 related to human service contracts in our budget. We
12 have to review the data to let you know exactly why
13 that decrease happened, but this was a technical
14 adjustment. We're working closely with our OMB
15 partners exactly why that is, but this due to a
16 decrease in human service contracts.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
18 that, and look forward to getting a response on that.
19 In the Preliminary Mayor's Management Report, under
20 agency-wide management, it is reported that payouts
21 were only \$48,676 in Fiscal 23 and then increased to
\$279,846 in Fiscal Year 24, and \$234,849 in Fiscal
Year 25. While workplace injuries and accidents
involving persons in custody has decreased, what

1
2 happened in Fiscal Year 24 to cause such a large
3 increase in agency payouts?

4 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Thank you for
5 that question. I'm going to turn it over to GC Conway
6 [sic] who can speak directly to that question.

7 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: Good morning,
8 the General Counsel for the agency. My team works
9 very closely and robustly with the Law Department on
10 assessing and dealing with litigation. What we
11 learned when we looked at the data for those fiscal
12 years was that there were significant in each of
13 those fiscal years class action lawsuits that were
14 settled and paid out during that time. That would
15 account for a significant, significant increase in
16 the payout for those periods. We learned that the
17 class actions actually dealt with matters that
18 occurred very early on, you know, in the early 2010s
19 and were filed in 2017 and earlier. So, one of the
20 things that my team addresses is ensuring that the
21 conditions that gave rise to those lawsuits are
addressed and no longer exist, but we do work closely
with the Law Department and assessing litigation and
the settlements.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
3 that. Pivoting to the Federal Monitor. U.S. District
4 Judge Laura Taylor Swain instructed the new
5 Remediation Manager Nicholas Deml and the city to
6 meet and submit an agreed upon plan within 21 days of
7 this appointment. What logistics have been decided?

8 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: So, I've met with
9 Nick a couple of times. His official start date is
10 on the 30th, and I really look forward to working
11 with him. I think he brings a wealth of experience.
12 Him and I talked about our work together as a
13 partnership. He reports to Judge Swain, and I report
14 to the Mayor. But our North Star and our goal is the
15 same. We want safe jails. We want our staff to be
16 safe and we want the people in our care to be safe,
17 and how we get there is through diversity of
18 experiences and knowledge, bringing in expertise that
19 we don't have and working collaboratively. So, we
20 will putting together as ordered. He has been in
21 contact with Judge Swain. I'm not in contact with
her, but I look forward to working with him. His
Chief of Staff Isaac is here who is going to be part
of the leadership team that's going to address the 18
contempt orders and the overall Nunez Consent Decree.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And will Deml
3 be located physically on the island as well with his
4 team?

5 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Yes. Him and I
6 both agree, you cannot do this work from Boulevard
7 [sic] or from office in the building outside of
8 Rikers. You need to be on the island. You need to
9 be in the facilities. You need to be present. Part
10 of what we need to do is listen and engage our staff
11 to understand what they've been going through and how
12 we can improve those conditions. We need to be
13 talking with the people in our care. We need to be
14 talking with providers. So, the answer to that
15 question directly is yes. Him and his team has a
16 trailer on the island that they will be working out
17 of.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What changes
19 have been made by the Department since the
20 appointment of the Remediation Manager if any at all?

21 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: I think what
we've done- what I've done is build out my team, and
that is continuing, and what Nick has been doing is
building out his team. What we've been having
conversations about, about the drivers of safety, and

1
2 the bottom line to safety is making sure population
3 reduction happens and making sure we have adequate
4 staff to ensure the safety of our members of service
5 and the people in our care.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And have you
7 had any conversations about the Department's budget,
8 capital and expense, with the Remediation Manager?

9 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: I think he- we
10 toured. He understands the-

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: [interposing]
12 You showed him the doors?

13 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Yes. He knows
14 about the doors, and we showed him the
15 infrastructure. The reality of it is everything on
16 that island is really old. I think the oldest
17 building we have closes HDMJTC, that building is
18 closed. The next oldest was built in 1930. Most of
19 the systems are beyond their useful life, and so
20 we've been managing infrastructure on a crisis basis.
21 And the way I look at it is the infrastructure really
creates health and safety issues. Two hours into my
first day we had a water main break, steam break,
where our FMRD team had to engage the FDNY to come
and pump water out of our steam tunnel. It took out

1
2 two buildings, hot water for two buildings. When
3 something like that happens, people in our care get
4 angry and frustrated. They don't understand that the
5 infrastructure is old and that they can't get hot
6 water. Who gets the brunt of it, the A officer, the
7 officers who are in those housing areas, the officers
8 who have to escort, the officers in the housing, the
9 B officers. And so all of this infrastructure is
10 really around health and safety, and how do maintain
11 the facility until we can get off the island and
12 build the borough-based jail where we could really
13 use design and facility to center the humanity of
14 those in our care and those on our staff.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And I do want
13 to spend some time on the infrastructure piece, but
14 before I pivot, in terms of the plan of action from
15 your perspective, have you begun to lay out a
16 strategy to reduce the different components that fall
17 under the Remediation Manager so that you can retain
18 that authority?

18 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: We haven't talked
19 specifically about what the structure would look
20 like, but Nick and I are both clear. He reports to
21 Judge Swain, and I report to Mayor Mamdani, and both

1
2 of our charges are to create safety. His by
3 addressing the 18 consent decree, me by the charge of
4 the Mayor to deliver safety, humanity, and dignity
5 for those who work there and for those who are in our
6 care.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And I get the
8 recording verticals, but just wanting to understand
9 like is there any strategy on the administration side
10 on how do you begin to regain the authority out of
11 those 18 points, because as the Department begins to
12 do better in those categories, you get to get that
13 authority back.

14 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: That is
15 specifically outlined in the order that Judge Swain
16 issued so that once the work starts and once the
17 Remediation Manager makes determinations along with
18 the monitor, that there's improvements in certain
19 areas and we start to come into compliance with those
20 specific provisions over which he has, you know,
21 authority. The idea and the direction from Judge
Swain is to transition those areas back into the-

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: [interposing]
I'm sorry, that part I get.

GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: Oh, I'm sorry.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: But what I'm
3 asking is, is there any plan of action to be able to
4 start to knock those out one by one to get that
5 authority back?

6 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: Once the
7 Remediation Manager is fully on-boarded, they're
8 required to submit a 90-day action plan that'll work-

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: [interposing]
10 So, it'll be in that.

11 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay.

13 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: Yeah, city
14 collaboration with the Department to get there.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
16 And pivoting to the capital and infrastructure piece
17 where I think the Commissioner and I are in full
18 alignment on. We are aware that the Department of
19 Corrections often uses expense funding to provide
20 infrastructure improvements to the facilities. Can
21 you provide a list of projects that have been
completed using expense funding?

COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Yes. I would
turn to two people. One is our Deputy Commissioner

1
2 of our Facilities Maintenance and Repair division, DC
3 Doherty, and our AC of Finance.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: Good
5 morning. Since 2022, there's a significant amount of
6 funding that was taken out of the budget because of
7 capital eligibility concerns. Thus far, just in this
8 fiscal year we've spent additional funding on just
9 perimeter fencing projects and other safety and
10 security projects. DC Doherty has a much more
11 storied understanding of what that might be.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: Good
13 morning. Deputy Commissioner Kevin Doherty,
14 Facilities, Maintenance Repair Division. For- as the
15 Commissioner spoke to, we've had to do emergency
16 repairs for not just the steam tunnel, the steam
17 tunnel remediation which we had to replace or repair
18 segments of the steam line that supplies several
19 buildings, meaning GRVC, RMSC, RNDC. This all on top
20 of that, we've had to repairs, emergency repairs, to-
21 for generators. We had a power outage in late this
year due to salt remediation that we had to acquire
emergency generators to bring the island back on, and
doors. Since 2019, we've been installing doors on a
regular basis.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Since 2019,
3 the Department of Correction has been funding door
4 replacements throughout the facilities. In this
5 fiscal year 23 Preliminary Budget \$12 million was
6 transferred within the Department for a cell door
7 emergency. In the fiscal year 23 adopted plan, \$15
8 million was added in fiscal year 23 and \$10 million
9 in fiscal year 24 for cell door upgrades.

10 Additionally, the Department of Design and
11 Construction budget in fiscal year 23 included \$10
12 million for a cell door project. Can you confirm
13 that all of the cell doors are now in working order
14 with doors that lock and stay locked, or are
15 additional funds needed?

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: Just a
17 quick clarifying point, since 2019 we were using
18 capital funding to repair doors. Since they became
19 capital ineligible, we then had to shift to expense.
20 So, now we're using expense funding to cover our door
21 replacements.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: As far as
19 the installations of the doors, so the door in 23 and
20 24 were directly for RNDC location, and those doors
21 have been installed 100 percent, and they all

1
2 function correctly. For all locations that have
3 installed since then, a lot- we- OBCC. We have
4 installed for the SMU unit, a lot in RMSC. every
5 location that we have installed these has been a
6 positive, not just for the staff, also the
7 population. We have not had issues with the
8 converted doors.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: But I'm
10 taking from what you're saying or how you're saying
11 it, that there's some doors that still require
12 attention.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: Yes, yes.
14 There's- we-

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: [interposing]
16 So, additional funds would be needed for those doors.

17 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Yes. I think the
18 tota- and correct me- I think the total number of
19 doors throughout the Department that need to be
20 upgraded is about 2,100. We've done about 30
21 percent.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: Yeah, so
the total count on the doors left to be fully
converted for the entire island is 2,889 doors. To

1
2 date, we have installed 1,439 doors that roughly
3 gives us a percentage of completion of 33 percent.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Is additional
5 funds required for the doors?

6 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: We have- right
7 now, we have additional funding in the expense budget
8 to do 114 doors?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: 141.

10 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: 141 doors a year.
11 So, it would take us 10 years, 12 years to replace
12 all the doors.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And have you
14 been able to fund any capital projects through DCAS?

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: Yes.
16 Usually anything that is non-facility-based, right,
17 we can use capital funding to- for repair and
18 replacement in kind. There have been projects that
19 DCAS has certified that they will use at least five
20 years after the asset it has been completed. So,
21 yes, there are some projects that we have.

COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: And those
projects- just, those projects are usually IT-related
projects, not the infrastructure like the doors.

1
2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: Usually,
3 those projects have to do with infrastructure, like
4 island infrastructure and remediation projects that
5 are capital eligible. DCAS does not need to certify
6 IT projects.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: How much
8 funding is needed to repair all the remaining doors
9 in this upcoming fiscal year?

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: We could
11 get back to you on that.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And a point
13 of clarification, why can't DCAS co-certify the IT
14 projects?

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: It's not
16 that they can't. They don't need to. Because the IT
17 projects are going to be used once the facilities are
18 online. They'll be used by the Department. They
19 will not be used by DCAS. DCAS can only co-certify
20 that they- what will be left behind.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: In the fiscal
22 2026 Preliminary Plan, the Department of Correction
23 received a \$2.5 million increase for cell door
24 replacements at GRVC and Resh [sp?]. Has that
25 project been completed?

1
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DOHERTY: By the
3 closure of fiscal year 26, yes, the GRVC location as
4 well as the other location will be completed. So,
5 for the \$2.5 million doors we were able to procure
6 141 doors, door systems.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I
8 next want to turn to the borough-based jails. There
9 were minimal changes in the capital commitment plan
10 for the new jail facilities. Does this indicate that
11 the facilities are on track to meet the deadlines
12 that have been reported by the administration?

13 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: This
14 administration and the Department is committed to the
15 borough-based jail system and closing Rikers. We are
16 in constant communication with City Hall and Law
17 about this project.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Is there a
19 plan to reduce the budgeted headcount for officers
20 once the population is lower and the borough-based
21 jails are open?

COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: We have not
engaged in that conversation. Right now, the focus
is preparing the Department for the future which
means focusing on safety. We have our approved

1 headcount. We know how many people can retire. So
2 we're really focusing on recruitment and working with
3 our partners on population reduction in preparation
4 for the borough-based jails.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Local Law 140
6 of 2025 requires the Department of Correction to
7 appoint a person dedicated full-time to closing
8 Rikers and transitioning to borough-based jails. As
9 of March 13th, the Department issued a job posting
10 for this coordinator position. Is that person
11 dedicated full-time now? Excuse me. Is that person
12 in place now?

13 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER EGAN: Hi,
14 Margaret Egan, First Deputy Commissioner. We're
15 still going through that hiring process. So, we will
16 bring on an Executive Director for the borough-based
17 jail plan. That person will be solely dedicated to
18 moving this project forward, and moving this forward
19 in light of the values that the Commissioner outlined
20 and in partnership with you, with City Hall, with our
21 provider partners. As the Commissioner said, in
light of this being a citywide project and not just a
DOC project.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
3 that. And do you expect- do you know when to expect
4 the appointment of this person?

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER EGAN: Our hope
6 would be, I think, in the next month or so.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. The
8 same Local Law I'm talking about also requires that
9 the Department by May 1st, 2026 present a report to
10 the Council with recommendations by any reforms
11 relating to staff recruitment, development,
12 retention, safety, and security within jails and
13 department organizations and organizational culture
14 to improve conditions for Department staff and those
15 who are in custody. Is the Department on pace to
16 provide that report by May 1st?

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER EGAN: I believe
18 we are on pace to provide that report. What I would
19 say is that will then be an ongoing process, again,
20 in order to develop sustainable plans to make sure
21 that the Department and the borough-based jails live
into the long-term sustainable values that we are all
outlining. That report is just a first step.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And has the
3 Department transferred any land parcels over to DCAS
4 per Local Law 16 of 2021 in the last year?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOYD: No, we have
6 not transferred any land as of yet, but that's
7 something we're going to be discussing with City Hall
8 on next steps.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Has the
10 Department been in communication with the Rikers
11 Island Advisory Committee?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOYD: Yes, we have
13 participated in recent meetings with the Rikers
14 Island Advisory Committee.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And have they
16 been able to tour the land parcels on the island?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOYD: Yes, I recall
18 they've toured the island twice in the last couple
19 years.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
21 I'm going to come back with questions, and I'm going
to pause to allow my colleagues to ask. We've also
been joined with Finance Chair Lee, and we will start
with her with questions, and then we'll go to Council
Member Cabán.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hi. I will be very
3 quick. Hello. Good to see you, Commissioner. Last
4 time I saw you was in a different role, but it's
5 great to see you here. So, really, really quickly,
6 just going into- who at DOC was appointed as the
7 Chief Savings Officer? Okay, perfect. And so I know
8 the reports were due last Friday, so we're looking
9 forward to seeing those. And were there any areas,
10 if you can share at all, of underspending at DOC and
11 what effects would reductions have on the agency and
12 what areas and services would be most affected?

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: We- those
14 savings proposals are still being assessed by both
15 OMB and City Hall, but the areas that we really
16 focused on were cost deferrals, in-sourcing wherever
17 possible, contractual efficiencies where we could
18 find them, any sort of vendor negotiations if
19 applicable, and very targeted cancellations. But one
20 thing that we made very clear is that we did not want
21 to cut cost at the expense of the safety and security
of not just individuals in our care and custody, but
also our uniform [inaudible].

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Totally agreed,
because that's one thing that on the Council side we

1
2 definitely don't want to see as well as the sacrifice
3 in the services. So, thank you for that. And then
4 the number of contracts I see here remain flat.
5 There were some slight increase in contractual
6 services. I'm guessing is that due mostly due to
7 increase in cost, or if you could speak to that a
8 little bit?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR:

8 Predominantly, yes, it was due to increases in costs.
9 And as we mentioned earlier, for the- not just the
10 safety, but also ensuring that the island is safe and
11 the conditions on the island are in state of good
12 repair. So, it's mostly facility maintenance and
13 repair.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. Yeah, because
14 the maintenance and repair went up quite a bit and
15 contractual went up slightly, so, okay. And then in
16 terms of the vacancy rate for headcount, I know that
17 in January- as of January it was about 11 percent,
18 and so how has that been going? Are you still
19 subject for the two-for-one and do you anticipate? I
20 know you were speaking about it a little bit as I
21 walked in. So, just wondering if you could go into
that a little?

1
2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: When you
3 say vacancy rate at 11 percent, I'm guessing you're
4 meaning civilian vacancy rate?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: For the headcount.

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: For the
7 headcount.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah.

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: So, the
10 civilian vacancy rate has been approximately 12, and
11 it's been steady-

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: [interposing] Okay.

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: for the
14 last two or three years for the department-wide
15 vacancy rate is 18 percent.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. So, the
17 full-time positions that are budgeted, the 1,746, is
18 that including both?

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: 1,700-
20 about, 1,700- no, that's just civilians.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, just
22 civilians, okay, perfect. Thank you for clarifying
23 that. And then has the DOC applied for the
24 Comptroller's directive 10 waiver for any capital
25 projects in the last year?

1
2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: So, I
3 mean, I alluded to this earlier-

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: [interposing] Right.

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: Directive
6 10 waivers are only required in the case that DCAS
7 cannot co-certify a project, right? So, as of last
8 fiscal year, the only project that applied was one
9 program [inaudible] fencing project. It was for
10 security and safety. This is not something that DCAS
11 can co-certify. Therefore, we reached out to the
12 Comptroller's Office to obtain a waiver. That waiver
13 was denied.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: It was what?

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: It was
16 denied.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Oh, okay.

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: Right.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Did they have a
20 reason?

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: They said
they do not. I mean, they don't waive directive 10
requirements.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

1
2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: So, that
3 was one of the costs that was deferred over to the
4 expense budget instead.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Got it, okay. And
6 then I see in terms of new needs, it went down
7 significantly. So in FY26, \$187 and then in FY27
8 it's only \$4.3. Is it because you haven't included
9 some of the funds that are going to be added at
10 adoption, or what's the reasoning for the decrease?

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: Sorry,
12 can you clarify what numbers you're looking at when
13 you say needs specifically?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah, yeah. In the
15 Preliminary Plan changes for new needs, in FY27 it
16 was \$187 million and then in FY27 it's at \$4.3 which
17 is a pretty significant drop. So, I was just
18 wondering. Because I'm assuming that does not mean
19 that you have everything you need.

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: Well, we
21 work very closely with our OMB partners to ensure
that we received that our needs are met, and
obviously they have a very difficult job of balancing
the city's budget. Although we are in

1
2 communications, sometimes needs are deferred to- you
3 know, this is just the first plan cycle.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right.

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: And in
6 subsequent plan cycles, those needs will be
7 reassessed and readdressed.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Great. So, I guess
9 my question is do we see- or are we going to see an
10 increase in that in the Exec and Adoption?

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: We're
12 still assessing. We can't-

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. Okay,
14 perfect. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
16 Chair. Next, we'll have Council Member Cabán
17 followed by Council Member Narcisse.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you. Thanks
19 for being here today. I want to start off with some
20 numbers. How many uniformed officers are currently
21 included in DOC's Preliminary Budget?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR:
Approximately 5,600.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Okay. And of
those, how many officers are signed to posts in

1 housing units versus posts that require little or no
2 contact with the incarcerated population?

3 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: I would ask the
4 Chief of the Department to answer that.

5 CHIEF REMBERT: Good morning. Sherrieann
6 Rembert, Chief of Department. Can you please repeat
7 the question, please?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Yes. How many
9 officers are assigned to posts in housing units,
10 versus how many officers are assigned to posts that
11 require little to no contact with the incarceration
12 population?

13 CHIEF REMBERT: Well, that's kind of like
14 a difficult question, and I'll tell you why it is.
15 It's because we calculated as a staff that's needed
16 per facility per area. So, on an average every day,
17 we would need- we have 2,900 posts. So, on that
18 post, we would need app on or about 3,800 members of
19 service per day.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Right, but the
21 breakdowns of the posts, right? Like, some people
are posted in the bubble. Some people are posted
directly on the floor in a housing unit versus who is
posted in a different kind of position that doesn't

1
2 require much contact with the incarcerated
3 population.

4 CHIEF REMBERT: So, 3,800 people plus
5 our- inside our facilities which includes our court
6 system as well as a hospital prison ward in our
7 facilities. Outside of that, I have to give you the
8 count for the headquarters count, and I do not have
9 that headquarters count.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: So, could you
11 follow up with a breakdown-

12 CHIEF REMBERT: [interposing] Absolutely.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: of that? That
14 would be great. And then, how many officers are
15 working on therapeutic and re-entry programming for
16 incarcerated folks, and how many civilians are
17 working on therapeutic and reentry programming for
18 incarcerated folks?

19 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: DC Colon can give
20 you the programming.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER COLON: Hello. So,
the Division of Programs has about 220 active
non-uniformed staff members that are providing
programs and services to people in custody. We have

1
2 30 officers approximately that are assigned to
3 "headquarters programs," but what that means is that
4 they support programs like educational services,
5 horticultural services. So, they're actually in-
6 they're working directly with people who are in
7 custody and in our care. They're not just sitting
8 somewhere else not working with people in custody.
9 They're just in specialized units that aren't
10 necessarily assigned to the literal jails. Now,
11 within the jails, there's about 117 uniformed members
12 of service who are assigned to provide services like
13 escorting people in custody to a chapel or to a
14 mosque for religious services or who are on a post
15 like Law Library who are providing notary services
16 and also working directly with our legal coordinators
17 in our law libraries.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: So you include
16 folks who are doing- moving people from one area to
17 another as being a uniform officer that's working on
18 the programming. Is there a way to separate that
19 out? Basically, what I'm interested in is like the
20 active provision of the service or program. How many
21 are uniformed folks providing that with the person,
not moving them from place to place, and how many are

1
2 civilians? And you answered the civilian questions,
3 but I'm curious if we can get a little bit more
4 granular with the uniformed number?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER COLON: Yeah, you
6 know, it's a little hard to say, and I'll say it this
7 way- I would- I think we can foundationally say that
8 the 30 officers who are assigned to directly my
9 purview are absolutely supporting the rehabilitative
10 services and programs with people in custody.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Okay.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER COLON: The 117 I
13 would have to come back and break down, because it
14 does get- it gets- that's where it gets complicated,
15 because I would say like-

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: [interposing]
17 Understood.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER COLON: one of our
19 Law Library officers, they are providing notary
20 services to people in custody. They are working with
21 people in custody directly to help them navigate the
kiosks alongside our legal coordinators-

COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: [interposing]
Right.

1
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER COLON: but they are
3 also escorting.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Got it. Thank
5 you. Can- how many officers and civilians are
6 assigned to facilities that are not currently housing
7 any incarcerated people? Assuming that's back this
8 way.

9 CHIEF REMBERT: One moment, please.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Sure.

11 CHIEF REMBERT: Are you referring to
12 AMKC, that is only deal with-

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: [interposing] I'm
14 referring to any facility. So, AMKC or otherwise
15 where there currently are not incarcerated people
16 housed. So, I want to know how many uniformed
17 officers there are in those facilities and how many
18 civilians are assigned to those facilities, and then
19 I'd like to know why are staff being assigned to
20 those facilities, period? Like, what's happening
21 there?

22 CHIEF REMBERT: AMKC have roughly 50
23 people assigned, uniformed people assigned, and that
24 is our production kitchen, AMKC. Then you have CID.
25 That's correction [inaudible] the lunch [sic] side

1
2 about seven people, including a captain that deals
3 with our sheets and blankets and other linen that is
4 required for people in custody to have.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Anybody else?

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm sorry.

7 Do we have the answer for the Council Member? She-

8 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: [interposing] No,
9 she's answering the question.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: I'm just wondering
11 if there's- so you said the kitchen staff for food
12 production and laundry services are- anybody else
13 working in those facilities where people aren't being
14 housed?

15 CHIEF REMBERT: Yes. Then you have our
16 Correction Intelligence Bureau will have
17 approximately on or about 40 people assigned there.
18 They do our Correction Intelligence Bureau. They
19 give us information concerning our persons in
20 custody, and they work our person in custody, but
21 there's no person in custody inside the office with
them.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Got it. Thank
you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

Next, we'll hear from Council Member Narcisse followed by Council Member Restler.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Commissioner, and thank you for coming with all your leadership to help us out. And I realize that you have a bold vision for our Rikers and making sure that people are in rehabilitation and have a chance to go back to life and that is very pleasing to my ears. Being a reentry nurse, I'm going to go to my youth. How is the Department addressing the needs of the youngest and oldest people in custody? The needs of 18 to 25 years old are very different from the needs of those 60s and up. What type of accommodation is providing for them and what training is provided to officers to address the needs of older adults and recognize sign of aging, dementia, limitation on activities, and daily living?

COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Well, thank you for your question and thank you for your service. I would ask DC Colon to respond to that question.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER COLON: Thank you. Again, Nell Colon. So, for- I'm going to start with

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2 working with our youngest folks who are in custody
3 which are 18 to 21, our emerging adult population,
4 and we have a variety of strategies that do support
5 the emerging adult population, and we also have
6 training specifically dedicated to working with an
7 emerging adult population in our correctional
8 custody. And that training is actually something
9 that was developed in collaboration with the Nunez
10 monitoring team and is deployed specifically
11 associated with our action plan for the emerging
12 adult population, really discussing what it means for
13 social development, what it means for cognitive
14 development, where somebody might be if they're
15 experienced trauma and they're a young person and in
16 they're in our custody. And so that training series
17 is really to support officers and non-uniform staff
18 with working with young people. With that, though,
19 some of our strategies include ensuring that they
20 have access to school. It also ensures that people
21 have access to a variety of different vocational
programs, both certificates and certifications. It
ensures that people have access to counseling and
soft skill programs, and that they're working with
nonprofit providers, not just DOC internal staff,

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2 that specializing in supporting an emerging adult
3 population. Now, when it moves on to our elder
4 population and our custody, and I use that word elder
5 because some may not even coin some of the people as
6 elder who we kind of categorize into this group, but
7 with our elder population we do partner with the
8 Osborne Association. So, they have what's called the
9 Elder Reentry Initiative, and they have staff who
10 specifically come and work in some of our cohorted
11 housing units that do happen to house most of people
12 who are 55+. So that's why I use the elder as a
13 loose term in that sense. But that they are
14 providing them with targeted reentry support,
15 including social services and referrals for when they
16 leave and go back to the community, housing referrals
17 as well. And then they're providing them with a
18 variety of different groups and programs that are
19 specific to what their needs are. That being said,
20 as for training with uniformed staff on working with
21 people who are 55+ or how we've cohorted them, we
currently do not have- that I'm aware of- a training
under the branch of the Division of Programs or that
we're supporting with the Osborn Association, but we
will take that feedback and look into it. Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you.

Appreciate that. New York City DOC remains under the Federal Nunez Consent Decree stemming from findings of excessive and unconstitutional use of force in city jails. The most recent monitor report in January 2026 highlights persistent compliance challenges including gaps in accountability, supervision, and the Department's ability to proactively identify high-risk staff behavior. The report also flags the need for stronger earlier intervention capabilities and approve use of data to drive reform. What specific investment in FY26 are directly tied to achieving compliance under the Nunez Consent Decree, and has the Department evaluated the use of predictive early intervention or analytics tools to support those outcomes? Two, why does the current capital include minimal investment in data systems and early intervention technology despite ongoing compliance challenges? And is the Department considering improving solutions used in other consent decree jurisdictions?

COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Thank you for that question. I'll start it- start the response and then turn it over to DC Conway. This administration,

1
2 the mayor, and this new leadership team is absolutely
3 focused on the safety of our jails, the safety of our
4 staff and the safety of the people in our care. What
5 we've had for decades is a system where hurt people
6 hurt people. It is a system that has perpetuated the
7 trauma of the people in our care, and my charge and
8 my focus is making sure that we create a system that
9 supports those members of service who work in the
10 department and the people in our care. And there's a
11 number of strategies that we'll be laying out to do
12 that. Using data is one. Making sure we're training
13 and supporting staff, making sure that people in our
14 care have something to hold onto instead of something
15 to, you know,-- that sort of increases the likelihood
16 of fights. So, there's a number of things that we're
17 doing, and my First Deputy Commissioner and I and
18 this leadership team is going to be focusing on the
19 things necessary not only to come into compliance
20 with Nunez. That's the legal agreement we have. We
21 can do better than that, and we will do better than
that. I'll turn it over to GC Conroy to talk more
specifically.

GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: I think the
Commissioner answered pretty robustly there, but I

1
2 would also add that we do have ongoing and consistent
3 conversations with the monitor about implementing
4 such things. One of the things that they've been
5 very consistent on is the more robust use of an early
6 intervention system. I've discussed that with the
7 Commissioner. Though, I wouldn't say it at the
8 moment. We have contemplated or looked into
9 technology in the sense that you did, but it's
10 certainly something that we would consider and look
11 into, though I think we've had some recent
12 restructuring and I think we'll continue to look into
13 what we contemplate for the early intervention. I do
14 think- when you asked about other jurisdiction and
15 consent decrees, you know, the onboarding of
16 Remediation Manager presents a unique opportunity
17 here, because you not only have the monitor but now
18 the Remediation Manager and the Commissioner. So
19 you're talking about kind of a- you know, at least
20 two new entities into the system to bring new ideas
21 and more robust thoughts into what we could implement
and how we will do so. So, I anticipate, you know,
you'll see some changes by the end of this next year.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Don't forget
the staffing because they complain a lot about the

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2 hours, and I'm so happy you said you're going to work
3 on that. And I appreciate your bold visions. Thank
4 you, Chair, and thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

6 Next we'll hear from Council Member Brewer followed
7 by Council Member Morano.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
9 much. I heard that the women at Rosie's had a great
10 time with you and were very pleased that you were
11 able to explain to them that they could be like you
12 in the future. So, I heard from many sources. You
13 can probably figure them out. Bellevue, what's the
14 status and how long will it take? I know you need CO
15 officers? I didn't know the cost for that, and I was
16 just wondering the update on the timing? Having been
17 there a couple of times and seen nice space and
18 nobody there.

19 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: I'm actually
20 scheduled to go there tomorrow. Bellevue is a
21 priority for us. The Bellevue outposted beds is a
priority. The borough-based jails is a priority. So
we're working with this administration and law and
our partners at Correctional Health Services to make

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2 sure that we open up those beds. Those beds have
3 been on the runway for far too long.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm aware.

5 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Far too long.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, what's the
7 timing, though, do you think? Because the CO
8 officers need it, then you may not have enough, and I
9 think I know the back story, but how we going to
solve it, Bellevue?

10 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: I'm working with
11 my leadership team. I'm working with this
12 administration to make sure that we open it as
13 quickly as possible. What I've asked my leadership
14 team is to help me get to yes, right? We face
15 challenges on staffing. We face challenges in
multiple aspects of our work. I believe we can get to
yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, soon,
17 Commissioner.

18 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: And I'm working
19 with City Hall to do that.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: All right. Just-
21 I trust you. Others have said the same thing and

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2 nothing happened, but we trust you just so you know.
3 I've been through this, all of it. Can you walk
4 through the number of people and their roles under
5 the Executive Director of Visiting Operations? I
6 think- and a while ago you said- not you, but DOC
7 said that you put in for 12 people. What's going on
8 with the individuals working in this area, and are
9 you planning to prioritize filling out this team.
10 Because I think visiting is important. We've talked
11 about this in the past.

12 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Absolutely,
13 visiting is important. I'll turn it over to DC Boyd
14 in a minute. But let me say visiting is extremely
15 important for me. I was on the visit work group with
16 Tanya Krupt [sp?] from Osborn Association and I
17 remember my time on the island when my father came to
18 visit me. He came one time and I asked him never to
19 come back again. All the way from the Bronx, it took
20 him all day to come visit me for one hour, and I
21 didn't believe that that was fair. He did nothing,
but yet, he paid the price to come see me. And so
visiting for me is a personal commitment to make sure
that the people in our care get access to their

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2 visitors. Looking at the- how the process works so
3 people that come feel valued and that they can see
4 their loved ones, and we're going to do what we need
5 to do is make sure that that's a reality for every
6 visitor.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: As you know, in
8 my previous role as head of Oversight and
9 Investigation, we did a study on this topic. So, we
10 do know that it's challenging, but we'd love to have
11 them improved. Go ahead.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOYD: Hi, Council
13 Member.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Hello, Mr. James
15 Boyd.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOYD: So, the
17 Executive Director for Visit Operation has started.
18 She is knee-deep in this work and assessing the work.
19 We are trying to assess internally how we can
20 probably self-fund the new needs for staffing, but
21 she is on-site. She is doing the work. We do
appreciate the report that you released, and just
want you to know that we have accepted some of those
recommendations, including the benches and putting up

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2 additional signage, but that- the glass is half-full
3 and so there's more to do there. We are also
4 creating dashboards and, you know, reports to help us
5 measure the success, right? We can't expect to
6 improve anything if you're not measuring it. And
7 what we've seen over the last couple of months is a
8 reduction, a modest reduction in wait times, right?
9 These reports keeps us honest, right, internally. It
10 makes sure that we're opening on time and make sure
11 we're moving people through the process. And what we
12 saw over the last couple of months is the- any delays
13 of opening visits reduced from an hour and a half to
14 now just a couple of minutes. And so we're doing our
15 part by creating some really significant dashboards
16 led by operations research team, but we're also
17 excited that there's more work we can do and that we
18 will do, and this Executive Director is going to lead
19 that effort.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, is she going
18 to have a staff of 12 people, or it hasn't been built
19 out yet, or what's the status?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOYD: It hasn't been
21 built out yet. I think that will be her initial

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2 staffing levels. I think as we anticipate
3 on-boarding or implementing an online visiting
4 scheduling system for family visits, she's definitely
5 going to need those resources, but I think those 12
6 people will be a starting point, because I think the
7 overall arching goal is to consolidate a lot of the
8 visit operations under this ED.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, I
9 appreciate that. One other question is just buses to
10 court. We also did a study on that and ONI, and I
11 wanted to know just in terms of getting people there
12 on time, do you have an evaluation as to whether that
13 happened? It's really important, as we all know, to
14 get to court. And so what's the status, if there is
15 any improvement or not, and just the cost of doing
16 that, of course?

16 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: We're- I don't
17 know the cost specifically, Council Member, but we
18 are very happy to say that our court productions are
19 at 99 percent. So, you know, it's something that we
20 take and have taken very seriously, you know, to move
21 these cases forward. So, that's our number. I don't

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2 have a cost breakdown for that, but I mean, that's
3 something if you would like we could follow up on.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I remember
5 we heard 99 percent in the past, but it doesn't
6 necessarily tag with the folks' experience, because
7 you know, you- 99 percent is what kind of
8 denominator? In other words, every single person, 99
9 percent of the people who have a court date get there
10 on time, I'm- I don't know. What is the 99 percent
based on?

11 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: That is anyone
12 who has a scheduled court production, a court
13 appearance. 99 percent of the people that have that
14 court appearance are brought to their court
appearance.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Go ahead. I'm
18 sorry.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No, I was
going to say sorry. If you want I can put you on-

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing]
21 Second round. Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

3 Alright, next we'll hear from Council Member Morano
4 followed by Council Member Restler.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you, Chair.

6 Thank you, Commissioner, for your testimony.

7 Obviously, a lot of folks have highlighted what we're
8 seeing in terms of staffing, and we're hearing that
9 headcount is down significantly by some estimates as
10 much as 40 percent. Can you walk us through your
11 concrete plan to rebuild staffing levels, and whether
12 officers are still being required to work extended or
13 triple shifts, even if only for short periods?14 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Yeah. Thank you
15 for that question. I think recruitment starts with
16 safety. I think the reputation that the Department
17 has over decades have really deterred people from
18 thinking about Corrections as a career. And part of
19 what we need to do is focus on safety. The second
20 part we need to do is really develop recruitment
21 strategies and retention strategies. As I said in my
testimony, 800 people are eligible for retirement
today. So, one of the things we always ask is how do
we get people to stay? When we ought to be asking

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2 those 800 people, what's keeping you here? And we
3 ought to be doing more of that, right? And so being
4 able to focus on retention, because about 88 percent
5 of the people who are eligible for retirement,
6 retire. So, how can we keep those folks, and how do
7 we recruit so that we can have adequate staffing.
8 And I think it starts with safety, and it starts with
9 making sure that our officers feel heard and valued
10 and appreciated. And as I said, we have a system
11 that has for far too long isolated, demonized and
12 traumatized everybody involved in that system.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: With facilities
14 operating around 92 percent capacity and ongoing
15 staffing shortages, are we currently operating at a
16 level that you'd consider safe both for officers and
17 detainees?

18 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Absolutely.
19 That's why as I said in my testimony, population
20 reduction is really important- working with this City
21 Council and our Alternatives to Incarceration
providers, working with our OCA, working with
District attorneys and judges. As I said, we don't
control who comes in, but we can do our part to make

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sure people are connected to services so that they don't come back. And so population reduction is a key to that particular strategy, and we're going to be doing that.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: With punitive segregation largely eliminated, what tools do you have to manage individuals who assault Correction Officers or other detainees, and how do you ensure safety after those incidents occur?

COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Well, you know, we're going to- we put out a 45-day plan to come into compliance with Local Law 42. That planning and work is underway. It'll be over some times, but it's underway. And I think the way that we hold people accountable with the tools that we have, and the tools that we have is if someone assaults a staff or someone assaults someone in our care, we go through the courts. That results in an arrest. That results in prosecution and process of getting that case adjudicated. We need to separate people from that particular incident, and we're coming up with the strategies of how to do that so that people are held

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2 accountable, our staff is safe, and people in our
3 care is safe.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: The borough-based
5 jail system is designed for roughly 4,500 beds, while
6 current population levels are significantly higher.
7 How do we responsibly get from today's numbers to
8 that level without compromising public safety, and
9 what happens if the population exceeds capacity?

10 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Well, I think
11 what we have to do is work in partnership. This is,
12 as I said in my testimony, this isn't a DOC issue.
13 This is a New York City issue. And as Mayor Mamdani
14 has often said, his strategy is to use all of
15 government, and it's going to take all of government
16 to make sure that we safely reduce our population and
17 prepare for the borough-based jails. Our task as a
18 leadership team is to prepare for that transition, to
19 work with our partners, to increase the use of
20 supervised release where that's appropriate, to use
21 ATI diversion where that's appropriate, to use the
powers invested in me as Commissioner on 6A as
appropriate, work with our court administrators to
make sure cases are getting adjudicated in a timely

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2 fashion are all part of the strategy we need to do to
3 bring down population. So, it's not a DOC issue. It
4 is an all of us issue, and I look forward to that
5 partnership.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thanks very much.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Perfect
8 timing. Next we will hear from Council Member
9 Restler followed by Council Member Salaam.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so
11 much, Chair Brooks-Powers, and- hope that wasn't me.
12 Congratulations, Commissioner. It's good to see you
13 always. Thrilled to have you before us. Feels like
14 a- just a breath of fresh air and a new day for the
15 Department of Correction. I'm really excited for your
16 leadership and the change that you're going to help
17 usher in. It is urgently needed, as you know better
18 than all, and I want to congratulate First Deputy
19 Commissioner Egan. I've heard great things about you.
20 So, look forward to working with the whole team. A
21 few things I just wanted to focus on, and I'll- I'd
like to build on a little bit of what Council Member
Morano was asking. But before I do, just want to
check in on the therapeutic outpost units. This has

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3 been a big priority of mine for about seven years,
4 and Bellevue was supposed to open in 2022. It's
5 2026. Gale already asked? So, can- Gale asked about
6 Bellevue? Did you ask about North Central Bronx and
7 Woodhull as well? Alright, so Bellevue was answered.
8 I'll go to Gale for the updates there. North Central
9 Bronx and Woodhull are supposed to be under
10 construction already. They aren't. DOC's been- your
11 predecessors were entirely uncooperative on this, and
12 despite these being fully-funded projects did
13 absolutely nothing to move things forward. So what
14 is the status on these projects? I'm sure they're
15 priorities of yours. I want to understand how they're
16 going to get done.

17 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Thank you for
18 that, Council Member, and good to see you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Truly.

20 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: It is. It's a
21 priority for this administration and it's a priority
for this leadership team-

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]
Great.

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3 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: to bring those
4 beds online. It is an important component to
5 population reduction, safety, and making sure people
6 are in the right place to get the care that they need
7 and not in our facilities being detained. And so it
8 is a priority. I can't give you a specific date as to
9 when, but I can tell you it is absolutely a priority
10 for the mayoral administration and for my
11 administration to bring those beds online, and we're
12 working with Correctional Health partners to make
13 sure that that happens as quickly as possible.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Brilliant. What
15 I would ask is by the time you come back to us for
16 Exec, that we do have a timeline, right, so that when
17 we have this conversation again in 45-60 days, that
18 we do have a clear path forward. Understand that
19 you've only been there a few weeks and it's hard to
20 figure it all out in real time, but this is a main
21 priority and these are fully-funded projects we're
excited to have at DOC that's cooperative and
supportive of these efforts. I'd like to go back to
Council Member Morano's questions about population
reduction. And you have, you know, a deep expertise

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3 in this topic, understand well that this is not
4 narrowly in the purview of the Department of
5 Correction, but it's a citywide challenge. We need
6 to work with state stakeholders, providers, the
7 Council as well. Can you speak to, you know, A, how
8 you're planning to approach your 6A authority and
9 what opportunities there are to reduce the city
10 sentence population? My quick review of the data was
11 that when Mayor Adams took office in January of 2022,
12 just three percent of the population was
13 city-sentenced. Today, it's closer to eight percent
14 of the population is city-sentenced. Do you think
15 there's an opportunity for us to significantly reduce
16 the city's sentence population? And then secondly,
17 what are the investments that you think we should be
18 prioritizing as a city to further reduce the
19 population of supervised release in other ATI/ATD
20 programs? What are the things that you think are the
21 most important priorities for us as we move forward
on this budget?

COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Again, thank you
for that question. I think the use of 6A is a tool,
but the reality of it is we have 6,700 people- I

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2 think we have a little bit over 500 people who are
3 city-sentenced in our system. We do have a process
4 in place where everybody who comes into the system is
5 screened. The First Deputy Commissioner and I have
6 looked at that process and we are assessing what we
7 could do to create not one-off strategies, but a
8 systemic strategy that really allows us to move the
9 population, reduce the population based on 6A and
10 create a system that is sustainable. What I think
11 the city could do for investments, if you look at
12 who's in our system, I think we need to support
13 alternatives to incarceration, supervised release,
14 case processing where appropriate, and the most
15 important, access to drug treatment and housing.
16 When I was at Fortune, 25 percent of the people who
17 came through our door were unstably housed. We have
18 been growing- Fortune has been growing housing in
19 response to that urgent need. When people leave our
20 system and end up in the shelter and end up on the
21 street, they tend to end up back into our system.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yep.

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3 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: And so we need to
4 make the appropriate systems at those touchpoints to
5 make sure people have a place to land-

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]
7 That's right.

8 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: and they have
9 hope that life could be different for them. Because
10 people tend to learn how to live the life that
11 they've always lived until someone breathes life into
12 them. And we as a city have an opportunity to
13 breathe life into people when they leave our system.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I couldn't agree
15 with you more strongly. I think that for us to
16 achieve the population reduction that is necessary
17 for the borough-based jail plan to be successful,
18 it's going to require those investments. I think
19 that for us to achieve the population reduction that
20 is necessary for the borough-based jail plan to be
21 successful, its going to require those investments.
One of the real failures or short-comings of the
original borough-based jail plan was it mandated a
series of investments for one year. And it's just
not enough. We have to sustain it. And so there were

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2 a lot of really investment and initiatives in
3 population reduction, in supervised release in ATIs
4 and ATDs, in justice involved supportive housing in
5 the treatment that people need, it laid out the road
6 map, but for one year. And we need your help and
7 expertise and leadership to develop that plan with
8 the City Council for what are the investments we need
9 in this budget and in the next series of budgets to
10 sustain and achieve that population reduction so that
11 we can shrink that population, achieve the
12 borough-based jail plan and have a safer jail system
13 for all. And I am really looking forward to working
14 with you. And next time, I'm going to be asking more
15 about culture change, because I feel like we have
16 leadership at the agency now that's thinking about
17 how does a new DOC house and staff the borough-based
18 jails to ensure that we don't replicate the problem
19 on Rikers Island in our communities. So, thank you
20 and really excited to work together.

18 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Thank you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you,
20 Council Member. Text we'll hear from Council Member
21 Salaam, followed by Council Member Brewer.

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3 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Thank you and
4 good afternoon. Glad to hear the testimony and all
5 the great things that the Department is planning for
6 this population of people. I want to start off with
7 state ready population over growth and fiscal impact.
8 So, due to New York State Department of correction
9 staffing shortages, state readied individuals in DOC
10 custody increased from 103 to 622. It costs
11 approximately \$400,000 a year to incarcerate someone
12 on Rikers Island. Yet, the city has not received
13 reimbursements. What is the total cost of housing
14 state-ready individuals and has the city pursued
15 reimbursement from the state?

16 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: So, I can have our
17 GG respond to that. We've had, as you indicated, a
18 major problem, but I am really happy to report that
19 our state partners have been working in collaboration
20 with the Department to make sure that the people who
21 are state ready are going upstate. Our number
currently stand a little lower than 100 people
state-ready. And I watch that every single dya on my
cness report, and I'm seeing movement where the state
are take- they're taking people out of our

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2 jurisdiction which is a good thing. I'll turn it
3 over to the GC.

4 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: yeah. To echo
5 what the Commissioner said, we're happy that the
6 cadence of transfers is what it was pre-strike. So,
7 you know, we work with our partners upstate on a
8 number of these things to make sure that we don't
9 have a backlog like we did, because our population
10 increased by about 20 percent. I will ask our AC of
11 Finance to answer your question regarding the cost
12 and the recouping of funds.

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: Thank you
14 for the question. I am happy to announce that or to
15 say that we do receive recoupment from the state on a
16 quarterly basis for all of the state-ready
17 individuals who are in our care for more than 10
18 days. So, every quarter we correspond with the state.
19 The state sends us a list and then we do get
20 reimbursed for those and those reimbursements happen
21 on the PS side.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Moving to
borough-based jails capital cost overrun. The
borough-based jails project was originally estimated

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2 at \$8 million and is now over- now projected at over
3 \$11- I'm sorry, \$8 billion and is now projected at
4 over \$11.47 billion, a 46 percent cost increase.

5 What is driving these costs increase, and is there
6 risk of further delays or overrun?

7 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: I can tell you
8 that the mayoral administration and this department
9 is committed to opening the borough-based jails and
10 closing Rikers Island. As I said in my testimony and
11 to questions asked earlier, the infrastructure on
12 Rikers Island is not conducive to the health and
13 safety of those who are staff and those who are in
14 our care. The cost increase I think is natural
15 response to the increase in the cost of living and
16 the increase in the cost of materials. When it takes
17 you as long as it's taken the city to build the
18 borough-based jails, you're going to have cost
19 increase. So, I believe that those cost increase
20 projections are based on increase in materials.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: And regarding the
22 mental health population growth, given chronic
23 understaffing, how is DOC providing adequate mental

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2 health care and reducing the population of
3 incarcerated persons with mental illness?

4 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Yeah, this is
5 where we work very closely with our partners,
6 Correctional Health Services, to make sure that
7 people get access to those services and make sure
8 that they're appropriately cared for. And I'm
9 thrilled to be working with Patsy Yang [sp?] and her
10 team who care deeply about the mental health and
11 health care of those in our care, and so we work with
12 our partners to make sure that happens.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: And lastly,
14 violence in custody escalation. While the first four
15 months in fiscal year 26 has shown a 14 percent
16 decrease in violence, the 10-year trend is alarming.
17 What structural changes in staffing, training, and
18 facility operations is DOC implementing to reverse
19 this decades-long trend? And given the ongoing
20 violence and security challenges on Rikers Island,
21 how can DOC reduce security staffing while
maintaining staff operations- safe operations?

COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: As I said
earlier, I think it's a number of strategies,

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2 population reduction, recruitment, making sure that
3 we have adequate staffing to cover the increase in
4 population, making sure programs are embedded in our
5 day-to-day operations. We have our new providers,
6 our providers coming back to be able to do that, to
7 help make sure people are connected to services, and
8 it's creating a model that creates safety for
9 officers and safety for the people in our care, and
10 that means giving people something to hold onto. We
11 need to express the value and concern we have for our
12 officers, and we need to do the same thing for the
13 people in our care. And I think- you know, I use
14 this analogy. A rising tide lifts all boats, and
15 this is a moment where we need to make sure the tide
16 is rising so that officers feel valued and safe and
17 the people in our care are safe and connected to
18 services so that they don't have- so they don't come
19 back. So, it's not a quick fix. It's not a one
20 strategy, it's multiple strategy, and as Mayor
21 Mamdani always says, use an all of government to fix
it.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
Council Member Brewer?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
much, Chair. So, the cell doors, I understood it was
\$38 million total. It seems to me that's such a
priority. But I was able once with some I would say
Chromebooks I think it was at DoE to go around
District- Directive 10. You have to figure out a way
to go around that. What are you doing? I don't
understand. This is like a crisis. To- capital would
be much easier than trying to get a little bit.

COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: It's a priority.
It's a priority of the mayoral administration and
it's a priority of this administration. We
appreciate working with our partners at OMB to put
some baseline funding in to fix the doors.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, but that's
an expense.

COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: But it's an
ongoing conversation with this administration. I'm
specifically-

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3 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, but you are
4 this administration.

5 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: I'm specifically-
6 and I'm saying the mayoral administration that I'm
7 working with-

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing]
9 Okay.

10 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: to make sure that
11 the doors are a priority.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, but I hope
13 that maybe with this committee and all of us, we
14 could push to have this become capital, because you
15 are never going to get it with the expense.

16 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Yes.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Is it \$38
18 million, is that the general number for the doors-
19 the cell doors to be fixed? That's the number I've
20 heard.

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: It's- I
22 don't want to mispeak, so we're going to have to get
23 back to you with the exact number, but-

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It's a big
25 number.

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2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: It's a big
3 number.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Number
5 two, quickly, food. James Boyd knows I'm interested
6 in food. So, we met with the wonderful staff and we
7 also learned that it is possible to do more in terms
8 of buying from the farmers. I get told I'm, you know,
9 farm-to-table or something. I'll take that. I don't
10 care. But the issue is, I assume that it could be
11 the same cost. We need small potatoes, not large
12 ones. I got the whole list. What are we doing, and
13 is it the- I don't think it's the cost factor. I
14 think it's a policy factor, to improve fresh fruits
15 and vegetables at Rikers, because it helps people's
16 mental health, too?

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: Hi,
18 Council Member. We can follow up. We actually have
19 a new leader overseeing our Nutritional Services
20 Division, and we can follow up with an update on
21 that.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. A little
salt would be nice, just a little. Then just
finally, just really quickly, programs- so I know you

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2 talked a lot about it. I know, Commissioner, you have
3 lots of great ideas, but there is enough funding
4 without getting into the specifics and some of the
5 questions alluded to that, to do more programming so
6 that people have something to- as you said, to look
7 forward to internally and then outside. Does
8 programming have to be more- when I go there, I just
9 see a lot of people not in a program.

10 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Well, I'm
11 thankful that we have the providers coming back in
12 and we'll be providing services throughout the
13 Department. I'm thankful for that. But as we move
14 forward and we continue to build out the plans of the
15 future, we will make- we'll be assessing what else do
16 we need. Our bottom line in terms of the
17 borough-based jails, reducing population, what we can
18 do while people are in our care is make sure people
19 have access to services. Not only does it provide
20 hope and possibility for people, it provides people
21 continuity so when they leave us as everyone will
leave us one way either to the community or to the
state or some other way, they will be leaving us. We

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2 have control over when they leave and how they leave
3 and where they leave to.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. So, it's-
5 you'll work to see the funding and the
6 appropriateness of programming in a more robust- I'm
7 supportive of borough-based jails. I took a lot of
8 heat. Supported the one in Manhattan, as Borough
9 President. My issue, though, is it doesn't have a
10 big kitchen. I assume you know that, and it doesn't
11 have a lot of outdoor space. Are you able to do
12 deal- or are you thinking about that in your
13 planning?

14 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Well, I was also
15 on the original design team, right, and so we came up
16 with design principles about light, movement and
17 access, right, and using design not as a strategy for
18 safety, but using a design that's centered on the
19 humanity of those who are in our care and those
20 staff, the staff we have. You know, you visited
21 Rikers. There's nothing about those facilities-

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] Many
times.

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3 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: that tells staff
4 that they're valued, they're appreciated, nothing
5 that tells the people in our care that. What we hope
6 with the borough-based jails system is that we can
7 use those design principles to make sure that the
8 people in those facilities feel valued.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Just make
10 sure the kitchen's not being enough yet in Manhattan,
11 just so you know, and I don't know how you're going
12 to draw with outdoor space. You're thinking about
13 that.

14 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Well, I need to
15 get briefed by DDC on the design.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I can tell you
17 those are two issues, so please check up.

18 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Okay, I will.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
20 much.

21 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Salt.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And salt,
even though salt is not too, you know, healthy. A
little bit of garlic powder. You know, y'all could

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3 get creative with some seasoning. You don't need
4 salt to season all the time. Okay, let's get back
5 into it. I'm going to pick up with my line of
6 questioning starting with case processing. Local Law
7 138 of 2025 requires the Department to install
8 technology to allow incarcerated people to review the
9 evidence against them. The Department has previously
10 testified that it was contracting with the program
11 called Lightning Law to do this which would be
12 installed on tablets. \$1 million was baseliend for
13 this program in fiscal year 26. What is the status of
14 Lightning Law installation and compliance with the
15 law?

16 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: We are in the
17 very final stages of dealing with technological and
18 just legal issues with Lightning Law. So, I
19 anticipate very, very soon- and Lightning Law, their
20 staff is coming to our facilities to start to train
21 our staff on its usage. So, we are at the finish
line on that, and I anticipate it'll be on the
tablets in short order.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Perfect.
Thank you for that. And is the \$1 million in funding

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2 still included in the budget, and if so, under what
3 budget line?

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: It is
5 currently included in the budget. Now, in terms of
6 budget line, it's under IT Division, but like- that's
7 where it rests.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. Thank
9 you for that. Video meetings and video court
10 appearances play a critical role in moving people's
11 cases forward and figuring out a re-entry plan that
12 works. When people do not make scheduled calls, that
13 prolongs their time in Rikers. Per the Preliminary
14 Mayor's Management Report, the Department gets 89
15 percent of people to video court appearances as
16 opposed to 99 percent who get to in-person court
17 appearances. The latter is, you know, a great
18 statistic, obviously. How often does the Department
19 produce people on time for video appointments with
20 attorneys?

21 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: So, I think
there's two different things we're talking about
here. So, we're talking about court productions. We
actually- that's the 89 percent that we're talking

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2 about on the video productions. Recent changes to
3 the criminal procedure law greatly expanded the types
4 of hearings that could be done virtually. In light
5 of that, we actually have a procurement out for an
6 expansion of our video kiosks to accommodate that.
7 So, I anticipate again in the coming year our goal
8 and our anticipation is that we will have a much more
9 robust production up in the universe of 99 percent or
10 higher where we are on the physical productions. But
11 also, we do have separate from the attorney visits
12 which we are working on robustly to improve on
13 scheduling and otherwise, we- separate from that, the
14 family visit productions are one of our highest
15 utilized. It's on Fridays, and what I understand to
16 be a very good system with the family visits on that.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm curious
16 if you could go a little deeper just to kind of
17 explain why going in front of the device is a lower
18 percentage hit rate versus having to like transport
19 someone to court?

19 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: My understanding
20 that we could follow up affirmatively are two issues.
21 One is the actual number of terminals we have which

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2 is what I'm talking about in the procurement, which
3 we're going to expand out on. And the second thing
4 is just technical issues. What I understand is
5 there's sometimes technical issues on both the court
6 side and our side at times which, I mean, we've all
7 experienced issues with Zoom or teams meetings. So,
8 my understanding is that's what accounts for that,
9 but we can certainly follow up and just confirm that
that's- my understanding is correct.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
11 that. How often does the Department produce people
12 on time for video appointments for mental health,
service provider or re-entry related assessments?

13 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: I'm going to ask
14 DC Boyd.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOYD: Yeah, I have
16 to check to see, but I don't- I'm not quite certain
17 if we track on that granular level, but I'm happy to
follow up.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. You
19 going to check now or you're going to get back to us
20 after?
21

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3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOYD: I can get back
4 to you, ma'am.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. What
6 are your plans to ensure people get to all the video
7 appointments on time? Like, how are you working
8 through those kinks?

9 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: As this process
10 kind of evolves, you know, and the productions
11 increase, it'll be much easier if we don't have as
12 many people going to court, and then we have the
13 video booths available so that we'll be able to
14 develop a system. I think right now what's happening
15 is the court system is kind of in evolution,
16 transitioning from what is customarily, you know,
17 in-person to a video system. So, again, as the staff
18 become available and our kiosks become more
19 abundantly available, we should see an improvement
20 just by naturally- you know, just easier to make
21 those productions.

22 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: But that's also
23 an opportunity for us to continue to assess, right?
24 And this is where we say all of government. If we're
25 seeing more and more people are being invited to do

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2 the video court hearings, we need to increase our
3 capacity as the GC said, making sure we have more
4 terminals, making sure we have officers available to
5 escort people to those terminals so that those cases
6 can get heard.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Yes, that was
8 going to be actually my follow-up question. Like, if
9 you're seeing a growing need, is the budget going to
10 reflect the need to invest more in that space to be
11 able to facilitate that. How many staff- I'm sorry.
12 Pivoting now to staffing an overtime. How many staff
13 does the Department employ or contract as bail
14 facilitators?

15 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Bail
16 facilitators, I'm not-

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: [interposing]
18 These professionals are statutorily required to meet
19 with incarcerated people within 48 hours of admission
20 to jail to help them post bail.

21 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: I'm not sure. I
would have to- yeah. I would have to follow up on
that. I'm not- I couldn't answer that question right
now.

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3 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So, as a
4 follow up, what- then this- section. Does funding
5 for bail facilitators come from the Department's
6 budget, and are there any performance metrics you can
7 share about how effective bail facilitators are at
8 helping people post bail.

9 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: We'll get back
10 to you on both.

11 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Yep.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
13 The Department has contracted to spend up to \$800,000
14 with an outside firm to undertake a staffing
15 analysis. The contract began in January 2026 and
16 runs through June 2027. When was the last time
17 before this that the Department undertook a staffing
18 analysis at Rikers?

19 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: So, we'd engaged
20 in 2025 with the State Commission of Correction to do
21 a post-analysis. It did take a considerable amount of
time to go through one facility. I think under the
previous administration which is, you know, now moved
into 2026, we undertook the vendor to do so. And
thus far, there's been I think very considerable and

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2 productive results at the outset. So, we're really
3 anxious and excited to see what, you know, the
4 ultimate product of that is.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And is each
6 facility being analyzed separately?

7 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: The entire
8 Department is being reviewed, yes, separately and
collectively.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And what is
10 the sequence of that analysis and when will the
11 analysis for each facility be ready?

12 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: So, I met with
13 the consultant yesterday, and she presented a
14 preliminary analysis and framework. We are going to
15 be meeting with Nick and his team when he's back. The
16 consultant will be in town on April 13th, so that we
will meet. She will do a full briefing and lay out
the timeline for the analysis.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: The consultant
18 is out of state?

19 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Yes.
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3 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So, when you
4 guys procured that contract, were there no, like, New
5 York-based firms to consider?

6 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: I think this-
7 I'd have to look into it. I don't know if this was a
8 formal RFP or if this was put out in a specific
9 expertise area to do this, which I think might be the
10 case. But again, that's a specific question we'll
11 have to follow up on. I don't think this was a
12 formal Request for Proposal that was put out for
13 bidders.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So, as you're
15 looking to that, I'd like to know what that process
16 was identified, this entity-

17 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: [interposing]
18 Yeah.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: and how that
20 particular person was selected versus looking within
21 the state, and also it'd be good to know if this is
an MWBE contractor as well.

GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: We'll get both
those answers to you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

3 As you know, captains play a critical role
4 supervising and supporting the line staff day to day.
5 How many captains does the Department currently have?6 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: I'm going to turn
7 to the Chief for that.8 CHIEF REMBERT: Good afternoon,
9 Sherrieann Rembert again. The captains, we allotted
10 for 703, but we only have 490, with a vacancy of 213.11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What's the
12 plan of action to fill those vacancies?13 CHIEF REMBERT: Well, first, because of
14 our staffing challenges, on the officer side, we're
15 going to have to build that level up first, and then
16 we are going to do a class, a promotion class, for
17 the captains. But first things first. We have to
18 build the correction officer level up first before we
19 can do that. Because if you do not, then it's going
20 to level- it will not level us off.21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Makes sense.
Thank you for that. What is the ideal number of
captains to operate the jail safely? I know you said
what the goal is, but to look to operate it safely,

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2 what is that ideal number, that magic number to
3 operate it safely and properly? Or put another way,
4 what is the ideal ratio of officers to captains? To
5 your point earlier in terms of-

6 CHIEF REMBERT: [interposing] Right. So,
7 the ideal is to have the 700.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay.

9 CHIEF REMBERT: because we're going to
10 the Nunez remediation, and you need supervision in
11 order for our offices to be able to do their job
12 properly and give them the level of supervision they
13 need, the supporting guidance they need so that we
14 could have a safe, healthy, and secure facility.
15 That is the goal. That is the goal. That is the
16 number 700.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Do you- and I
18 know you have to increase the number of the actual,
19 like, officers, and in order to- in order to increase
20 the number of captains. But is there a plan for a
21 fiscal 27 to do that, and if so, is that included in
the budget?

CHIEF REMBERT: Very good question. I
think my Commissioner will want to answer it.

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COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Yeah, yeah. The approved headcount is in the budget.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. And that takes into account the captains as well?

COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. How much has the Department spent on overtime so far in fiscal year 26?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: The Department has spent approximately \$240 million thus far.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And what is the projection for the spending by the end of fiscal 26?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: Approximately \$370 million.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: How much is allocated to overtime song the various budget lines for fiscal 27? And how was the total number determined? And as you're looking for the number, I'm going to just tell you, my pet peeve is around the overtime, because I feel like to get the balanced budget, we normally project lower and go over buffet

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2 as a result, instead of just being realistic in terms
3 of what need really looks like.

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: Yeah.

5 Give me just a moment.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Sure.

7 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: You're
8 absolutely right, so as of right now for civilian
9 staff members for fiscal year 27 we are at \$7
10 million and for uniform members of service we're at
11 \$158. But you're right. The needs or the budgetary
12 needs are then addressed as the years goes on. So,
13 next year, whatever our overtime expenditures are,
14 we'll work closely with OMB to address those. The
15 budgetary concerns that bring us back up. The same
16 that it happened this fiscal year.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Well, with the
18 number you just projected for fiscal year 27, when
19 you look year-to-date, so like the current fiscal and
20 then there's expectation, or even fiscal 25, how- how
21 is it trending, and like, how are you creating that
number?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: So, we
have a baseline budget, right? That baseline- that

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2 budget is just there. It exists, right? Then with
3 each plan cycle, that budget is adjusted, right? So,
4 in terms of how- I think your question is how is
5 overtime changing?

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Well, I
7 wanted to know- so, like, when you project and you're
8 requesting from OMB the amount you just said for
9 fiscal 27.

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR:

[inaudible]

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Right? How
12 did you come to that number? Like, are you looking
13 at the previous fiscal years and how much was spent,
14 projecting a need to increase it all? Like, for me,
15 I know it myself and my colleagues and it's not just
16 with Corrections, it's also with PD and some of the
17 other agencies that have to contend with overtime.
18 It's important to really understand if these numbers
19 are true to have a true idea of what our budget looks
20 like, because otherwise, we're doing these mods and
21 these changes throughout the year to address a
shortfall, because we already knew that Corrections

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2 normally spends X for overtime, but yet, they put \$2
3 million less in what they're requesting from OMB.

4 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: And I'll let AC
5 answer how he got to the \$158, the projections. I
6 think there's a variable that we factor in and is
7 available to manage. If we fill positions, we reduce
8 overtime. We reduce population, we reduce overtime.
9 And so the strategy as the Department is to try to
10 fill those vacancies and recruit. And so that is the
11 strategy. If we can fill those positions, we can
12 begin to have promotional classes for captains. So
13 it doesn't allow us to take from Peter to pay Paul.
14 We can have those captain classes. We can reduce
15 overtime.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Now,
17 Commissioner, can I say I actually appreciate that
18 answer, because that's the most straightforward I've
19 ever gotten on that. So I definitely appreciate
20 that, but I then up you on that and want to ask how
21 aggressive do you go then to make sure you're filling
those positions understanding that that as a result
will bring down the overtime costs?

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3 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Yes. I met with
4 our communications team. We're going to be putting
5 out new communications strategy to try to attract
6 people to take the exam. We have an exam working
7 with DCAS, have the exam coming up. We are looking at
8 making sure that we're able to expedite people
9 through our vetting and screening process. So, I
10 have a strategy that I'm going to be talking with
11 City Hall about. And so that's- you know, it's like
12 really creating a different for this department, both
13 through our media and through the way that we operate
14 to attract people to the Department.

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR: Yeah, I
16 just want to make clear the numbers that I gave you
17 for next fiscal year, they are not a projection of
18 overtime. It's just what's in our budget, right?
19 There's a distinction to remain there, right? It's
20 very difficult to project one year down the line what
21 the overtime is going to be. There's way too many
variables to take into account. So, the best that we
could do is look at our current vacancies and see
what our facilities need and what that variance is-
the truth- the fact of the matter is that our

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uniformed members of service, their headcount has decreased substantially, right? And at the same time, our average daily population has increased substantially. That creates a differential, and in order to fill that differential, we must fill it with overtime. That's the only operational lever that we have, and that is our primary driving factor or predictive factor that we use to assess what the overtime will be by the end of the fiscal year.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And I appreciate that response, so thank you for that. In terms of the strategy, I don't know if you guys have it at Corrections, but is there a referral mechanism also? I think about the correction officers that live in my district, most of them roll up on me at Stop and Shop in Arverne [sp?]. But just thinking like when you talk neighborhood to neighborhood and say hey, you know, I got this job at Correction, great pension, 20 years in and out. Like, are you interested? What is the benefit for them to do that?

COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Yeah. That was something actually I was talking with the leadership team the other day about creating those kind of

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2 strategies. So, everything is on the table. I think
3 that's a wonderful strategy. When I was at Fortune
4 that was something we had. I went to the ADWs union
5 meeting, and one of the retired ADWs had said to me,
6 my son was thinking about coming to the department,
7 but because of the issues around safety, I told him
8 not to come. And this department used to be a
9 department that generations used to come here. It
10 was their kids and their kids. And so, that is not
11 the reality anymore. And that's why I say, you know,
12 this system has just traumatized everybody in it.
13 The officers don't feel like this is a place that
14 they would want their family to work. They don't
15 feel like this is a place- as soon as they can get
16 out, they want to get out, because they don't feel
17 safe and they don't feel valued, and the people who
18 are put in our care don't feel valued and feel like
19 the only way to survive is the survival of the
20 fittest. And so we have to change it, and I believe
21 this is a moment where this mayor, the leadership
team that I'm building at the department to change
that, to change the narrative of the department and
the way that we work, and that's what I'm committed

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2 to doing in partnership with all of you and all of
3 our partners in the community.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Well, you
5 definitely have an open invite if you want to set up
6 a table in a high-dense area in the district or
7 anywhere around the City. I know my colleagues-

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZUBAIR:

9 [interposing] Just to add, we do have a recruitment
10 team, and do if you are having job fairs or community
11 fairs, we're happy to dispatch and deploy our teams
12 there. We have been very aggressive on a recruitment
13 front. As the Commissioner mentioned, we do have an
14 exam registration that's opening up April 1st. This
15 is now the fourth exam we're opening in the fiscal
16 year. And so we're doing all that we can to drop the
17 test and recruit people. We're also doing digital
18 ads, social media ads. We're looking at our
19 strategies on who's the face of some of these
20 campaigns. One of the things we saw that was a big
21 improvement was adding additional correctional
officers into the market mentors so that there's
representation and people can see themselves as a
correction officer. This is a game changer for the

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2 Department as you just referenced, back in the day,
3 20 years ago all of these jobs is word of mouth, tell
4 a friend to tell a friend to tell on.. And that's
5 how we came on the job. So, now when technology, we
6 have to leverage every channel, and we welcome the
7 opportunity for you to post things on your social
8 media channels as well as all of the Council Members
9 to help us with those recruitment efforts. I think
10 as the Commissioner stated, it's going to take a
11 whole of city government approach to help us recruit
12 officers.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No, thank you
14 for that. I'm going to now pivot to mental health. I
15 know my colleagues asked some questions, so that took
16 most of them off of the list for me. How many people
17 currently in custody at Rikers have a serious mental
18 illness?

19 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: I'm going to ask
20 our AC to come and say.

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZADZORA: Hi, good
afternoon. Kathleen Zadzora, Assistant Commissioner
of Health Affairs. So, Correctional Health Services
who's responsible for the health and mental health

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2 care for people in custody does not disclose specific
3 mental health diagnoses to the Department. So, I
4 would have to go by what I believe CHS most recently
5 publicly stated which is around 20 percent of
6 individuals have a diagnosed serious mental illness.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

7
8 And some of these questions are for CHS, so just let
9 me know if you can answer, and if you cannot, we'll
10 follow up. In the past, CHS staff and correctional
11 staff took a week-long crisis intervention training
12 course side by side to prepare staff to work as teams
13 and units for people with serious mental illness.
14 The training was halted entirely for years after
15 COVID hit, and when it restarted briefly, the
16 Department and CHS no longer trained together. We
17 understand the training was then halted again for
18 months for contracting reasons. Is that coordinated
19 cooperative training taking place today?

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZADZORA: Thank
21 you for the question. So, the Crisis Intervention
Teams training is done by the academy now, and the
pause for a contract that you referenced that is now-
that's rolled out, and so there are community

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2 providers that assist with the mental health
3 instruction portion of that. We would have to get
4 back to you with specific numbers as far as how many
5 members of service have been trained now in the new
6 year.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
8 that.

9 CHIEF REMBERT: I'm sorry. I'm going to
10 take that question. So, the CIT training and mental
11 health first aid training is plus a thousand members
12 of service that has taken that. And the CIT training
13 for anyone that's in the mental health observation is
14 135 members have taken that. The basic CI- the basis
15 Crisis Management is plus 1,800 members have taken
16 that. There is also other training that we do provide
17 outside of our crisis intervention which is one-time
18 thing, and then we have a refresher once a year.
19 Then there's a mental health first aid that's every
20 three years. That is a certification. After that,
21 the crisis management, that's a one-time event, and
then we have the correction conflict resolution as
well. That is part of the training that we are
getting, and that's under the Bureau of Justice

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2 Assistance program grant we have. So, we work in
3 conjunction with La Guardia College during the crisis
4 intervention training.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
6 that. How long on average are people staying at
7 Rikers after they have been found unfit by a judge
8 before being transferred to a state hospital for
9 treatment?

10 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: We have about on
11 a rolling basis between 180 and 200 individuals that
12 are awaiting mental health beds. I don't know the
13 specific length of stay. We could talk to- I'll
14 bring that back to our management team, custody
15 management team, to kind of get assessment of that.
16 But we are working closely with the state on that
17 issue, and there is litigation related to that that
18 doesn't involve us directly, but we do work with them
19 to try to accelerate those timelines, but there is
20 about 180 to 200 in our custody that are awaiting
21 beds.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And they're
20 awaiting beds because of- I'm sorry. What, like-
21 what results in the delay of them getting placed?

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3 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: It's the
4 availability of beds.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Availability.

6 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: For the state,
7 yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. And
9 Commissioner, have you been able to review the report
10 from last year concerning dead-locking?

11 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: I have not
12 reviewed that report.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. Do you
14 know if dead-locking or med-locking is still
15 happening in any mental health unit that you know of?

16 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: That is- you
17 know, just for the Council's awareness and Chair, we
18 referred that- those allegations out to the
19 Department of Investigation and they've not yet been
20 returned to us. So that is still under
21 investigation, but we have made clear to our teams
and internally that that is not a practice that is to
be going on. You know, so we've looked into
internally and made sure that we've messaged to our
entire staff at multiple different meetings that that

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2 is not acceptable within guidelines practice, but to
3 comment beyond that, like I said, it's under
4 investigation with DOI. we've not gotten the results
5 yet.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: If someone
7 with serious mental illness is dead-locked or
8 otherwise not being allowed out of their cell, will
9 CHS staff treat and medicate that person at the cell
door?

10 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: I can't answer
11 on behalf of CHS. That is a CHS question, Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
13 that. I'm going to pivot to deaths in custody.
14 Following the death of Ardit Villa [sp?] who was
15 found dead after being held in one of the PACE units,
16 the Board of Correction and Investigation reported
17 that mandatory 30-minute checks were missed in the
18 hours before his death. What actions have been taken
by the Department to ensure that these checks are
conducted?

19 GENERAL COUNSEL CONROY: So, I think-
20 when we talk to the Board of Correction, there was a
21 number of recommendations that they made. One of the

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2 things that we've talked about consistently and has
3 been raised to us is the issue of touring and doing
4 consistent touring. As we've articulated at the
5 Board of Corrections meetings, we do have a, you
6 know, an oversight system and a tour one system
7 that's utilized to ensure that that's happening. You
8 know, again, specific instances are still under
9 investigation related to that, but you know, it is
10 part of our policy to do this consistent touring, and
11 to make sure that it is addressed. And in some
12 circumstances in these deaths there has been
13 discipline implemented immediately subsequent to a
14 review of the incidents, but this is something that I
15 know this administration is serious about, and that's
16 a basic correctional practice.

15 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: And one of the
16 things that we're doing is looking at the death that
17 occurred in 2025, lessons learned, what can we do to
18 ensure the prevention of that. And I think over the
19 years, one of the things we have seen- that I've seen
20 since taking on this seat is the utilization and
21 training of all of our officers with Narcan, and the
ability for our officers to use Narcan has been what

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2 I've seen a game-changer in terms of a loss of life.
3 The willingness for them to do it, for them to be
4 trained and every officer carrying it. And so we're
5 looking at what we can do as a department to ensure
6 the safety of those who are in our care. And so
7 we're looking at all of the deaths for 2025.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

9 And according to the PMMR there has been one
10 non-natural death on Rikers in the first four months
11 of fiscal 2026, and only four in all of fiscal 2025.
12 What criteria qualifies as a non-natural death?

13 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: I'm going to turn
14 it over to our AC.

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZADZORA: And so
16 also there are- there are two pending deaths from
17 calendar year 2025 that have not received a final
18 OCME determination. So, that number may change the
19 next time that is updated. My understanding is that
20 non-natural death would be any death that the Medical
21 Examiner's Office does not consider to be 100 percent
attributable to a sickness or an illness. So, an
accidental manner of death, for example, would be
considered non-natural, suicide would be considered

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2 non-natural, therapeutic complication would be
3 considered non-natural.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Got it.

5 Thank you. Well, those are all of the questions that
6 the committee has for you today. I thank you for your
7 testimony and the conversation around the budget
8 today. The panel is dismissed. We'll take a
9 two-minute break before we bring up the Board of
Correction. Thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER RICHARDS: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Sorry, we'll
take a 15-minute break.

12 [break]

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon, just a
14 quick reminder that there's no food or drinks in the
15 chamber today. No one may approach the dais at any
16 time. Thank you. Good afternoon, just another quick
17 announcement, there'll be no food or drinks in the
chambers. No one may approach the dais. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Good
19 afternoon. The hearing is now back in session. We
20 are entering into the segment with the Board of
Correction, and we will be hearing from the Executive
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2 Director Jasmine Georges-Yilla, Melissa Cintron
3 Hernandez, the General Counsel, Tiana Betancourt,
4 Deputy Executive Director of Administration, Katrina
5 Blackman, Assistant Executive Director of Monitoring-
6 thank you- and Navena Chaitoo, Assistant Executive
7 Director of Research. Counsel will swear you all in.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good afternoon,
9 everyone. Please raise your right hand. Do you
10 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing
11 but the truth before this committee and to respond
12 honestly to Council Members' questions? Thank you.
13 You may begin.

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GEORGES-YILLA: Good
15 afternoon, Chair Brooks-Powers and members of the
16 Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify
17 today on behalf of the New York City Board of
18 Correction regarding our Fiscal Year 2027 budget
19 needs. As you just said, I am Jasmine Georges-Yilla,
20 Executive Director of the Board, and I'm joined today
21 by BOC Deputy Executive Director of Administration,
Tiana Betancourt, our Deputy Executive Director and
General Counsel, Melissa Cintron Hernandez, BOC's
Assistant Executive Director of Monitoring, Katrina

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2 Blackman, and our Assistant Executive Director of
3 Research, Navena Chaitoo. Also, the Board's Chair,
4 Dwayne Sampson, sends his regards to you Chair and to
5 the Committee Members as well. As an independent
6 oversight body established under Section 626 of the
7 New York City Charter, the Board serves as a critical
8 accountability mechanism for the City's jail system.
9 The Board is mandated to establish, monitor, and
10 enforce minimum standards governing the care, custody
11 and safety of people detained in New York City jails.
12 Despite operating as a small agency with limited
13 resources, since its creation, the Board remains
14 committed to fulfilling the significant
15 responsibility. To carry out its mandate, the Board
16 monitors compliance with its minimum standards
17 through regular facility visits and inspections, data
18 and document review, public meetings and hearings,
19 and engagement with effective stakeholders. The Board
20 also conducts investigations and systemwide reviews
21 of critical issues, including deaths in custody, and
publicly reports on jail conditions, compliance and
areas requiring corrective action. Over the past
year, the Board has issued reports and

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3 recommendations regarding non-compliance with the
4 Board's overcrowding rules, access to counsel rules,
5 and housing units and practices operating as
6 restrictive housing without due process, and among
7 other issues. The Board also published two death
8 reports, two borough-based jails progress reports, a
9 monitoring unit quarterly report, an assessment of
10 the Department of Corrections lock-in and lock-out
11 procedures, and a report on injury response in New
12 York City jails. With additional resources, the
13 Board could significantly expand the scope and impact
14 of this work. Inadequate resourcing of these core
15 functions materially limits the Board's ability to
16 carry out its legally-required role, and weakens the
17 city's overall governance framework. We thank the
18 City Council for always investing in the Board as a
19 key partner in the strategy to transform the city's
20 jail system. The Board's fiscal year 27 budget is \$4
21 million which supports 33 authorized positions and
other than personnel services. Over 60 percent of
our \$329,000 OTPS budget goes to heat, light, and
power for DCAS-managed facilities, costs beyond our
control, covering both our headquarters at Two

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3 Lafayette Street and our operational presence on
4 Rikers Island. We currently have 29 staff with four
5 vacancies impacting operations. Two correctional
6 standards review specialist positions are expected to
7 be filled by year-end. The Director of Research and
8 Computer Aid positions remain unfilled due to
9 underfunding and budget approval delays. While
10 recent hires like the Director of Violence
11 Prevention, EEO Officer, and Special Investigations
12 Coordinator strengthen oversight, staffing remain
13 insufficient to ensure full compliance with minimum
14 standards, especially as the jail population
15 continues to exceed the capacity of borough-based
16 jails. Additional resources are essential to keep
17 pace with evolving operations and ongoing system
18 changes. The Board seeks an additional \$2.8 million
19 in its fiscal year 27 new needs submission,
20 increasing the Board's overall budget to \$6.8
21 million. This request reflects the city's current
fiscal realities while ensuring the agency can
fulfill its Charter mandated oversight duties. The
request focuses on three core areas: personnel,
operational support, and modern technology

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1
2 infrastructure. Since submitting this request, the
3 Office of Management and Budget has asked the Board
4 to identify \$60,000 in savings for fiscal year 26 and
5 \$100,000 in fiscal year 27 and the out-years, and to
6 cut agency vacancies by 50 percent. Maintaining
7 current staffing and ideally expanding it is
8 essential. Any reduction in positions or funding
9 would severely limit the Board's ability to monitor
10 jail conditions, respond promptly to incidents, and
11 conduct critical research. The Board seeks four
12 positions and approximately \$450,000 for baseline
13 support of oversight operations, data infrastructure,
14 and executive coordination. Specifically, the Board
15 requests funding for a Deputy Executive Director of
16 oversight and compliance to serve as lead project
17 manager for our complex oversight work. This role
18 would coordinate investigations, compliance reviews,
19 monitoring, research and reporting across teams and
20 external partners, ensuring timely action. It would
21 also develop tools to track compliance with minimum
standards, a critical need as the city transitions to
borough-based jails. With the jail population at
roughly 7,000, this position is essential to ensure

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oversight keeps pace with evolving facilities, policies, and practices. Additionally, the Board requests a Prison Rape Elimination Act, or PREA, project director to restore PREA monitoring and address ongoing gaps in sexual abuse and harassment compliance, an IT system support engineer to rebuild and maintain DOC to BOC data feeds, support modern data infrastructure, and ensure accurate reporting, and a special Assistant to the Executive Director, Secretary to the Board to support executive administrative tasks, governance of operations, meeting preparation and committee work. These roles are essential to maintain effective operations and accountability. In addition to personnel services funding, the Board requires baseline operational funding for legally-mandated accessibility services, including Communication Access Realtime Translation, or CART, to ensure that all meetings and hearing are accessible to staff. Also, the Board is required to hold regular public meetings which entail ongoing costs for audio/visual support, lighting, and recording. These are fixed, legally-required, and demand-driven expenses. After covering these

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1 obligations along with unavoidable utility costs,
2 only \$37,000 remains for all other operations,
3 including contractual services, supplies and
4 equipment. This amount is insufficient. It
5 significantly constrains the Board's ability to
6 fulfil its charter-mandated responsibilities and
7 creates a risk of a budget deficit. Due to limited
8 OTPS capacity, the agency has been forced to shift
9 funding from PS to OTPS to meet these needs. This is
10 not a sustainable approach. To eliminate the need
11 for these shifts, the board is requesting \$90,000 for
12 baseline accessibility funding and an additional
13 \$100,000 in OTPS funding to support essential
14 operations and address a growing workload driven by
15 increased complaints and appeals, as well as the
16 limitations of an outdated data management system. A
17 central component of the Board's OTPS request is \$2.1
18 million to support continued investment in modern
19 data infrastructure, particularly the Complaints and
20 Appeals Management System, or CAMS. This system
21 replaces the Board's legacy data management platform
which was built nearly two decades ago and is no
longer supported or capable of meeting modern

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1 security, storage, or reporting requirements. CAMS is
2 essential for receiving, tracking, and analyzing
3 complaints and appeals from people in custody,
4 attorneys, advocates, and correctional staff. It
5 enables the Board to coordinate investigations,
6 identify patterns of concern and produce the public
7 reporting required under the Charter. CAMS also
8 restores the Board's ability to integrate and analyze
9 operational data from the Department of Correction
10 which is fundamental to effective oversight of
11 violence, use of force, restrictive housing
12 placements, access to care, grievances and other key
13 indicators of jail conditions. Without modern data
14 infrastructure, the Board's oversight work risks
15 interruptions, delayed investigations and reduced
16 transparency, especially as we monitor a larger, more
17 complex population. As the City moves towards
18 borough-based jails, strong, coordinated oversight
19 becomes even more critical. Facilities, operational
20 policies and practices will change, and the Board
21 must have the capacity to track compliance with
minimum standards and ensure that reforms translate
into measurable improvements in safety, fairness, and

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3 transparency for the jail population. Together,
4 these PS and OTPS requests totaling \$2.8 million
5 reflect a lean proposal that considers the required
6 savings targets. The Board's work is critical to
7 ensuring transparency, accountability, and humane
8 conditions in the city's jails, yet our ability to
9 meet this mandate is sharply limited by our current
10 funding. An overall budget of \$6.8 million would
11 allow the Board to begin to expand its reach and
12 provide effective oversight during a period of
13 significant change in the jail system. Oversight is
14 most meaningful if it drives results, turning
15 monitoring, research and investigations into timely
16 findings, public reporting, immeasurable
17 improvements, and compliance. We look forward to
18 working with the Council, the administration and the
19 Remediation Manager to strengthen compliance with the
20 minimum standards, support a safe transition away
21 from Rikers Island and reinforce transparency and
public trust. Thank you again for the opportunity to
testify, and I welcome your questions.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

And I'd also like to say thank you for submitting

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2 your testimony in advance. We greatly appreciate it
3 in terms of being prepared for today's conversation.
4 I'm going to start with the topic of the Chief
5 Savings Officer. The administration has called on
6 all agencies to bring on savings through the creation
7 of Chief Savings Officer who will complete a
8 comprehensive assessment of their agency's spending.
9 Who has been designated the Chief Savings Officer for
10 the Board of Corrections and what areas of spending
are being looked at for savings?

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GEORGES-YILLA: I'll
12 turn it over to our Assistant Executive Director of
13 Administration, Tiana Betancourt, but before I do, I
14 just want to stress that having such a small
15 oversight agency have to participate in the savings
16 program is significantly impactful in a negative way.
17 We already are stripped bare with our resources. So,
18 to have to identify vacancies and savings for
resources that we already don't have is very
difficult. So, I'll turn it over to Tiana.

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BETANCOURT: Hi, Chair
20 Brooks-Powers. So, as the Board's Chief Savings
21 Officer, I'm responsible for implementing the City's

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1 Savings Director for the New York City Board of
2 Correction. The Board has been asked to achieve
3 savings of roughly \$60,000 in fiscal year 2026 and
4 \$100,000 in fiscal year 2027 and the outyears,
5 including a 50 percent reduction in city-funded
6 vacancies. To meet these targets, the Board is taking
7 a vacancy-based approach. We are prioritizing the
8 retention of two correctional standards review
9 specialist positions that are essential to front line
10 monitoring and our charter-mandated oversight
11 responsibilities while identifying savings through
12 the Director of Research and computer aid positions
13 which were not fully funded. Additional savings are
14 reflected within non-FTNG which include typically
15 supporting salary-related adjustments and unfilled
16 salary allocations. Since these funds are not
17 currently supporting active staff, they will be used
18 to help us meet savings targets. And at this time,
19 the Board is in final stages of the interview process
20 for the two correctional [inaudible] specialist
21 positions. I'd also like to note, you know, as we
are a small independent oversight body, our staffing
is directly tied to our ability to maintain a

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2 consistent presence in facilities and carry out our
3 charter mandate. Reductions of this nature have more
4 immediate impact on our operations compared to larger
5 agencies with broader staffing structures. We are
6 moving forward to meeting these required savings
7 targets while remaining focused on preserving our
8 core oversight functions.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No, thank you
10 for that, and thank you for being so candid. I quite
11 honestly share the concerns of that you're expressing
12 in terms of what that impact would be on the board.
13 So, again, thank you for being forthcoming and candid
14 on that topic. I'm going to pivot to headcount. So,
15 as of January, the Board had an actual headcount of
16 29 out of the 33 budgeted positions filled. And I
17 know you said you have two that are in the final
18 stage right now. Would you say that the Board of
19 Correction is sufficiently staffed?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GEORGES-YILLA: No, I
21 would not say that. I emphasized in my testimony that
22 this is a lean new needs request. We are being
23 practical and conservative given the, you know, the
24 limitations that we were giving in terms of the

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2 saving program, but in order to produce more
3 assessment reports and have more ability to tour and
4 produce public reporting to the best of our ability
5 to meet the mandate of the Charter, we would need
6 additional staff even above what we're asking for in
7 our new needs request, but we did work within the
8 confines that we were given.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Appreciate
10 that. And is there a reason the Board has had a
11 difficult time recruiting staff to fill these
12 positions?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GEORGES-YILLA: In
14 terms of?

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Just in
16 general. Like, where you are right now that you have
17 vacancies I'm assuming that it's been- because some
18 of the other agencies have been having a hard time
19 filling their vacancies as well.

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BETANCOURT: I will
21 say one of the largest constraints are due to the OMB
PAR process. It is taking quite some time just to
get an approval. We have candidates that are sitting
in the pipeline ready to go, ready to start after

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2 recruitment and the interview stages, and we are just
3 waiting what seems like months for approval
4 processes.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I was about
6 to say on average how long. So, it's months
7 sometimes.

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BETANCOURT: Yeah, it
9 could be longer than a month at times, yeah.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Sounds right.
11 I remember when I worked at the mayor's office, it
12 took a couple months, too. What type of outreach does
13 the Board do to fill vacant positions?

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BETANCOURT: So, we
15 post on New York City Jobs website. We work through
16 Smart Recruiters. We post at At Work, so you know,
17 55A programs, things like that, reaching out to CUNY,
18 SUNY postings and internships and other areas.
19 Primarily to attract diverse candidates across the
20 board.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. In the
last year, the Board has received baseline funding
for three existing one-year funded positions. Do
these positions remain filled today?

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3 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GEORGES-YILLA: I think
4 you're talking about a special investigations
5 coordinator and maybe a research associate as well
6 and a monitoring correctional standards review
7 specialist. And yes, they do. And I just- I really
8 do want to commend the small staff that we do have.
9 They are very committed. They impact the people in
10 custody. Their lives, they create change and they
11 care for the humanity of the people in the jails, and
12 so I really commend the work that they do with the
13 limited resources that we have.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
15 I'm going to pivot to the Remediation Manager. Has
16 the Board of Correction leadership met with the
17 Remediation Manager.

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GEORGES-YILLA: Yes,
19 we had a meet and greet with the Remediation Manager.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Is there a
21 plan to coordinate with the Remediation Manager
moving forward?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GEORGES-YILLA: I
think at this stage the Remediation Manager is in the
planning phase of preparing his action plan for the

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court, and I think- we both understand that the Remediation Manager and the Board have two distinct roles. The Remediation Manager is responding to federal court orders and the Board's mandate has to do with the minimum standards and the charter mandate that we have for the conditions of confinement. And so we are going to move forward working in partnership and we will offer whatever help we can provide to the Remediation Manager, and I hope- I believe based on the meeting that we had that the same will extend to the Board in helping to further compliance with the minimum standards.

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CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that. And I'm going to pivot now to the borough-based jails. Can you please describe the role the Board has taken with regard to the borough-based jails, and have you been in discussions with the Department of Corrections or involved in any of the planning?

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GEORGES-YILLA: Yes. I'm going to turn it over to our Assistant Executive Director of Monitoring, Katrina Blackman.

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2 ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BLACKMAN:

3 Good afternoon, Chair. Good afternoon, everyone.
4 Yes, to first answer your question, according to
5 Local Law 192 of 2019, we are responsible and are
6 required to report on the progress of the
7 borough-based jail's status semi-annually. So,
8 typically what we do, we have meetings that are
9 hosted by the Department where they provide us
10 updates, also in partnership with Correctional Health
11 Services quarterly. So, once every three months or so
12 we have these progress updates with the Department of
13 Correction, and actually coincidentally, we are
14 scheduled for one later on this week. So, they have
15 been very transparent in letting us know the updates
16 of each construction site, capital budget, and just
17 any overall concerns that may be coming up throughout
18 the course of the quarters. So, they've been
19 cooperative in that sense.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: If the Board
21 was able to receive the requested funding to have
additional headcount added, how would you fill the
roles for those positions?

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2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GEORGES-YILLA: I
3 would fill each unit that we have. So, I would put
4 people in monitor- we would enhance our monitoring
5 team. We would enhance our research team. We would
6 enhance our special investigations team, our
7 administration team, and our IT team. We currently
8 have one designated person, and like I said, we're
9 requesting a \$2.1 million new IT system so that we
10 would be able to enhance the reporting that we do,
11 the tracking, the identification of trends. Right
12 now, we do what we can with what we have. We report
13 out at our public meetings different issues that our
14 monitors are observing. So, definitely more people
15 to be able to observe on a continuous routine way,
16 what's going on in the jail so that we could also
17 report out in a continuous way and be able to analyze
18 those trends and data.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
17 That's all the questions we have for this panel. We
18 appreciate the testimony and look forward to working
19 more closely with the Board as we get closer to
20 closing Rikers and transitioning to borough-based
21 jails and ensuring that we are changing the culture

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2 in this space. So, thank you, and the panel is
3 released.

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GEORGES-YILLA: Thank
5 you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
7 Okay, we're going to move into the public testimony
8 portion of today's hearing. I now open the hearing
9 for public testimony. I remind members of the public
10 that this is a formal government proceeding and that
11 decorum shall be observed at all times. As such,
12 members of the public shall remain silent at all
13 times. The witness table is reserved for people who
14 wish to testify. No video recording or photography is
15 allowed from the witness table. Further, members of
16 the public may not present audio or video recordings
17 as testimony, but may submit transcripts of such
18 recordings to the Sergeant at Arms for inclusion in
19 the hearing record. If you wish to speak at today's
20 hearing, please fill out an appearance card with the
21 Sergeant at Arms and wait to be recognized. When
recognized, you will have two minutes to speak on
today's hearing topic. If you have a written
statement or additional written testimony you wish to

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2 submit for the record, please provide a copy of that
3 testimony to the Sergeant at Arms. You may also
4 email written testimony to tetimony@council.nyc.gov
5 within 72 hours of this hearing. Audio and video
6 recordings will not be accepted. We'll now call the
7 first panel: Benny Boscio from the Correction
8 Officers Benevolent Association, Dalvanie Powell,
9 United Probation Officer's Association, Dejon
10 Williams, President of Local 299 of DC37. We ask
11 that everyone please adhere to the clock, and if you
12 have additional testimony, you can always submit it
13 in writing afterwards. Thank you. You can begin
14 once you're ready. Just turn on the mic.

15
16 BENNY BOSCIO: Good afternoon. Chair, if
17 I could get a little bit of extra time, please? Good
18 afternoon, Chairwoman Brooks-Powers and members of
19 this committee. My name is Benny Boscio, Jr. I am
20 the President of the Correction Officers Benevolent
21 Association, the second-largest law enforcement union
in the City of New York. Our members, as you know,
provide care, custody and control of approximately
6,800 inmates daily. New York City Correction
Officers are essential first responders. 85 percent

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2 of our members are Black and Hispanic, and
3 approximately 50 percent of our officers are female.
4 In short, we are the most diverse uniformed force in
5 the City of New York. Our number one mission is to
6 ensure the jails are safe for everyone while ensuring
7 the people in our custody receive all the services
8 and programming they are entitled to, and they are
9 safely escorted to and from their medical
10 appointments and their court appearance. As far as
11 programming is concerned, the Department literally
12 provides dozens and dozens of programs to people in
13 our custody, and each our facilities also provides
14 their own programs that include reentry support to
15 assist people in custody reenter their communities,
16 support for single mothers, support for LGBTQ
17 individuals, mentoring programs for young people,
18 programs to reduce recidivism, programs for veterans,
19 provides that provide K9 therapy to help inmates
20 manage stress, anxiety and depression faith-based
21 programs, and programs to help people with alcohol
and drug addictions. These are just a few examples of
the 20 to 30 programs provided to the thousands of
people in our custody, and not even one of these

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2 programs can operate without enough correction
3 officers to provide safety and security, with most
4 programs requiring anywhere between two to four
5 correction officers at any given time, and sometimes
6 more. And this does not include the many services we
7 provide which are consistent with the Department's
8 minimum standards. This also does not include
9 unexpected incidents-

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: [interposing]
11 I'm sorry, Benny, but we do have your testimony in
12 writing. I want to be respectful. So I'm going to
13 let you have a summation of what you're going to do,
14 because the testimony that you have is a bit long.

15 BENNY BOSCIO: Yeah. Look, while our
16 members provide these essential services we're
17 dealing with the challenges of a very dangerous
18 environment that comes with supervising a population
19 where 70 percent of our people in custody are facing
20 violent felony charges. Last year, there were over
21 660 assaults on correction officers committed by
people in our custody, including 25 sexual assaults
on our female officers, over 170 spitting incidents,
over 260 splashing incidents, over 150 slashing

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1 incidents, over 120 stabbing incidents, and over 500
2 pieces of weapons and drugs recovered by our
3 officers. In fact, we are- we recover weapons and
4 drugs in our facilities daily. In the first three
5 months of this year we have already seen over 140
6 assaults on correction officers. In fact, within
7 just this past week, a female correction officer was
8 slashed just below her eye by an inmate. In addition
9 to these violent conditions, we are still suffering
10 from a severe staffing crisis. Our workforce is down
11 approximately 40 percent from 2020. We have
12 approximately 5,000 officers working across three
13 tours-

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: [interposing]
15 I'm sorry, I ask that you wrap up, please.

16 BENNY BOSCIO: You know what, Chairwoman
17 Powers,-- Brooks-Powers, I'll submit my testimony.
18 As one of the largest stakeholders that's involved
19 that represents the correction officers, I do believe
20 we should be part of the main agenda so that we- I
21 can really give you- there were a lot of questions
asked by your committee that could have been answered
by the union, and I feel that all too often we are

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2 kind of put on the back burner. It was very important
3 for me to do my entire testimony which probably would
4 have been about five minutes. You know, it's just
5 unfair.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No, and I
7 understand-

8 BENNY BOSCIO: [interposing] And I want to
9 respect everybody's time here, but you know, your
10 committee doesn't even stay around to hear the union,
11 right? And we're the ones- us and the people in
12 custody are suffering the most.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And trust me,
14 I understand and I want to be respectful of you as
15 well as everyone who has signed up and we'll respect
16 the two-minute timeline for that. We do have your
17 testimony in writing. In the future, what I ask that
18 you do is if you would like additional time, for you
19 to put that request in advance so we can work to
20 accommodate you. I have no problems of working to
21 accommodate where we can, but because these hearings
do run long and people wait here from the beginning
of the hearing- and I understand that you have to
leave a bit early today yourself- I don't want to

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disrespect anyone's time here. And please don't take this as being disrespectful to you or the Correction Officers, because again, we do have your testimony. It was emailed to me earlier. I have already submitted it for the record. And to your point, in terms of some of the things that could be answered, in these moments, we can have exchange and I will ask questions through these hearings of you from your perspective as well, but we also need to leave time to have that discourse. And so I just want to again be respectful, because if I do that for you to give you five minutes, everybody else here that wants five minutes, I have to give it to them, too. So, I do apologize, but again, in the future we will work to coordinate this better, okay?

BENNY BOSCIO: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

DALVANIE POWELL: Good afternoon, Chair Brooks-Powers and esteemed members of the committee. My name is Dalvanie Powell. I'm the President of the United Probation Officer Association representing supervising probation officers, probation officer training, probation officer assistants, and every day

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3 our members work hard to give New Yorkers involved in
4 the criminal justice system a second chance while
5 balancing the need to keep our community safe. Thank
6 you for this opportunity to testify on why the city
7 must invest in the Department of Probation. Since
8 the appointment of Commissioner Sharun Goodwin, we
9 have seen meaningful progress in a short period of
10 time. The administrative processes are improving
11 including a more responsive HR unit and faster
12 resolution as disciplinary matters are being
13 resolved, movement on long-standing grievances.
14 Family Court staffing has been strengthened.
15 Recruitment is ongoing and training academy has been
16 reduced to six to eight weeks. We also are engaged in
17 productive discussions around scheduling, uniform
18 safety policies, experienced staff who have left
19 under provisions, leaderships are beginning to return
20 to the agency. However, despite the progress the
21 Department has made in the critical state, today they
are less than 600 supervising probation officers and
probation officers while the headcount is supposed to
be according to OMB 845. Within weeks, we expect to
lose dozens of more probation officers and parole-

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2 probation officers and supervisors to parole,
3 Department of Corrections, NYPD, and neighboring
4 probation departments. Officers are not leaving
5 because they want to, they're leaving because our
6 salaries are significantly lower than other law
7 enrollment agencies despite requiring college
8 education. As documented by the State Comptroller,
9 Department of Probation has had the highest attrition
10 rate. Our workforce is predominantly women and people
11 of color, and we have in pay equity litigation since
12 2019. As the city focuses on affordability and pay
13 equity, we must be a part of that commitment.
14 Resolving the issue is as essential as stabilizing
15 workforce and supporting the Commissioner's vision
16 for the agency. In conclusion, officers are tasked
17 with individuals stabilize their lives while keeping
18 our neighborhoods safe. We are asking that the city
19 and the City Council and the mayor's office to
20 stabilize the workforce by addressing pay equity and
21 investing in the retention. I thank you, and I'm open
for questioning.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

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3 DEJON WILLIAMS: Good afternoon, Council.
4 My name is Dejon Williams. I'm local President of 299
5 representing recreation workers in the Department of
6 Corrections which are chaplains, recreation
7 directors, and recreational supervisors. Our memes
8 are tasked with providing recreation and prayer
9 services to persons in custody, in highly dangerous
10 and unusual settings which include housing units and
11 prayer locations. They are in close quarters daily
12 with said persons in custody. And due to a retaining
13 issue- a retention issue, excuse me- my members are
14 highly overworked and underpaid. They provide
15 enhanced recreational services which is committed to
16 creating a meaningful and uplifting and
17 community-building experience for those persons in
18 custody. Some of those programs are debates which
19 the inmates are given specific topics to discuss,
20 support groups, chess tournaments, family days which
21 host events, that do arts and crafts, father-daughter
dances in collaboration with council teams, suicide
prevention, substance abuse and sexual assault
awareness. I come here today to ask for- sorry. I

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3 come here today to ask for a help with this retention
4 issue and pay issue. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so
6 much. And I do have a follow-up question for each of
7 those who testified. As we've been talking about the
8 vacancies that exist and correction, probation and
9 recreation, are the unions engaged at all in terms of
10 the recruitment efforts by the Department? Like,
11 does the Department reach out and identify ways that
12 they can do a better job with the recruitment
13 efforts?

14 BENNY BOSCIO: We've had some
15 conversations with the Department in terms of
16 recruitment. We made some suggestions.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What are
18 those suggestions?

19 BENNY BOSCIO: You know, to do more based
20 commercials that kind of deal with the minority-based
21 offices to tract, right, because 85 percent of our
members are Black and Hispanic. Like I mentioned 65
percent of our members live in the City of New York.
dealing with colleges and military bases, we've

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2 suggested better commercials to kind of attract
3 people. We need a better pension system. They just
4 enhanced the pension for FDNY and the Police
5 Department.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I put in a
7 resolution on that, by the way-

8 BENNY BOSCIO: [interposing] Yes, thank
9 you.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: to support
11 that.

12 BENNY BOSI: Because you know, we need to
13 make the job more attractive, and those benefits
14 given to them and not us that we've maintained parity
15 for many years with that kind of puts us at a
16 disadvantage and no one has a more severe staffing
17 crisis in this city than we do.

18 DALVANIE POWELL: So, I've been in
19 conversation with the recent administrations and past
20 administrations about recruitment and retention. In
21 fact, we have a follow-up meeting coming up on
Friday. So, we've talked about promoting better ways
of promoting. They're starting to go into the
colleges and trying to recruit from there as well to

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3 make the job more attractive. I would- main issue is
4 salary. And like I said in my testimony, we're in
5 the midst of a litigation right now for pay parity,
6 and I attached the charts for you for your review for
7 you to look at. And plus, City Council, I did a
8 report back in 2021 and 2018 which supports our
9 argument. So, that's the main reason that we have an
10 issue with retention is because the salaries are so
11 far less than others. Along with the fact that you
12 have to have a college degree. So, my concern is
13 that- alright. So recently I did contract
14 negotiations. The starting salary is now \$61,000
15 which is good, but compared to corrections and police
16 in our five boroughs, we're going to get lost in the
17 sauce again. So, now, I have a step in place for 11
18 years, but it takes 11 years to get to \$81,000 for
19 probation officer, 11 years, for a supervising
20 probation officer \$95,000. And that's recent. And
21 that's recent. So, that's one of my problems. But
the recruitment, any chance we get we try to give out
input. And the good thing the department does, I
want to tell you, is they have supervising probation

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2 officers a part of the interviewing process which is
3 good to wean out people.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
5 that.

6 DEJON WILLIAMS: For our recreation staff
7 retention is an issue due to pay as well. Some of my
8 members make under \$60,000 a year.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I was going
10 to say, what's the starting?

11 DEJON WILLIAMS: It's \$57,000. Their
12 counterparts in other agencies make upward closely to
13 \$80,000. It's about \$78-\$79,000. And then we have
14 that same issue with the choice of working in
15 recreation or going into corrections. They're going
16 to make the corrections pull more times than not. We
17 haven't been invited to do much helping to recruit,
18 but we do have a meeting coming up in the next month
19 where we will give some options of possibilities.
20 But pay is one of the biggest problems.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. And
earlier today we heard from the Commissioner and his
team in terms of when we look at recruitment of
correction officers in particular, the conditions and

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2 the safety piece comes up often. Has the union
3 provided any guidance to Department of Corrections on
4 how they can address the environment or the culture
5 within Rikers?

6 BENNY BOSCIO: Well, in terms of the
7 violence, I mean, you know, we have addressed the-
8 I'm sorry, could you repeat your question? I just
9 got lost there.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No, I was
11 just saying that earlier today the Commissioner and
12 his team had mentioned that a part of the challenges
13 they have in recruitment has been that people don't
14 feel safe in those roles.

15 BENNY BOSCIO: Correct.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And so I
17 wanted to know has there been any efforts by the
18 Department to work with the union in terms of
19 addressing some of that. Have you given
20 recommendations even in terms of some of the things
21 to address and reduce like the assaults that are
happening on the correction officers that would make
their job more- make people more interested in these
opportunities?

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3 BENNY BOSCIO: Yeah, I mean, safety's the
4 main issue, right? Fixing the cell doors as you guys
5 have talked about. And I think the Commissioner said
6 it would take 10 years to fix all the cell doors.
7 You know, fixing the cell doors and the amount of
8 money that the city's going to spend on borough-based
9 jails shouldn't be mutually exclusive, right? Like,
10 if we're not getting off the island, there needs to
11 be a priority in fixing cell doors. The population
12 can pop out with- you know, out of the cells with a
13 fork. Not to mention that there are no more viable
14 deterrents in place, right? We talk about crimes
15 being committed in jail, and crimes in jail are
16 treated differently than they are in the state of New
17 York, in the City, right? And there shouldn't be
18 treated, right? When crimes are committed in jails
19 and there's person in custody stabbing or slashing or
20 person in custody to correction officer, yes, there's
21 a re-arrest process, but the re-arrest results in
concurrent sentencing. So, there's no consecutive
sentencing. There's no added time to that, and I
think the population realizes that. So, if there's
no deterrence in place, how is anybody going to

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2 change behavior? How do we create safety when there
3 are no viable consequences anymore for those actions?
4 And we've suggested. We've pleaded. I mean, the
5 assaults speak for themselves, right? The numbers
6 I'm giving you are accurate numbers. 660 assaults
7 last year and 140 already in three months' time, you
8 know, there's no deterrence in place. So, we're
9 constantly asking the question what are we going to
be- what's going to be done here to deter behavior.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
11 that. And then my last question for this panel is
12 around the Federal Monitor. Just wanting to
13 understand if there is a role for the unions to play
14 in the conversations with the Remediation Manager to
15 your knowledge, and have you met with him? Has he
16 met with the unions at all?

17 BENNY BOSCIO: We met with the
18 Remediation Manager, briefly, about a week ago. You
19 know, it was a good meeting. He's not settled yet.
20 I think it's a couple weeks before he actually gets
21 settled, but we will be having consistent meetings
with him and the Commissioner.

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3 DALVANIE POWELL: Can I answer something
4 I wanted to bring to your attention. We had a more-
5 in my opinion- a more structured electronic
6 monitoring program during COVID. The one that was-
7 the recent electronic monitoring that we have now, we
8 wasn't really- we wasn't a part of it. It was
9 mentioned to us under the previous administration,
10 and then our concern was the staffing issue. It's
11 not structured the way it was during the COVID. I
12 just wanted to bring that to your attention. And we
13 didn't meet with anybody about anything. It's a good
14 program. I think it's a very good program that needs
15 to be looked at and reassessed for Probation
16 Department. But I just wanted to bring something to
17 your attention. Before I came here today, we spoke
18 about safety. Probation is the scale of justice,
19 right? So we have to balance, and I keep hearing the
20 social work. There is a social work component.
21 That's because we have to help with the
rehabilitation component. Before I came here today,
I had to run to Brooklyn, because one of my female
supervisors was tackled by a probationer who was
trying to escape while they was trying to place him

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2 under arrest for a warrant. So, people tend not to
3 think about us and our safety, and I've had- many
4 officers have been hurt and injured in the midst of
5 working, whether more so in the office than they do
6 in the field. So, I need the City Council and the
7 City to understand that probation officers deal with
8 the same exact element- I'm going to just finish-
9 element of-

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: [interposing]

11 No, my [inaudible] at times.

12 DALVANIE POWELL: [inaudible] as Benny and
13 his team because- we're community corrections and
14 they deal with the inside part of it. So I just
15 wanted to make that clear to the City Council that we
16 have same our problems as the rest of the law
17 enforcement.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No, thank you
19 for-

20 DALVANIE POWELL: [interposing] And when
21 we talk about retention and y'all talked about
relationships earlier, understand we have to build
relationships with the clients, right? So, every
time there's a probation officer that leaves, that

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3 has to start all over again, because we have to build
4 trust, because they've been through so many systems
5 that disappoints them or failed them. So, when they
6 get with this probation officer, we're building
7 trust, we're building supervision plans. We're
8 trying to get them on the right track, and what
9 happens? They're gone again. Last week alone,
10 Council Member, nine people put in for their
11 resignation. One unit alone in Queens, she has no
12 probation officers come next week, none, wiped out.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Oh, that's
14 not good. Okay. and is there ways that the Council
15 can support the recruitment efforts, too? Because I
16 know in the last administration there was these
17 borough-wide, like, recruitment efforts and things
18 like that. Do you see the unions working with the
19 respective departments in doing forward-facing things
20 like that again?

21 DALVANIE POWELL: Yeah, I got some ideas.
22 You know, I'd love to sit with the City Council as
23 well so we can all brainstorm, because it takes a
24 village, right? So, we not on this- in it by

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2 ourselves. So, I would love to do something like
3 that?

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Absolutely.

5 BENNY BOSCIO: You've done some
6 community-based stuff and going with the departments
7 to promote the job with some of our fraternal
8 organizations in different communities. That is
9 actively going on right now. You know, you were part
10 of the Council last time. We appreciated the
11 unanimous vote that we got from the home rule message
12 on our 20-year pension bill. Unfortunately, the
13 Governor vetoed that. So, we would ask the Council
14 for help in reaching out to state legislatures and
15 the Governor's office to please give us that 20-year
16 pension bill so that we can make the job more
17 attractive.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Absolutely.

19 DEJON WILLIAMS: And the recreation unit,
20 we have not had a meeting, but again, we do have
21 something- we have some dates planned for the next
months, so hopefully we can get in and sit down and
have a discussion on some ways to fix things. Some
years back, we requested having persons in custody

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3 move to different units where they can get recreation
4 activities to make it a little safer, but again, that
5 goes hand in hand with the correction officers having
6 the amount of staff to actually be able to move them
7 from a unit to another unit. And if you don't have
8 the amount- the right amount of officers to cover and
9 move, that just can't happen, and my members are
literally in their housing spaces giving recreation
activities.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No, thank you
11 for that. Thank you for your testimony today.
12 Looking forward to the continued conversation. This
panel is dismissed. Thank you.

13 BENNY BOSCIO: Thank you for your time.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: The next
15 panel we're going to call up Michael Klinger, Damon
16 Gilbert, Stephanie Taylor, Caprice Jenerson, Juliet
17 Davis, Karen Adelman with the New York City Bar
18 Association. You could start. You could just turn on
the mic whenever you're ready.

19 MICHAEL KLINGER: Good afternoon and
20 thank you to Chair Brooks-Powers and the committee,
21 committee staff for the opportunity to testify today.

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3 My name is Michael Klinger. I'm a Jail Services
4 Attorney with Brooklyn Defenders. To begin, we
5 acknowledge several promising signs of change in the
6 Department since the arrival of Commissioner
7 Richards. He's committed to use his powers under
8 correction law Article 6A to identify and release
9 people who can safely be managed in the community.
10 The Department has committed to reviving a
11 collaborative working group of families, community
12 members, advocates, and department staff to address
13 concerns around visiting loved ones in the jails.
14 And the Department has moved to improve lines of
15 communication between attorneys representing people
16 in custody and Department leadership. These are each
17 promising steps, but much more is needed. First, you
18 must reduce the jail population, because time spent
19 in custody harms all people and particularly those
20 with medical or mental health needs. The most
21 important thing the city can do is focus on
decarceration. In addition to a population reduction
of several hundred under 6A, this effort must include
fully staffing and opening the long-delayed outposted
therapeutic beds at Bellevue and expediting the

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2 opening of the units at Woodhull and North Central
3 Bronx, all years behind schedule. Even once
4 completed, these units will account for fewer than
5 400 beds which is as insufficient as it is necessary.
6 Next, we must protect all New Yorkers by ensuring
7 that the Department's contractors don't violate
8 sanctuary laws. Our understanding is that telephone
9 service provider Securis currently stores and mines
10 all jail calls for data that it then may sell or
11 otherwise share, possibly as an additional
12 revenue-generating product. Its clients include
13 federal agencies charged with civil immigration
14 enforcement, which means that New York City is
15 potentially violating sanctuary laws every time
16 someone makes a phone call from the jails. Finally,
17 treat trans people with safety, dignity and respect.
18 We urge the Council to pass Intro 134 to require that
19 people in custody are housed in accordance with their
20 gender identity. This is a life-saving law that is
21 consistent with city and state human rights laws that
protect trans people outside of jails, so we can give
it the force of law and protect everyone in city
custody from harm.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

3 KAREN ADELMAN: Good afternoon. Thank you
4 for the opportunity to speak. My name is Karen
5 Adleman, and I'm a Co-Chair for the New York City Bar
6 Association's Corrections and Community Reentry
7 Committee. And at this time with the new
8 administration, New York City really faces a pivotal
9 opportunity to reform our correctional oversight
10 system. Persistent crises in our jails range from
11 staffing shortages, missed appointments, inconsistent
12 programming to dangerous, unsanitary conditions,
13 visit denials and deaths of people in custody. The
14 Nunez case and the recent appointment of Mr. Deml of
15 the Federal Remediation Manager have really laid bare
16 the systemic challenges and revealed the structural
17 weaknesses and accountability in governance. But
18 against the backdrop of these challenges, the City
19 Charter already provides a mechanism to foster a more
20 humane and just criminal justice system, enshrining
21 the Board of Correction as the City's independent
oversight body for correctional facilities. The BOC
has been charged with this important role for decades
and will continue to perform those charter-mandated

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2 functions long after Mr. Deml's tenure has concluded.
3 This drastic step of appointing the Remediation
4 Manager should itself make clear how important it is
5 to strengthen the BOC's capacity to execute its
6 mandate of oversight. To this end, we urge the
7 Council to ensure that the BOC has resources it needs
8 to perform its important duties. As you heard the
9 BOC describe its mandate when they spoke, it's vast
10 and their outdated technology really severely hampers
11 their ability to manage the voluminous amount of
12 material generated by their monitoring. This
13 deficiency slows down operations and limits the
14 potential insights that can be drawn from the data
15 which in turn hamstring the BOC's ability to ensure
16 compliance with its minimum standards and force the
17 capacity to develop or implement innovations to meet
18 real-time challenges. We believe it is essential the
19 next city's budget give BOC resources to update the
20 sorely outdated technology it currently uses for such
21 critical data collection and management. And as you
heard them speak in their own testimony, the \$2.1
million needed just for that is a minute fraction of
the agency's budget that they oversee. I will submit

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2 the rest of my testimony, but we also believe that
3 adequate staffing levels are very essential,
4 especially given the transition to the new
5 borough-based jails which will be even more
6 geographically dispersed.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
8 that.

9 JULIA DAVIS: Good afternoon. Thank you,
10 Chair and committee members. I'm Julia Davis. I'm
11 the Executive Director of Youth Represent. I want to
12 focus my testimony on adolescents and young adults,
13 over-represented throughout the system from arrest
14 through incarceration and who represent hundreds and
15 hundreds of young people on Rikers Island today.
16 Youth Represent serves adolescents and young adults
17 through age 26, and I want to just take a moment to
18 reflect on how little has been focusing our resources
19 on adolescents and young adults. The City has never
20 gotten any Raise the Age money, even though the law
21 has been on the books since 2018. We have seen a
systematic sort of pullback of city funding for young
people in the juvenile justice system. We're drawing
with the impacts of COVID which although they are six

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2 years old, we're looking at adolescents and young
3 adults that had their adolescence and young years
4 like severely impacted by the COVID pandemic. And
5 most importantly, the last administration reduced
6 significant in Department of Probation and other
7 parts of city government the investments in young
8 people that keep them out of the system. When we
9 think about the hundreds of thousands of dollars we
10 spend on incarcerating young people, we have to think
11 about the opportunity for reinvestment, not only in
12 ADT and ATIs which bring young people home, but in a
13 really robust continuum of services that keep kids in
14 school, connect them with work, resolve mental health
15 issues, address family dynamics and are going to move
16 our young people in the right direction. So, I urge
17 you to take a look at a new report that came out from
18 the New York City Youth Justice Coalition. This
19 landscape report which will be included in my
20 testimony outlines some very specific areas for
21 reinvestment that the budget should include. I'll
just highlight a few of them for you today,
particularly in the Department of Probation where we
saw a significant divestment from young people.

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2 Bringing back programs like NeON Works, Works Plus,
3 AIM, Impact, Arches, Next Steps, these are programs
4 that have been proven to have an impact on community
5 safety and young people, and so I'm looking forward
6 to working with you on a budget that brings those
7 things forward. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

9 Did you give the Sergeants a copy?

10 JULIA DAVIS: Yes, it's coming. Thank
11 you so much.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Oh, okay. I
13 was looking for it. Go ahead.

14 CAPRICE JENERSON: Good afternoon and
15 thank you for an opportunity to testify. I am
16 Caprice Jeneron. I am the President and attorney in
17 charge of the Office of the Appellate Defender, also
18 known as OAD. OAD has existed for nearly 40 years in
19 the criminal legal space to ensure that justice does
20 not end at conviction and sentence. We represent
21 individuals after sentencing to correct legal errors,
to enforce constitutional rights, and uphold the
integrity of the criminal legal system. We are one
of the few organizations in New York City dedicated

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2 exclusively to appellate and post-conviction
3 representation, and that focus matters. Appellate
4 work requires specialized expertise, sustained
5 attention, and a long-term commitment to each case.
6 It is also mandated representation. When someone
7 cannot afford counsel, the city has an obligation to
8 provide representation not only at a jury trial, but
9 also on appeal. And yet, criminal appellate defense
10 does not receive the same level of investment or
11 visibility as other parts of the system. At OAD, we
12 are a small, highly-specialized team. We train the
13 next generation of appellate advocates. We carry
14 complex cases that span many years. We support our
15 clients not only in court but as they prepare to
16 return to their communities, and that work
17 strengthens public safety, promotes fairness, and
18 builds trust in the legal system. But we are doing
19 that work in a funding structure that has not kept
20 pace with reality. Flat contracts, rising costs, and
21 a lack of parity across the legal system creates
structural gaps that make it difficult to sustain the
workforce and service required to meet our mandate.
That's not a budget issue. That's an issue of

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2 equity. If appellate representation is required, as
3 it is, it must be adequately resourced. If we expect
4 high-quality advocacy, we must invest in the people
5 and the systems that make it possible. And I
6 appreciate the opportunity to testify. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Ready for
8 you, and I believe Stephanie Taylor is in the room.
9 You can come because you were called as a part of
10 this panel. Go ahead.

11 DAMON GILBERT: Good afternoon. Thank
12 you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Damon
13 Gilbert. I'm an attorney with New York Lawyers for
14 the Public Interest. I'm here to talk about Rikers
15 conditions. Rikers continues to expose thousands of
16 New Yorkers to dangerous and deteriorating conditions
17 and these harms are not incidental. They are
18 systemic and ongoing. At the same time, the city
19 continues to invest considerable resources into this
20 system while failing to deliver safety or civility at
21 any kind. Despite the level of spending, people
remain trapped in conditions that expose them to
mold, contaminated water, extreme temperatures,
polluted air, and violence, often because the systems

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3 that would allow them to leave or avoid incarceration
4 altogether are underfunded or unavailable. To
5 improve safety and meet the city's legal obligations
6 to close Rikers by 2027, the budget should prioritize
7 safely reducing the jail population. First, the city
8 should take immediate steps to continue expanding the
9 release programs like 6A to ensuring people are
10 discharged with connections to community-based care
11 and housing. Second, the city should invest in
12 alternatives to incarceration programs. Third, the
13 city should invest in mental health service like
14 additional Intensive Mobile Treatment teams, Forensic
15 Assertive Community Treatment teams, and residential
16 treatment beds. The path to closing Rikers runs
17 through these investments, and I ask that this
18 Council work to align the budget with that goal.
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: You finished?

21 Okay.

22 STEPHANIE TAYLOR: Good afternoon, Chair
23 Brooks-Powers and members of the City Council. Thank
24 you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is
25 Stephanie Taylor and I serve as the Director of the

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3 Incarcerated Mother's Law Project and Volunteers of
4 Legal Services or VOLS. For over 40 years, VOLS has
5 partnered with CBOs in the private bar to provide
6 free civil legal services to New Yorkers who
7 otherwise cannot afford or access representation.
8 For more than 20 years, the VOLS Incarcerated
9 Mother's Law Project has helped individuals
10 incarcerated in New York's women's prisons and jails,
11 including the Rose M. Singer Center, RMSC, on Rikers
12 Island with their family law needs. Through this work
13 we regularly meet parents who are trying to maintain
14 relationships with their children while navigating
15 incarceration, Family Court and reentry. And what we
16 see is a crisis that goes unnoticed. The steady
17 erosion of family relationships when parents become
18 involved the criminal legal system. Structural
19 support for parents before, during, and after
20 incarceration is extremely limited to non-existent.
21 Family Court and foster care timelines continue to
run while parents are being held in custody.
Communication with caregivers and children becomes
difficult, and guidance about parental rights is
scarce. Many parents lose contact with their

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2 children or worse, lose their parental rights
3 altogether without ever receiving meaningful legal
4 information or assistance. At RMSC our team meets
5 many mothers and parents hoping to understand how to
6 protect their legal rights. While our legal clinics
7 and the great work of institutional legal services
8 providers and social services organizations such as
9 Our Children and Osborne Association provide critical
10 support, they are only small interventions in a much
11 larger systemic problem. To address this gap, the
12 City should take three key steps. One, fund programs
13 that provide family law assistance, specifically for
14 incarcerated parents to invest more in
15 community-based organizations to develop family law
16 advisory services and to re-ensure parents receive
17 clear information about their parental rights and
18 Family Court obligations at sentencing or at the
19 earliest stages of custody. When parents become
20 involved in the criminal legal system, they should
21 not lose the chance to remain part of their
children's lives. With earlier support and targeted
investment, New York City can take meaningful steps

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2 to preserve these vital family connections. Thank
3 you so much.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

5 And did you submit that in writing as well?

6 STEPHANIE TAYLOR: I will do so, yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. And
8 everyone submitted theirs in writing? Okay, because
9 I only got a few up here, so I just wanted to make
10 sure. Thank you. This panel is dismissed. We'll
11 call up the next panel. Zachary Katznelson with the
12 Independent Rikers Commission, Megan Marcelin, New
13 York City ATI Coalition, Amanda McCarthy, CASES,
14 Luisa Taveras, Women's Prison Association, Reginald
15 Chatman, the Fortune Society. And Zachary can get
16 started by turning on the mic whenever you're ready.

17 ZACHARY KATZNELSON: Good afternoon,
18 Chair Brooks-Powers. Thanks for the opportunity to
19 testify. Zachary Katznelson with the Independent
20 Rikers Commission. Just building off your questions
21 on overtime earlier about truth in budgeting, it
seems to me that maybe a challenge could be put to
the Department to actually look at the subpopulations
within the Department, for instance people with

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2 serious mental illness, people with addiction. How
3 much are they actually spending to take care of those
4 folks, to provide services, to provide services while
5 people are in jail and think about reentry plans for
6 when they get out with the goal of course being that
7 they never come back into jail? What would it
8 actually take? What are they spending now, and what
9 is the goal? And then what would the budget be to
10 actually match that? Because right now we have a
11 budget that is a cookie cutter from prior years,
12 right? It doesn't have the stamp of Commissioner
13 Richards. It doesn't have the changes that he might
14 want to see. He just started a few days before it
15 was released. But what are we actually building for
16 as a city? Right now, Rikers' budget and Rikers'
17 reality is so much about putting out the fires of the
18 day, those steam pipes that burst, whatever it is,
19 but not stepping back and actually planning. If
20 we're going to get out of the mess we're in, we're
21 going to need to have that in a budget that actually
matches, a budget that actually truthfully meets the
needs safety-wise and service-wise inside the jail.
This budget is not there yet. And just wanted to

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2 mention a note on recruitment and retention. One
3 thing that our commission has talked about and
4 pushed- we may have had a chance to discuss a little
5 bit. I have a GI bill for people that work in the
6 correctional world, health care staff, recreational
7 staff, officers, people on probation, whatever it is,
8 that maybe they're not going to stay 20 years or 22
9 years or whatever until their pension. Maybe they
10 stay three or five years. Hopefully, they stay
11 longer. But after that, they get assistance just
12 like a soldier might, right? With home mortgage
13 loan, with a small business loan, with something
14 that'll move them as a stepping stone to something
15 else. Maybe that'll help bring people in. Hopefully
16 they stay again, but at least start with recruitment.
17 It's not just about pensions and dollars. Obviously
18 that would help, but maybe a different way of
19 thinking about how to bring people into that
20 community of work. Thank you so much.

18 MEGAN FRENCH-MARCELIN: Thank you, Chair
19 Brooks-Powers and staff of the committee. My name is
20 Megan French-Marcelin. Today I testify on behalf of
21 the New York City Alternatives to Incarceration and

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2 Reentry Coalition. We are a network of 12
3 organizations that provide supports to
4 justice-involved New Yorkers. In fiscal year 25, our
5 organization served more than 68,000 New York City
6 residents. New York City stands at a pivotal moment
7 in its criminal justice reform journey. The long
8 overdue closure of Rikers Island forces us to
9 confront a fundamental question: What does real
10 safety look like and for whom? Because the truth is
11 we cannot jail our way to safety. Rikers Island has
12 come to symbolize the worst failures of our criminal
13 legal system, a place defined by horrific conditions,
14 systemic abuses and a culture of impunity. This is a
15 system that perpetuates harm, not safety. It is why
16 the city must invest in community-based alternatives.
17 Research clearly demonstrates that these programs
18 reduce the likelihood of future convictions, decrease
19 homeless and psychiatric hospitalization, increase
20 connections to essential services, and foster civic
21 engagement. These programs are as cost-efficient as
they are effective, and yet we sit here facing \$4.6
million in cuts in Preliminary Budget. We are seeking
restoration and the \$20 million increase in ATI and

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2 reentry services from the administration. From the
3 New York City, the New York City ATI Coalition is
4 requesting an additional \$2.4 million increase across
5 our 12 organizations, because we have a choice before
6 us: continue a cycle that has failed for
7 generations, or invest in a future grounded in care,
8 accountability and true safety. I urge you to choose
9 the latter.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

11 AMANDA MCCARTHY: Good afternoon, Chair
12 Brooks-Powers and members of the Committee on
13 Criminal Justice. I am Amanda McCarthy, Senior
14 Director and Youth Policy Lead at CASES. We served
15 12,000 New Yorkers last year with programs that
16 supported their goals and prevent the trauma of
17 incarceration. City Council must ensure that the
18 budget makes the necessary investments to close
19 Rikers Island. At a cost of nearly half a million
20 dollars per person per year, Rikers Island is the
21 most expensive and least-effective tool that our city
has to creating community safety. Unfortunately, key
investments to reduce incarceration are missing from
the Preliminary Budget. CASES is a proud member of

COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE

1
2 the Alternatives to Incarceration, ATI Reentry
3 Coalition, an ecosystem of providers that provide
4 public safety and community wellbeing. We are asking
5 the administration for the restoration and expansion
6 of funding for ATI's reentry services at MOCJ at
7 \$24.6 million increase from what is proposed in the
8 budget. The Coalition is requesting an additional
9 \$2.4 million increase in the ATI and Reentry Programs
10 initiative across our 12 organizations. The proposed
11 \$4.6 million cut to ATIs and reentry programs must be
12 reversed, and funding must be increased by an
13 additional \$20 million to meet the needs of our
14 communities. CASES operates a range of ATI programs
15 which not only keep people out of incarceration, but
16 it transforms lives. In fiscal year 25, almost 2,300
17 people were able to avoid incarceration by
18 participating in one of our ATIs, including Nathaniel
19 Act. Among clients who successfully completed the
20 program, none are re-convicted of a violent felony
21 and less than five percent are reconvicted of any
felony. The program decreases homelessness by 70
percent and cuts psychiatric hospitalizations in
half. We can urge the city to fund these programs.

1 COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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3 In addition to supporting ATI and reentry services,
4 the city can further improve public safety and
5 community wellbeing by fully funding Assertive
6 Community Treatment, ACT, and Intensive Mobile
7 Treatment, IMT, programs to end the waitlist for
8 services, expand access to mental health services for
9 young people by doubling funding for the
10 court-involved youth mental health initiative and
11 supporting ACS' proposal to expand CASES' ACES
12 program to serve more preventive [sic] youth. Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

15 LUISA TAVERAS: Good afternoon. My name
16 is Luisa Taveras, and I am the interim CEO of Women's
17 Prison Association. Chair Brooks-Powers, thank you
18 for the opportunity to testify today. Founded by
19 Quaker abolitionists and prison reformers in 1845,
20 WPA has spent over a century challenging the systemic
21 inequalities that push women, specially Black and
Brown women into the criminal legal system. The
population of women in New York City jails had been
steadily declining prior to the Adams administration.
Sadly, over the past four years the number of women

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2 detained on Rikers Island has more than doubled.
3 This increase is concerning, especially given that
4 there was clear evidence that community-based
5 alternatives are more effective in preventing women
6 from future contact with the criminal legal system
7 and in promoting their long-term stability. New York
8 City has not prioritized funding for organizations
9 like WPA which aim to safely reduce the population at
10 Rose M. Singer Center, Rosie's, the women's facility
11 on Rikers Island through community-based diversion
12 and reentry supports. Instead, it appears that the
13 city has adopted a jails first approach, exemplified
14 by the Department of Corrections plan to triple the
15 number of beds at the new women's jail to be built in
16 Kew Gardens. This shift undermines the very
17 community infrastructure that offers women the safe
18 and supportive pathways out of the criminal legal
19 system. A different approach is not only possible, it
20 already exists. WPA meets women and gender-expansive
21 people where they are by providing trauma-informed
gender-responsive support before, during and after
incarceration, including comprehensive case
management, trauma-informed clinical care and stable

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2 housing. This helps them reclaim stability and
3 opportunity. This year we are asking the
4 administration for the restoration and expansion of
5 funding for ATIs and reentry services at MOCJ at
6 \$24.6 million increase from what is proposed and
7 asking the Coalition- in addition, the Coalition is
8 requesting \$2.4 million increase in Alternatives to
9 Incarceration and reentry programs. We are also
10 requesting that the Speakers Initiative to support
11 the launch of a Mothers and Families Together, a
12 diversion program for incarcerated mothers on Rikers
13 Island. And finally, WPA seeks Council funding for
14 two key pillars of our stabilizing model,
15 trauma-informed clinical care, and supportive
16 housing. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

16 REGINALD CHATMAN: Good afternoon, Chair
17 Brooks-Powers and members of the Committee on Public
18 Safety. Thank you for the opportunity to talk about
19 the Fortune Society's work and our ATI reentry
20 programs promote public safety and empower young
21 people to build their lives. My name is Reggie
Chatman. I am the Director of Policy at the Fortune

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1 Society David Rothenberg Center for Public Policy.

2 I'm also a formerly incarcerated person who spent 25
3 years in prison and so I have lived experience and
4 professional experience with respect to the issue.

5 I'll also be referring testimony as to be succinct.

6 Over 58 years, the Fortune Society has supported

7 people returning from incarceration. In FY25 we

8 served over 18,000 people, including over 1,000

9 people through our ATI programs. We are also a proud

10 member of the NYC ATI Reentry Coalition which

11 collectively have served more than 30,000 people

12 annually. But to truly enhance community safety, we

13 can and we should be serving more people to reduce

14 the number of people detained at Rikers Island and to

15 enhance community safety. Therefore, we are

16 requesting that this administration restore and

17 expand funding for ATI and reentry services by

18 providing \$24.6 million more than they did in their

19 Preliminary Budget proposal. We also specifically

20 request \$2.4 million increase in City Council's ATI

21 and reentry program initiative. We are grateful to

the City Council for standing with us in FY26 and we

urge the Council to do the same thing this year, not

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2 just to prevent cuts, but to ensure expansion of this
3 important work. Evidence shows that our programs
4 work. In FY25, 83 percent of our participants
5 completed ATI programming and over 92 percent
6 completed gun diversion programs. ATI and reentry
7 service programs cost just a fraction of the \$500,000
8 that it costs to incarcerate one person in Rikers
9 Island. So, it makes sense financially to invest in
10 ATI services as opposed to incarceration. We also
11 urge the panel to provide \$3 million more for the
12 Board of Corrections to regulate, monitor and inspect
13 our city's correctional facilities. Thank you,
14 Committee and Chair Brooks-Powers for allowing me to
15 testify.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I
15 was trying to follow you. I'm like wait, what's
16 going on? I thank you all for the work that you all
17 are doing. And just wanted to ask a few follow-up
18 questions. And first of all, I really appreciated
19 the ideas in terms of thinking outside of the box for
20 recruitment opportunities, and hope that the
21 Commissioner and his leadership team take some of
that under advisement as well, because we want to

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3 make sure that all stakeholders as it pertains to
4 Rikers in that space have the safety and the support
5 that they need. Obviously, my focus has been really
6 opening up those beds that exist right now as well,
7 to start moving folks out and, you know, getting
8 things back on track in terms of the construction for
9 the borough-based jails. But what's really important
10 is getting the numbers of those that are in custody
11 are down. And so based on some of the testimony from
12 the agencies earlier today, I just would like to hear
13 some of the reaction from the advocacy side in terms
14 of like what programs are- I would say, based on
15 data- really strong in terms of the work that they're
16 doing to reduce and in terms of the efforts from the
17 administration, what more should we be investing in,
18 in terms of prioritizing. Because we know there's
19 like a \$5 billion deficit in the budget. So
20 everyone's going to be fighting for a piece of the
21 pie across the different categories in the budget.
So, if we had to prioritize, where are we
prioritizing most that's going to help us to achieve
the goal to reduce the population on Rikers Island?

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3 MEGAN FRENCH-MARCELIN: I'll take a crack
4 at that first. Thank you for the really thoughtful
5 question. As I said, we served 60,000 people last
6 year at a fraction of the cost that it takes to run
7 our jails and prisons. And last year, we sat before
8 Council facing \$17 million of cuts, and I will say
9 that as an advocate it's frustrating to be here year
10 after year, fighting against cuts for programs that
11 we know are more effective at public safety than our
12 jails. Every year, I'm sitting here talking about an
13 increase that amounts to about seven percent of what
14 DOC spends on overtime each month. Our total ask
15 across 12 organizations is about seven percent of
16 their overtime budget each month. And so when we're
17 talking about reducing the size of budget, it is
18 DOC's budget that we need to reduce, and we need to
19 be pouring millions and millions of dollars into
20 these life-saving programs, because I believe I told
21 your staff, we are working on a cost benefit analysis
with John Jay's data- Justice- Data for Justice
Collaborative. And part of the reason we want to do
that is we've been able to show just how effective
our programs are, but our programs aren't just

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3 cheaper on the front end, right? We can take about
4 50 people through program, for the cost of one person
5 spending a year on Rikers. That's already
6 unconscionable. But we also build on the back end,
7 because people are connected to employment. They're
8 not utilizing homeless shelters. They're not going
9 to the emergency room as a form of health care,
10 because they're connected to Medicaid and other
11 social safety net benefits. And so I think, if we
12 want to really transform our safety system, we have
13 to think about it more holistically. We know what
14 makes communities safe. It's people having access to
15 the basic resources that every single person in New
16 York should have as a human right. And to do that,
17 we need to invest in programs that actually grow
18 people, don't deplete them.

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CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
that. Anyone else want to answer it?

ZACHARY KATZNELSON: I'd say something.
Thank you. I feel like there's issues of funding and
there's also issues of connecting people to those
programs. And one of the real failures right now
unfortunately is- part on your questions of getting

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3 people to their video appointments to actually meet
4 with providers, right? That is a real failure right
5 now inside. We're missing these opportunities. Just
6 an example, supportive housing. We know how
7 essential that is for people to have civility and
8 care when they get out. The return rates right now of
9 people with mental illness coming back to Rikers
10 Island, 47 percent are back in Rikers within one
11 year. Not just re-arrested, re-incarcerated within
12 one year. That's a true failure across a whole range
13 of systems. That supportive housing can provide
14 incredibly stabilization when it's possible. Last
15 year, there was 1,009 people approved for supportive
16 housing in Rikers. 14 were actually placed in
17 supportive housing. We have 4,000+ vacant units
18 across the city of supportive housing. We've only
19 managed to place 14 people coming out of Rikers and-

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: [interposing]

21 Why is that? Because I heard that statistic before,
and I thought it was mind-blowing, but what is the
hurdles that have to be met in order to get into
that- those housing, because I feel the same way
about the affordable housing. Just broadly speaking,

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2 you have a new development. I've seen it in my
3 district and other places where we're building
4 housing, and then it takes months for like HPD to
5 place someone through Housing Connect. So, in terms
6 of the supportive housing, what has been the
7 challenges that you've identified?

8 ZACHARY KATZNELSON: The first one is
9 that out of the roughly 1,000 people, only about 265
10 were actually referred to a provider at all. So,
11 that first step of actually letting providers in the
12 community know this is a person who needs housing,
13 that's missing, and that's a combination of- it was
14 Correctional Health Services. Now, it's actually the
15 Department of Social Services, HRA. They're in charge
16 now of making those referrals. They've not been
17 consistently making those referrals. Part of the
18 idea was consolidating, taking away from CHS, giving
19 it to HR was supposed to help the process.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: what triggers
21 to DSS to make the referral. What is like- walk me
through that step so I can understand it.

ZACHARY KATZNELSON: Sure.

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3 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What, like-
4 because we work with DSS all the time in my office.
5 So, I'm just trying to understand how do they get
6 triggered to know that this someone that is formerly
7 incarcerated that's eligible for supportive housing
8 in need. What triggers that for that population?

9 ZACHARY KATZNELSON: So, they will get
10 the application, the completed application hopefully
11 from Correctional Health Services. Correctional
12 Health Services working with people in the jails to
13 actually work on their applications. Once they're
14 done, they are sending it to HRA. HRA is actually the
15 one who approves and decides what type of supportive
16 housing would be appropriate for this person. It's
17 then on them. They already have- so they now have
18 that person in their system. It's on them now to say,
19 okay we're going to reach out providers and say
20 here's somebody who needs this space. We interview
21 them. We meet with them. So, that bureaucratic
piece is not happening right now. And that is
something I think we need to delve in frankly with
the HRA about how do we improve that process, and
then there's a second piece about how hard it is for

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2 people in Rikers Island, not just in terms of getting
3 people to the appointment, but even making the
4 appointment in the first place. Rikers requires the
5 agency give three different dates where they can hold
6 time to meet with the person. Then they get back to
7 them two weeks later, three weeks later and sometimes
8 say, okay, we've chosen this one date for you. We've
9 had to hold them open the whole time.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Is that-

11 ZACHARY KATZNELSON: [interposing] And
12 then if the person-

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: [interposing]
14 Is that because of staffing shortage?

15 ZACHARY KATZNELSON: It's staffing
16 shortage to some extent, but it's prioritization.
17 It's like how are we going to- if you know- the new
18 commissioner over the new vision. We're going to
19 really work hard to get people into the care they
20 need and figure out where they should be, and Rikers
21 is not the answer for people with profound mental
illness. So, hopefully, this will become more of a
priority. I think it wasn't enough of a priority
under the prior administration to figure out how do

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2 we move people through the system as efficiently and
3 quickly as possible.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And is there
5 a budgetary gap that exists or a legislative gap that
6 would help to your point make this process flow more
7 seamless, or both?

8 ZACHARY KATZNELSON: I think probably
9 both. For instance, mandating that the referrals
10 happen with a certain reasonable period of time.
11 Just like Council last year mandated that holistic
12 assessments take place within three weeks for someone
13 who might be referred to an ATI or six weeks if it's
14 more complicated. That same process, which is great,
15 that hasn't been implemented yet. That's another
16 great example of something to push to make sure what
17 is the funding necessary to make that happen, to make
18 sure we have the social workers, psychiatric
19 professionals, whatever it is to make that happen.
20 On the same lines, what could we do for referrals to
21 supportive housing? What does HRA need to make these
referrals? What does CHS need to actually complete
the applications to make sure they have the staff,
and then how do we get people actually connected and

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2 hopefully placed. And I would say one last piece of
3 this is the- it is not easy to get someone coming out
4 of Rikers placed in supportive housing. I think it
5 is critical that justice-involved supportive housing
6 which this council has fought hard to increase the
7 supply of- an RFP just went out for 190 new beds.
8 That'll raise the total number to 310 beds across the
9 city dedicated to this population. The sooner those
10 beds can come online, the better, but that's only
11 part of the city's promise. The city promised 500 of
12 those beds back in 2019 as part of the plan to close
13 Rikers. We're still 190 beds short. And so I think
14 that's a funding issue as well. Like, let's make
15 sure we can meet the needs of people. Remember,
16 these are the people that are cycling in and out,
17 aren't getting the care they need. The people we see
18 on the street who are in complete distress, alright,
19 that's who we're talking about here. We have a much
20 better answer.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And at what
19 rate do you find that securing housing or going
20 through one of the diversion programs has resulted in
21 reducing recidivism?

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3 ZACHARY KATZNELSON: What rate? Is that
4 what you're asking?

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Yeah, do you
6 have any data around that?

7 ZACHARY KATZNELSON: [inaudible]

8 MEGAN FRENCH-MARCELIN: So, in written
9 testimony, we have stats from all of our member
10 organizations, and we can send you more of those, but
11 I think when we're talking about this population,
12 it's really, really important to remember the stats
13 coming out of CASES, to my right, who- in- they run
14 the ACT teams across the city that work with serious
15 mental illness, justice-involved populations. And
16 for folks who have gone through the Nathaniel Act
17 program, they have seen 100 percent of people not
18 commit a new felony in two years, and they have
19 reduced homelessness by over 90 percent.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Well, thank
21 you to this panel. This is very informative. The
panel is dismissed.

ZACHARY KATZNELSON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Next, we're
going to hear from Benjamin Heller with the Vera

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2 Institute of Justice, Magaly Melendez, Center of
3 Justice Innovation, Melanie Dominguez, Katal Center
4 for Equity, Health and Justice, and Jennifer Parish.

5 BENJAMIN HELLER: Hello. Hi, Chair
6 Brooks-Powers. Thank you for the opportunity to
7 speak today. My name is Benjamin Heller, and I'm a
8 Program Manager at the Vera Institute of Justice. I
9 appreciate this hearing today. DOC's FY27
10 Preliminary Budget is \$2.99 billion including fringe
11 benefits, pension contributions and debt service.
12 This is a five percent increase compared with last
13 June's adopted budget. Just \$14 million of that
14 budget is for external rehabilitative programming.
15 OMB authorizes 7,060 officers through the end of FY
16 2030 which is three years after the city's deadline
17 to close Rikers Island. Filling these roughly 1,300
18 vacancies would cost the city approximately \$174
19 million in salaries and benefits. In addition, DOC's
20 overtime budget remains high and inaccurate. If
21 spending in FY27 resembles the current fiscal year,
DOC's overtime budget will last less than six months.
A massive staffing increase would move DOC in the
wrong direction. The agency is poised to downsize

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2 when Rikers closes, and the Lippman Commission
3 estimates that the new borough-based jails will only
4 require 3,240 officers. Now is the time for DOC to
5 deploy staff more efficiently and effectively, not
6 hire more, especially given there seems to be little
7 connection between DOC hiring and reductions in
8 overtime. We urge OMB to lower DOC's authorized
9 uniformed headcount in this and subsequent years to
10 bring staffing inline with the needs of the new
11 borough-based jail system. We also urge OMB to
12 introduce new units of appropriation for executive
13 management and programming which will enable greater
14 budget transparency and accountability. To reduce
15 overtime spending, DOC leadership must deploy
16 existing staff more efficiently, reinforce strong
17 overtime oversight, and most importantly, submit
18 realistic budgets to which city government can hold
19 the agency accountable. In addition, our written
20 testimony includes specific budget asks related to
21 community-based mental health treatment, low-barrier
housing, alternatives to incarceration, reentry,
oversight, and non-police mental health response. By
investing in these services, the Mamdani

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2 administration can shrink the jail population in
3 preparation for the move off Rikers, deliver
4 responsive and effective governance, and improve
5 community safety for all New Yorkers. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

7 MAGALY MELENDEZ: Good afternoon, Chair
8 Brooks-Powers and the members of the committee. My
9 name is Magaly Melendez. I'm the Deputy Director of
10 Bronx Community Solutions Initiative of the Center
11 for Justice Innovation. Thank you for this
12 opportunity to testify. New York City is a defining
13 moment. The closure of Rikers Island is not just a
14 mandate, it's a promise, a promise to build a system
15 that is smaller, safer and rooted in dignity and not
16 detention. But that promise is at a risk if we do
17 not invest- I'm sorry- invest in what actually makes
18 communities safer. We cannot close Rikers by simply
19 shifting where people are held. We close Rikers by
20 reducing who enters the system in the first place,
21 and that requires sustained investment in diversion,
prevention and community-based solutions. At Bronx
Community Solutions, we see this every day. Through
the Bronx Community Solutions Driving While

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2 Intoxicated Treatment initiative, we address
3 underlying substance use and reduce repeat offenses.
4 Through the Bronx Hope program we connect individuals
5 through harm reduction, peer support, and life-saving
6 resources. And through the Center for Justice
7 Innovations Driver Accountability program we improved
8 street safety by changing driver's behavior through
9 reflection, accountability and education rather than
10 relying on punitive responses like fines, prosecution
11 or short-term incarceration. And this work extends
12 far beyond Bronx Community Solutions. Initiatives
13 like Save our Streets which focuses on
14 community-based violence interruption and reimagining
15 intimacy through social engagement like Rise Project
16 which supports individuals in building healthy
17 relationships and reducing harm are critical to
18 addressing root causes of the system involvement.
19 Together, these programs are not optional. They are
20 the infrastructure of a safer city. Yet, too often,
21 these are very programs that face uncertainty when
budgets are tightened. If we are serious about
public safety and about closing Rikers, we must
protect and expand these investments, not reduce

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2 them, not delay them. We have made important progress
3 and we have a clear path forward. By sustaining
4 these investments, we can continue building a system
5 that reflects our shared values, safety, fairness,
6 and community. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

8 MELANIE DOMINGUEZ: Good afternoon. My
9 name is Melanie Dominguez. Thank you so much, Chair
10 Brooks-Powers, for holding today's preliminary
11 hearing. I am the Organizing Director of the Katal
12 Center for Equity, Health, and Justice. Our members
13 are from across the city and include people who have
14 been incarcerated, family members of currently and
15 formerly incarcerated people, and many more. Many of
16 our members know exactly how horrific Rikers Island
17 is and are deeply troubled that the closure plan is
18 off track. This fiscal year 2027 budget proposal
19 doesn't just fall short, it is a continuation of the
20 status quo that persisted under the Adams
21 administration. As a result, it leaves the Rikers
closure plan in limbo and fails to address the rising
jail population at Rikers Island. While Mayor
Mamdani continues to say he wants to close Rikers,

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2 those words fall short with this budget proposal.
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4 The city budget is where the rubber meets the road to
5 save lives and close Rikers once and for all. As the
6 crisis worsens at Rikers, the jail population rises
7 and the closure plan remains off-track, the fiscal
8 year 2027 Preliminary Budget allocates \$2.99 billion
9 to DOC which represents a five percent increase for
10 the agency budget compared with last June's adopted
11 budget. The Vera Institute cites that the DOC budget
12 increase is driven largely by personnel costs rather
13 than investments like educational, therapeutic and
14 reentry programming which is what is needed at this
15 current moment. And in addition, the administration
16 proposes increasing- while the administration
17 proposes increases the bloated budget of the DOC, the
18 Board of Correction budget is once again under funded
19 at a time when oversight is critical, and we heard
20 from the panel today as well. And so another key
21 problem with this proposal is that it fails to
investigate and address the increased cost of the
borough-based jails which have risen from the
original estimate of \$8 billion when the closure law
was first enacted in 2019. And so these are things

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3 that we really hope that the City Council can
4 address, and one way that we can clearly reduce the
5 jail population is by investing in mental health
6 access in the community and making sure that folks
7 are not being put at Rikers Island because they have
8 a severe mental illness. We actually have a report
9 that we put out with the Data Justice- the Data
10 Collaborative Justice at John Jay, which is cited in
11 the written testimony. And so all in all, we really
12 are asking the Council to cut the DOC's bloated
13 budget, making sure that the number of people
14 incarcerated at Rikers Island is reduced, and calling
15 for the Council to pass a budget that advances the
16 closure of Rikers Island and invests in communities.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

15 JENNIFER PARISH: Good afternoon. My
16 name's Jennifer Parish. I'm the Director of Criminal
17 Justice Advocacy at the Urban Justice Center Mental
18 Health Project, and I'm a member of the Halt Solitary
19 campaign and the Jails Action Coalition. Thank you
20 for the opportunity to testify. In my testimony
21 today I want to highlight three main points. First,
the suffering in the city jails must end, but that

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2 will most effectively occur through decarceration,
3 getting people off of Rikers Island and not by
4 continuing to budget for more than 7,000 uniformed
5 officers. DOC is one of the most richly staffed jail
6 systems in the country. We need to eliminate the more
7 than 1,300 vacancies that exist. That would save us
8 \$174 million annually. This money could be much
9 better spent on community resources including mental
10 health services and alternatives to incarceration
11 that will enable us to reduce the jail population and
12 provide people the supports they need to thrive
13 outside the jails. Second, the Department of
14 Correction must invest in effective therapeutic
15 programming to successfully implement Local Law 42
16 and end solitary confinement once and for all. With
17 a mayor and commissioner who believe in ending
18 solitary, they must follow the law which the Council
19 enacted in 2024, and that includes quality
20 programming as alternatives to solitary confinement.
21 We urge the Council to support the Department in
bringing in outside experts with the experience
designing and implementing effective programming, and
they could do so for a tiny fraction of the funding

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2 that's allocated for the vacancies. Finally, the
3 Council should increase Board of Corrections budget
4 so that the agency can provide essential oversight
5 and transparency needed. In at least the last 30
6 years, the Board has not been funded at the level
7 required to perform its vital function. Currently,
8 the Board's funded for 33 staff who have tremendous
9 responsibility to monitor jail conditions, conduct
10 investigations, compile data, and publish reports.
11 The board staff in the facilities are essential for
12 addressing abuses. And if I could just give one
13 example of the importance of the Board of
14 Corrections. In December, their staff identified in
15 the solitary confinement units at West facility,
16 people were being held in smocks without their
17 clothes and required to wear diapers. It took the
18 Board's much advocacy with the Department to get that
19 corrected. So, it's essential that they are fully
20 staffed to be able to have people in the facility to
21 observe conditions and correct them. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

Thank you to this panel. You're dismissed. Next we
will hear from Darren Mack with the Freedom Agenda,

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2 Tammy Reed, Freedom Agenda, Eduardo Rodriguez,
3 Freedom Agenda, Joseph Soto [sp?], Freedom Agenda,
4 Victor Herrera [sp?], Freedom Agenda. You can start
5 once you turn on the microphone.

6 DARREN MACK: Thank you, Chair
7 Brooks-Powers and Council Members for the opportunity
8 to testify. My name's Darren Mack, Co-Director at
9 Freedom Agenda. We're one of the organizations
10 leading the Campaign to Close Rikers. Our members
11 are survivors of Rikers like myself and family
12 members who suffered the harms of Rikers along with
13 their loved ones. They know from experience that
14 Rikers Island continues cycles of violence and
15 destabilizes communities while devouring the
16 resources that could be used to create real safety.
17 Unfortunately, key investments in a safer and
18 healthier New York City are missing from the
19 Preliminary Budget. That's why we're calling for
20 \$69.2 million more to meet mental health needs
21 outside of Rikers, \$48.5 million for diversion and
reentry programs and \$3 million to correct the Board
of Corrections oversight capacity. The City Council
pointed out recently that some longstanding vacancies

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3 and city agencies could provide opportunities for
4 cost savings. The Department of Correction should be
5 at the top of this list. DOC has 7,060 authorized
6 position for uniformed officers, but less than 5,800
7 on staff, and about 1,300 positions vacant. These
8 vacancies have been growing for years despite law and
9 eligibility court requirements, increasing pay in
10 benefits, and conducting a multi-million dollar
11 recruitment campaign. Filling these vacancies would
12 cost and additional \$174 million per year. Every
13 penny of that money would be better spent on efforts
14 to reduce the jail population like the investments
15 we're advocating for. DOC's authorized headcount
16 gives them a staffing ratio four times higher than
17 the national average. The budget also authorized DOC
18 for more than two times more officers than they would
19 need to operate the borough facilities. If the city
20 is serious about reducing incarceration and closing
21 Rikers, cutting these vacancies is no-brainer.
Closing Rikers is a legal and moral mandate that must
be backed up by this year's budget. I'll submit along
with this testimony a full budget analysis that

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2 outlines amendments needed in fiscal year 27 budget
3 that pave the way to closing Rikers. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

5 TAMMY REED: Good afternoon, Chair

6 Brooks-Powers and committee members, and thank you
7 for allowing me to testify today. My name is Tammy
8 Reed, and I'm testifying on behalf of Freedom Agenda
9 and as a member of the Campaign to Close Rikers. I
10 want to start off by saying that as a tax-paying
11 citizen of this city, I'm blown away about the amount
12 of money we spent to house one person for on year on
13 Rikers Island which is to the tune of almost a half a
14 million of year. I live off of less than \$25, but yet
15 I still eat, I have adequate clothing, utilities and
16 so forth. So we can do much better than this. What
17 I'm proposing today is that the current budget of
18 fiscal year 2026 be adjusted to be in line with the
19 closing of Rikers. I'm requesting that instead of
20 passing this over-bloated DOC budget that the City
21 Council work with the Mayor to reallocate funds to
areas where we truly do need the funding such as
mental health services, more vigorous community
services such as affordable housing for those with

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3 mental health, disease, and others just to name a
4 few. Again, I am baffled as to why we keep dumping
5 money into a facility such as Rikers Island which is
6 a disgrace and sin our city instead of addressing the
7 real issues that's plaguing our city such as mental
8 health housing and preventative care. And what I mean
9 by that is funding programs to help our young ones
10 from ever entering the system. Recently, I was at an
11 event where a panelist said that there are surveys
12 that correlate failing test scores in schools to the
13 number of beds needed in juvie [sic] hall, and I was
14 flabbergasted by this statement. If you can
15 correlate test scores to juvie hall beds, then surely
16 you can correlate it to the fact that there is a need
17 to fund schools and programs that prevent kids from
18 filling up these beds. There are a host of
19 organizations out here that are already dedicated to
20 this goal. One such organization is the Family
21 Enrichment Centers. They're popping up all over New
York City. I volunteer at one in New York- in St.
Albans, Queens, and as a privy [sic] member, one of
the main issues is funding. And this is true for a
lot of organizations that are already up and they're

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2 doing the work. So, I ask that the committee
3 consider taking some of that Rikers money and put it
4 into these programs to help out young ones.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And what's the
6 program in St. Albans?

7 TAMMY REED: The Family Enrichment Center,
8 Community Connections.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. With
10 Preston?

11 TAMMY REED: Yes. Yep.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Got it.

13 TAMMY REED: Work with him every day.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Yes.

15 JOSEPH SOTO: Good afternoon, Committee
16 Members.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Please turn
18 your mic on.

19 JOSEPH SOTO: Good afternoon, Committee
20 Members. My name is Joseph Soto. I'm a Native
21 American Spiritualist, but 30 years ago I was an
adolescent trapped in the gladiator school of Rikers
Island. Between 94 and 97, the violence was so
consistent that I had to cut my long hair short just

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3 to survive to make sure that no one could grab it
4 during a fight. It wasn't until December 5th, 1995
5 when I was finally able to start growing my hair
6 back, because I was in state custody. I kept it long
7 ever since as a symbol of my spirit and my freedom.
8 30 years later the violence at Rikers Island has not
9 changed. It remains the same, if not it's worse. The
10 only thing that has grown since is the waste of
11 public money. Today, New York City spends nearly
12 half a million dollars to incarcerate just one person
13 for a year. This alone DOCs in spending over \$370
14 million on overtime. We are pouring billions into a
15 system that fails to provide safety and dignity to
16 our people. More than 50 percent of people in Rikers
17 Island today have a mental health diagnosis and
18 hundreds are there simply because they are homeless.
19 I urge the Council to reign in DOCs inflated budget
20 and stop the cycle of violence, please. I lived
21 through this decades ago. Expand the Board of
Correction's oversight to hold the system
accountable. Redistribute these funds into
community-based services that foster real safety and
wellbeing, including the mental health and diversion

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2 programs that the campaign to close Rikers Island is
3 advocating. The city committed to closing Rikers
4 Island in 2027. We cannot wait another 30 years.
5 It's time to divest from the failure to reinvest in
6 our people. Thank you for hearing me out.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

8 VICTOR HERRERA: Good afternoon, members
9 of the committee and fellow attendees. My name is
10 Victor M. Herrera and I'm a long-time
11 directly-impacted leader and member of Freedom
12 Agenda, Close Rikers. I want to begin with- I have
13 experienced the violence that was mostly provoked by
14 staff during patrolling factors in the Department of
15 Corrections, Rikers Island, where the other C's [sic]
16 are ignored when it comes to controlling care and
17 custody. The individuals that are pre-trial detained
18 that are faced with the difficult overwhelming
19 understanding of what they are faced when confronted
20 with the criminal prosecutorial apparatus that is
21 just too tough to overcome. When, as COBA just
provided, they are faced with overworked staff,
equally stressed for their own short fall, whether
overtime or staffing shortage engaging in daily

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3 correctional ideologies, the result is harm to both
4 sides, not one side as implicated by the union boss
5 COBA. Detainees are always the best source to blame
6 for the harm they experience. I am here today to urge
7 you to increase funding for specific reentry programs
8 that to prepare pre-trial detained or parolees to
9 return with the necessary information and resources.
10 There is an absence of reentry prep for individuals
11 to participate when the appropriate needs upon
12 returning the community is vital for those seeking
13 economic and housing resources. The absence of
14 substantive information and preparation leaves many
15 at risk with the current metro card and Go ID. for
16 cost effectiveness, public safety, justice remedial
17 education and resources would go a long way for
18 people returning. And the urgency- these security
19 issues are truly overwhelming and traumatizing. More
20 social services are needed while individuals are
21 being held in custody or detained. Without increased
allocation of funding for such programs, the city's
therefore underserved people and communities, leaving
them open to a negative suggestiveness open to
interpretation by other agencies, i.e. NYPD and

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2 Probation. I understand that budget resources are
3 limited and that every department is making a case
4 for funding. However, cutting or underfunding
5 prevention programs like the one proposed for people
6 in detention will only cost more. This is not just a
7 moral choice, it is a fiscally responsible one.

8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

10 Thank you to the panel. This panel is dismissed.
11 Next, we'll call up Alice Hamblett with Worth Rises,
12 Vidal Guzman with America On Trial Incorporated,
13 Barbara Menny [sp?], and Tanawah Downing. You can
14 start whenever you're ready. Just unmute the mic.

15 ALICE HAMBLETT: Good afternoon, and
16 thank you Chair Brooks-Powers and the committee for
17 the opportunity to testify. My name is Alice
18 Hamblett and I'm the Policy Campaigns manager at
19 Worth Rises, a nonprofit working to end the
20 exploitation of people impacted by the prison
21 industry. In 2019, New York City became the first
jurisdiction in the country to provide free phone
calls in its jail, strengthening family
connectedness, improving re-entry outcomes and

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2 increasing public safety. However, it has become
3 apparent that even free calls from New York City
4 jails come at a steep cost. Under the guise of a
5 simple phone system, the DOC and its tail telecom
6 vendor Securis have constructed a vast, high-tech
7 spying network that primarily targets Black and Brown
8 New Yorkers. Without a warrant, DOC records every
9 call and collects biometric, financial and other
10 personal information from all participants, including
11 the roughly 20,000 people admitted to New York City
12 jails each year, as well as their family and friends,
13 and packages it to sell to other law enforcement
14 agencies. Meaning that personal data can circulate
15 forever. Introduction 96, the End Correctional
16 Community Surveillance Act, sponsored by Council
17 Member Brewer, would ban this recording and data
18 collection without a warrant, force the destruction
19 of data already collected, and create a private right
20 of action for anyone whose information was unlawfully
21 surveilled or disclosed. It recaptures the promise
of our first amendment rights while retaining the
tools necessary for public safety. Please see our
written testimony which we will be submitting

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2 following the hearing for me details. Thank you for
3 your time.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

5 TANAWAH DOWNING: Good afternoon. My name
6 is Tanawah Downing and a civil rights advocate and
7 litigator out of Washington, D.C. My friends, there's
8 nothing more destructive to our union than paying
9 people to violate the constitution of the United
States of America, and please allow me to explain.

10 The Constitution is the overarching requirements that
11 every state must follow, and trust, we all understand
12 that. States cannot enact their own alternative
13 legislation, substitute for that the guarantees of
14 the Constitution and then go out and enforce it as
15 though it's constitutional. Clause One of Amendment
16 Five to the United States Constitution says no person
17 shall be held to answer for a capital or otherwise
18 infamous crime unless on presentment or indictment of
19 a grand jury. However, the state of New York has
20 enacted its own alternative legislation that permits
21 prosecution attorneys and law enforcement to charge
by information, not by indictment, and that is
unconstitutional. Now, an emolument violation is

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2 when you pay someone to violate the constitution. If
3 you receive federal funding, you cannot pay someone
4 to violate federal law. There's two areas of the
5 constitution that reinforces this. The first is
6 Article 1 section 10. That's where it says that no
7 state shall create new law that shall impair the
8 obligation of contracts. Police officers,
9 prosecutors, judges, they're all under a contract.
10 That's a contract to perform based upon the oath or
11 affirmation they took to support and defend the
12 constitution of the United States of America. So
13 when the State of New York creates a law that directs
14 them to disobey the constitution, that would
15 obviously be a violation of Article 1 Section 10.
16 The second place that reinforces this is the 14th
17 amendment. That's where it says no state shall
18 create or enforce any law which shall abridge the
19 privileges and immunities of United States citizens.
20 The privileges and immunities of United States are at
21 a minimum which is enumerated in the Bill of Rights.
They cannot be impaired. This was affirmed by the
United States Supreme Court in 2019 and as a result,
the State of New York has created a law and is

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2 directing their agents who unfortunately you all pay
3 to violate the Constitution of the United States. As
4 a result, there's currently an inordinate amount of
5 people currently in prison here in the state of New
6 York illegally and unconstitutionally. So, I'm
7 preparing to litigate this with the United States
8 Supreme Court on behalf of the more than 700,000
9 people who are currently in prison here in America
10 illegally and unconstitutionally. I'm here today to
11 let you know that if we continue to pay these public
12 officials to violate the constitution, the criminal
13 sanctions can come from that. We don't want to head
14 down that path. I'm here to work with you to fix this
15 problem, but we need to- I need to make sure that
16 you're aware that paying people to violate the
17 constitution is an emolument violation. It is illegal
18 and it is a crime. So, I'm asking you honorable
19 individuals today to please take a look at Clause 1
20 Amendment 5 [sic], confirm what I'm saying to be
21 true, and then direct your agencies to act in a
lawful, constitutional manner that is consistent with
the obligations they have codified in the

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3 Constitution of the United States of America. Thank
4 you so much.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

6 VIDAL GUZMAN: Hey, how you doing? My
7 name is Vidal Guzman. I'm the ED and Founder of an
8 organization called America on Trial. I come here
9 today as someone who was incarcerated twice on Rikers
10 Island. I was tried as an adult when I was 16. I was
11 on Rikers when I was 17. I was also re-incarcerated
12 when I was 19. As New York moves to close Rikers, we
13 must treat community reinvestment as urgent and
14 important in these budget hearings. If we're serious
15 about reducing incarceration, we start long before
16 people, especially young people come in contact with
17 the system. Right now, New York, we heard everybody
18 say, operates the most richly. We also heard the
19 Department of Correction talk about how much they
20 spend on overtime, and then on top of that, we also
21 know how much it costs to keep a person on Rikers
Island, half a million. These resources could be
better used outside of the jail system to meet people
needs and prevent any type of interaction with the
criminal justice system. Through my work with

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3 America on Trial and as a lifelong resident of West
4 Harlem, I see everyday how underinvestments in
5 community like mine limit for young people how real
6 investments would do far more safety than continuing
7 to pour money into jails. We need more funding for
8 young programs, youth programs, job opportunities for
9 youth, pathway into growing industries like
10 technology. And I heard some of the public talk
11 about that we need investment in violence
12 interruption program, housing, trauma-informed. And
13 as the city continues to wanting to close Rikers, I
14 just urge this council to remember the commitment,
15 requesting meaningful investment in New Yorkers and
16 their communities. You know, closing Rikers does not
17 mean moving Rikers somewhere else. We really need to
18 think about the real shift. The question I should
19 ask y'all, is- the question is not whether we can
20 afford to invest in our community. The reality is
21 that we can't afford not to. Thank you for your time
for the opportunity to share my testimony.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so
much. Thank you to the panel. The panel's
dismissed. For virtual panelists we will be calling

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2 individuals one-by-one to testify. Once your name is
3 called, a member of our staff will unmute you and the
4 Sergeant at Arms will set the timer and give you the
5 go-ahead to begin. Please wait for the Sergeant at
6 Arms to announce that you may begin before delivering
7 your testimony. First we'll hear from Alicia Thomas.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

9 ALICIA THOMAS: Good afternoon, Chairs
10 and members of the Council. My name is Alicia Thomas
11 and I'm a resident of Bronx County. I'm here today
12 as someone who's experienced homelessness firsthand,
13 and as a member of Freedom Agenda and the Campaign to
14 Close Rikers Island. There was a time in my life when
15 I was doing everything I could to survive, trying to
16 keep a roof over my child's head while the system
17 kept pushing me down. My three-year-old son and I
18 were living in a shelter that was not fit for a child
19 and the conditions were very unsanitary, and I
20 worried consistently about his health and safety.
21 Every day was about survival with almost no
resources. However, what I experienced is not an
isolated story. What I lived through and what I saw
others going through were not so different from what

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1 happens at a place like Rikers Island. The
2 over-reliance on the carceral system does not solve
3 these struggles, it deepens them. Families are
4 separated. Children grow up without parents, and
5 people who need housing, health care, and mental
6 health support are met with punishment instead of
7 solutions. At a cost of nearly half a million
8 dollars per person a year, Rikers Island is the most
9 expensive and least-effective tool our city has to
10 create safety. And yet, the FY 2027 Preliminary
11 Budget that's presented is missing the very
12 investments that would actually help people before
13 they reach a point of crisis. We need the city to
14 invest a figure of \$69.2 million in health, mental
15 health care outside of Rikers, including restoring
16 and expanding Intensive Mobile Treatment teams to
17 eliminate a wait list of over 500 people waiting on
18 those services. To restore funding for Assertive
19 Community Treatment, and to create more Forensic ACT
20 teams for people returning home. We need investment
21 in outpatient competency restoration so people aren't
stuck waiting on Rikers Island for-

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3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
4 expired.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
6 Next we'll hear from Naya Williams.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: We'll next
9 hear from Jesse Taylor [sp?].

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

11 JESSE TAYLOR: Blessings to you all and
12 thank you for this opportunity to share my testimony.
13 My name is Jesse and I'm a member of Freedom Agenda
14 and I work with reentry services provider for women,
15 mothers and gender non-conforming people at the Rose
16 M. Singer Center. As you've heard all morning and
17 into the afternoon, collaboration between NYC Public
18 Schools, city agencies and impacted communities can
19 guide as a sustainable decarceration path. We need
20 to prevent rearrests, but empowering communities with
21 material support in the form of \$41 million to
restore FY 26 funding levels for Intensive Mobile
Treatment Teams, \$3 million in capital funds to
support 16 new residential treatment beds, an
additional \$48.5 million for diversion and reentry

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2 services through the Office of Criminal Justice,
3 \$6.89 million to expand programs serving
4 court-involved youth with mental health needs, and
5 \$20.3 million to establish at least 150 units of
6 low-barrier housing for people with court-involvement
7 and mental health diagnoses. As the Center for Court
8 Innovation's 2021 Closing Rikers Island report says
9 there are many short and long-term interventions that
10 can foster safer neighborhoods without the harms from
11 an overreliance on jail. These approaches range from
12 violence interruption programs to expanded mental
13 health care to investments in supportive housing,
14 youth programs, special education, and other efforts
15 to prevent to violence and address fundamental needs
16 in impacted communities. Closing Rikers and
17 developing care-driven people first, trauma-informed
18 borough-based jails will require intentional
19 community-centered action and a budget that promotes
20 wellbeing and reduces incarceration. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
19 Jesse. We'll go back to Naya Williams [sp?].

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.
21

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3 NAYA WILLIAMS: Thank you so much for the
4 opportunity to be able to speak today. My name is
5 Naya Williams and I'm a Deputy Director with the
6 Osborne Association's Court Advocacy Services which
7 has provided defense-based advocacy in New York City
8 for indigent clients for 40 years. Osborne serves
9 over 18,000 individuals and families a year who are
10 navigating the court system. For 21 years I have
11 advocated for individuals in New York City often
12 accused of serious offenses. I have recently worked
13 a 40-year-old client with co-occurrent untreated
14 mental illness and substance use disorder. I
15 interview, assess, and successfully advocated for a
16 sentence of time served with community treatment as
17 an ATI. This client, like many others arrested and
18 whose humanity was secondary to the offense, was
19 granted the opportunity to redirect his life.
20 Judicial buy-in and zealous legal strategy that
21 recognizes the effectiveness of CAS' mitigation and
advocacy contributed to the outcome. Collaboration
with defense attorneys promotes public safety while
saving public dollars spent on pre-trial detention
and prison sentences. Last fiscal year, CAS

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2 prevented 1,674 years of incarceration at a cost
3 savings to the city and state of \$227 million. I want
4 to close with reflections from parole attorney at
5 Legal Aid, Nain Kim [sp?] who recently said, "The
6 Osborne Association team shines a light on the
7 dignity of our clients in face of a system that makes
8 them feel small and invisible. Clients have shared
9 with me with the Osborne social workers have laid
10 down the bridges to realize their dreams to show that
11 they are capable beyond expectations, deserving of
12 investment and valuable members of the New York City
13 community. Without Osborne's collaboration, much
14 freedom and many second chances would have been
15 denied, but with their support our clients have
16 returned to their homes, families, jobs, and programs
17 knowing that they had others in their corners and
18 rooting for them." Osborne is a longstanding member
19 of the New York City ATI and Reentry Coalition. The
20 Coalition has requested an additional \$2.4 million
21 increase across our [inaudible] member organization.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you to
everyone who came out and testified today. If there's

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2 anyone in the room who wishes to testify that we may
3 have inadvertently missed, we just ask that you fill
4 out one of the cards and give it to the Sergeant at
5 Arms. Hearing none. Just want to thank the agencies,
6 the advocates and everyone in between for coming out
7 today and lending your voice to the start of this
8 budget season. Thank you everyone.

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[gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date April 27, 2026