

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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March 17, 2026

Start: 9:51 a.m.

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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Crystal Hudson,  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Alexa Avilés  
Gale A. Brewer  
Tiffany Cabán  
Linda Lee  
Darlene Mealy  
Frank Morano  
Sandy Nurse  
Pierina Sanchez  
Althea V. Stevens  
Shanel Thomas-Henry  
Sandra Ung

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

Erin Dalton  
Commissioner of the New York City Department of  
Social Services, DSS

Scott French  
HRA Administrator

Christine Fellini  
DHS Interim Administrator

Richard Johns  
DSS Chief Program Performance and Financial  
Officer

Chris Gonzalez  
DSS Chief Strategy Officer

Chandra Smith  
Human Resources Administration

Lisa Rhymer  
Eligibility Specialist for SNAP

Anthony Lackham  
President of Local 5949

Nevien Swailmyeen  
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

Melodie Crowell  
Associate Bias Opportunity Specialist

Ana Champeny  
Citizens Budget Commission

Molly Eckerle  
Met Council

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

Carlos Rodriguez  
City Harvest

Alyson Rosenthal  
West Side Campaign Against Hunger

Beth Williams  
Hunger Free America

Rachel Sabella  
No Kid Hungry New York

Nicole Hunt  
Food Bank for New York City

Mun Clifford  
Legal Aid Society

Abby Biberman  
New York Legal Assistance Group

Anna Arkin-Gallagher  
Brooklyn Defender Services

Montel Cherry  
Litigation for Mobilization for Justice

Shervon M. Small  
Legal Services NYC

Alison Wilkey  
Coalition for the Homeless

Victoria Leahy  
Homeless Services United

Lauren Schuster  
Urban Resource Institute

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

Jade Vazquez  
Win

Catherine Trapani  
Volunteers of America-Greater New York

Brendan Cheney  
New York Housing Conference

Shanaya RamseyMaria Dias  
Anthos|Home

Reham Bader  
Arab-American Family Support Center

Meg Epsey  
Her Justice

Katie Chun Kei Mui  
The Network

Richard Flores

Danna Denis  
Riders Alliance

Gabina Santamaria  
Riders Alliance

Nicholas Pearson  
Self

Aarthi Bola  
Self

Jeremiah Gonzalez  
Fair Fares program

Brian Fritsch  
Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee

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

Anita Kowk  
United Neighborhood Houses

Amy Blumsack  
Neighbors Together

Shana McCormick  
Rethink Food

Hailey Nolasco  
Center for Justice Innovation

Marcos Reyes  
CBC Youth Advocate

Mikaela Perry  
Equity Advocates

Elizabeth Mackey  
Self

Judith Douglas  
Housing Organizing for People Empowerment

Jason Cianciotto  
GMHC

Angel Donague  
Testifying on behalf of Annie Minguez

1  
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning ladies and  
3 gentleman. This is a mic check for the Committee on  
4 General Welfare. Today's date is March 17, 2026. We  
5 are located in the Chambers and this is being  
6 recorded by Mike Kane.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning. Welcome to  
8 today's New York City Council Preliminary Budget  
9 hearing for the Committee on General Welfare. Please  
10 silence all cell phone and electronic devices.  
11 Moving forward, no one is to approach the dais.  
12 There is no food or beverage in the Chambers. If you  
13 wish to participate in today's hearing, please fill  
14 out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms.  
15 Any other questions, reach out to us.

16 Chair, we are ready to begin.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: [GAVEL] Thank you so much  
18 and good morning. I'm Crystal Hudson, Chair of the  
19 General Welfare Committee. Thank you for joining me  
20 for the Fiscal 2027 Preliminary Budget hearing for  
21 the General Welfare Committee.

We will hear from two agencies, the Human  
Resources Administration, HRA and the Department of  
Homeless Services, DHS testifying under the umbrella  
of the Department of Social Services, DSS. The

1  
2 city's proposed Fiscal 2027 Preliminary Budget totals  
3 \$127 billion. Of which \$19.26 billion or 15.2  
4 percent funds DSS, making the second largest agency  
5 budget after DOE. This encompasses \$14.62 billion  
6 for HRA and 4.63 billion for DHS. DSS serves some of  
7 the most vulnerable populations in the city and these  
8 services are more vital now than ever. There were  
9 notable changes made in the Preliminary Plan for both  
10 agencies.

11 HRA saw \$2.63 billion in new needs, which are  
12 largely city funded, added in Fiscal 2027. The  
13 majority of that funding is going towards fully  
14 funding the baseline for City FHEPS and cash  
15 assistance, which the Council has long pushed for. I  
16 was very happy to see the Preliminary plan increased  
17 baselined funding for Community Food Connections.  
18 HRA's food pantry support program to \$74.5 million in  
19 Fiscal 2027 and the outyears.

20 DHS has 90- had \$935.8 million in city funded new  
21 needs in Fiscal 2027 including baselined funding  
increases for shelters and street homeless outreach.  
Street homeless individuals are amongst the most  
vulnerable New Yorkers and the precarity of their

1  
2 situation only grows as climate change makes extreme  
3 weather more common.

4 I look forward to working with the Administration  
5 on effectively addressing the needs of this  
6 population while maintaining a balanced budget. I'm  
7 particularly concerned about DHS's high vacancy rate,  
8 which was 27 percent as of January. DHS cannot  
9 adequately perform its responsibilities without the  
10 social workers and administrators, required to  
11 operate its shelters and intake sites or those doing  
12 outreach on the streets of New York in arctic  
13 temperatures.

14 It must prioritize hiring vacant positions and  
15 reducing its attrition rate. I'm also concerned that  
16 the recent mandate for agencies to reduce half their  
17 vacancies will impact DHS's ability to maintain its  
18 current level of services at a time when they are  
19 more needed than ever. I'm concerned that the recent  
20 mandate for agencies to reduce half their vacancies  
21 will impact HRA and DHS's ability to maintain its  
current level of services at a time - sorry.

The vacancy reduction in city funds savings  
mandated coupled with the current federal threats  
places DSS in a more vulnerable position. Under

1  
2 prior administration, savings mandates have included  
3 exceptions made for frontline workers and other  
4 essential staff that support shelter and benefits  
5 assistance programs, which make up much of DSS's  
6 staffing.

7 I'm also concerned about the areas where the  
8 budget does not adequately support the essential  
9 programs administered by HRA and a necessary level of  
10 staffing required to provide clients with services in  
11 a timely manner.

12 While HRA has made headway on their backlog of  
13 SNAP and cash assistance applications, denial rates  
14 have increased, which is troubling. We have still  
15 been hearing that it is very difficult to get through  
16 to HRA by phone and that clients are experiencing  
17 very long wait times at HRA centers.

18 HR1, the major federal spending bill passed by  
19 congress last year reduces federal support for  
20 administrative and benefit costs of SNAP. New York  
21 State may choose to pass on a portion of these costs  
to the city, directly impacting HRA's Expense Budget.  
While the Preliminary Plan adds 183 SNAP eligibility  
specialists positions with an aim to improve the  
city's SNAP payment error rate, there's a growing

1  
2 concern over staff retention and lack of  
3 institutional knowledge, which both have a direct  
4 impact on agency operations, clients service and  
5 benefits processing time.

6 Changes to SNAP from HR1, not only impact the  
7 city's expense budget but also would impose a greater  
8 burden on individuals and families in need in a city  
9 where one in five New Yorkers are receiving SNAP  
10 benefits.

11 While the budget maintains the essential benefits  
12 programs administered by HRA and the sheltered  
13 programs administered by DHS, we need to think more  
14 deeply about where we can most effectively allocate  
15 our limited city resources, especially during these  
16 uniquely challenging times.

17 DHS's shelter census continues to grow. At the  
18 end of February, there were over 85,000 individuals  
19 in DHS shelters, nearly one-third of them asylum  
20 seekers. While shelter exists - while shelter exits  
21 to permanent housing did increase in Fiscal 2025, so  
did the shelter census in the process for subsidized  
housing placements must be accelerated in order to  
significantly decrease the number of people living in  
our city's shelter system.

1  
2 Programs such as City FHEPS are more important  
3 than ever and the best way to move long term shelter  
4 residents into stable, permanent housing. However,  
5 this program suffers from numerous process  
6 bottlenecks on top of the difficulty of finding  
affordable housing in a very expensive city.

7 In today's hearing, we would look forward to  
8 discussing adjustments made in the Preliminary plan,  
9 staffing for Benefits Administration and shelters,  
10 SNAP cost risks and cost shifts as a result of HR1  
11 and the metrics included in the Fiscal 2026  
12 Preliminary Mayor Management Report. It is the  
13 Council's job to carefully review the budgets and  
14 operations of city agencies to ensure that we are  
15 good stewards of public dollars and that we are  
16 providing our city's most vulnerable residents with  
17 the services they need. This is a job I take very  
18 seriously.

19 Before I welcome the Commissioner, I would like  
20 to acknowledge my colleagues who are here today,  
21 Council Members Ung, Sanchez, and Morano.

Finally, I would like to thank the General  
Welfare Committee Staff for their work on preparing  
this hearing. Faria Rahman, Financial Analyst,

1  
2 Elisabeth Childers-Garcia, Financial Analyst, Julia  
3 K. Haramis, Assistant Director, Aminta Kilawan,  
4 Assistant Deputy Director, Penina Rosenberg, Senior  
5 Policy Analyst, Justin Campos, Policy Analyst and my  
6 Chief of Staff, Andrew Wright. And now, Commissioner  
Dalton, our Counsel will swear you in.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Now in accordance with the  
8 rules of the Council, I will administer the  
9 affirmation to the witnesses from the Mayoral  
Administration.

10 Would you all please raise your right hand?  
11 Commissioner Dalton, do you affirm to tell the truth,  
12 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your  
13 testimony before this Committee and to respond  
14 honestly to Council Member questions? HRA  
Administrator Scott French?

15 SCOTT FRENCH: I do.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: DHS Interim Administrator  
17 Christine Fellini? DSS Chief Program Performance and  
18 Financial Officer Richard Johns?

19 RICHARD JOHNS: I do.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And DSS Chief Strategy  
21 Officer Chris Gonzalez?

Thank you. You may begin when ready.

1  
2 ERIN DALTON: Good morning. I want to thank  
3 Chairperson Hudson and the members of the General  
4 Welfare Committee for holding today's hearing and for  
5 the opportunity to testify about the Department of  
6 Social Services Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget.

7 My name is Erin Dalton, Commissioner of the New  
8 York City Department of Social Services. DSS is made  
9 up of both the Human Resources Administration, HRA  
10 and the Department of Homeless Services, DHS so  
11 accordingly, I'm joined by my colleagues, HRA  
12 Administrator Scott French, DHS Interim Administrator  
13 Christine Fellini, as well as DSS Chief Program  
14 Performance and Financial Officer Richard Johns and  
15 DSS Chief Strategy Officer Chris Gonzalez.

16 Collectively we represent the approximately 14,000  
17 hardworking staff who dedicate their lives to  
18 supporting New Yorkers living at or below the poverty  
19 line.

20 Before I begin, I would like to share my  
21 excitement and gratitude in assuming the position as  
22 Commissioner of DSS. In my former post as the  
23 Director of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. That's  
24 Pittsburg, Department of Human Services. I was  
25 focused on strengthening families and communities

1 through a broad network of community based programs  
2 that prevent harm and address critical needs in  
3 housing and homelessness, in senior services, child  
4 welfare, behavioral health and developmental  
5 supports. I look forward to working in partnership  
6 with Speaker Menin, Chair Hudson, and the rest of the  
7 City Council to deliver the vital benefits and  
8 services to the city's most vulnerable populations.

9 Today, I will provide an overview of the FY27  
10 Preliminary budgets for both agencies and highlight  
11 the programs and services supported by those  
12 resources.

13 DSS is the largest local government social  
14 services agency in the country, comprised of the  
15 Human Resources Administration, and the Department of  
16 Homeless Services, DHS. The consolidated management  
17 structure and the shared mission of DSS, provide an  
18 integrated continuum of client services to  
19 approximately 3 million New Yorkers every day.

20 Our efforts to create a financial path to  
21 financial and social sustainability for low income  
New Yorkers are rooted in the following three  
pillars: First, streamlining access to social  
services; second, addressing homelessness and housing



1  
2 homecare, managed care, mental health substance use  
3 services and hospital care and is also administered  
4 by the state. Though the city pays a portion of  
5 Medicaid costs out of the city funds, representing 56  
6 percent of the city funded budget. And HRA sends  
7 these funds directly to the state to be used  
8 alongside other state and federal funds to pay  
9 medical providers and managed care plans. And third,  
10 the remainder of the budget, 16 percent goes to  
11 Public Assistance, 17 percent to Rental Assistance  
12 and Homelessness Prevention, 2 percent for  
13 Administration, 3 percent for Legal Services, 2  
14 percent for HIV/Aids Administration or HASA and 1  
15 percent for Employment Services, Community Food  
16 Connections, Domestic Violence Services.

17 HRA also administers the SNAP Supplemental  
18 Nutrition Assistance Program for 1.7 million clients.  
19 These federally funded benefits, which are about \$5  
20 billion a year, do not flow through our budget, but  
21 they represent another critical benefit that HRA is  
mandated to provide. HRA also administers another  
over \$50 billion in state and federal funds  
supporting NYC Medicaid clients which are not part of  
the city budget. Also note that the DSS budget for

1 administration covers shared services for both HRA  
2 and DHS.

3 Now, I will provide an overview of the DHS  
4 budget. DHS is committed to providing safe,  
5 temporary shelter, connecting New Yorkers  
6 experiencing homelessness to permanent housing and  
7 addressing unsheltered homelessness. DHS has an FY26  
8 budget of \$4.4 billion, of which \$3.5 billion is city  
9 funds. The agency has a headcount of approximately  
10 2,200 and with its not-for-profit partners, is the  
11 largest municipal organization to addressing  
12 homelessness in United States.

13 Almost 97 percent of the DHS budget supports  
14 shelter for families and individuals and services for  
15 the unsheltered including outreach and low barrier  
16 beds.

17 The DHS budget is broken out as follows in FY26:  
18 \$1.3 billion for adult shelter; \$1.27 billion for  
19 family shelter; \$456 million for street outreach  
20 services; and the remaining 4 percent is for general  
21 administration.

In the FY27 Preliminary Budget, this  
Administration is continuing to make investments in  
our critical programs with over \$3.1 billion added in

1 baselined funding, including for the City FHEPS  
2 rental assistance program, cash assistance, DHS  
3 shelters, food assistance programs, affordable  
4 housing services, additional services to support New  
5 Yorkers experiencing street homelessness and support  
6 for our nonprofit partners.

7 As I have highlighted in my testimony, DSS, HRA,  
8 and DHS budgets are significantly reliant on federal  
9 dollars and importantly, the 3 million people we  
10 serve rely on those - those benefits from the federal  
11 government.

12 Enacted in July of 2025, the federal budget  
13 reconciliation bill known as HR1 significantly  
14 changed both SNAP and Medicaid in ways that will  
15 directly affect New York City residents who rely on  
16 these programs to meet basic needs. The law expands  
17 work requirements for SNAP and Medicaid, increases  
18 administrative reporting requirements and reduces  
19 federal funding while shifting more cost to the  
20 states. As a result, many eligible individuals will  
21 lose access to food assistance or healthcare coverage  
due to stricter eligibility rules or paperwork  
barriers, rather than changes in income or need. For  
a city like New York, where millions rely on SNAP to

1  
2 afford groceries and depend on Medicaid for  
3 healthcare, these changes will increase food  
4 insecurity, lead to loss of health coverage, and  
5 place additional strain on local safety net providers  
6 such as hospitals, community health centers and food  
7 banks.

8 Under HR1, the definition of Able Bodied Adults  
9 Without Dependents or ABAWDs in SNAP expanded from  
10 ages 18-54 to ages 18-64 and now applies to adults  
11 without a child under age 14 where it had previously  
12 been 18. The law also removed several exemptions,  
13 including for veterans, people experiencing  
14 homelessness, and young adults who aged out of foster  
15 care. ABAWDs must complete at least 80 hours per  
16 month of work, job training or volunteer activities  
17 to receive SNAP for more than three months in a three  
18 year period.

19 New York had a statewide waiver from ABAWD for  
20 the time limits for many years but that waiver  
21 expired February 28, 2026. The new rules took effect  
March 1, 2026 when ABAWDs in New York City began  
needing to meet the 80 hour monthly work requirement.  
The three month time limit clock began March 2026,  
meaning individuals who do not meet the requirement

1  
2 could start losing SNAP benefits in June 2026, after  
3 their three allowable months.

4 Since the passage of HR1, HRA has embarked on an  
5 aggressive outreach campaign to raise awareness of  
6 the impending impact of these new rules on SNAP  
7 recipients in New York City. Along with repeated  
8 direct outreach to the almost 120,000 identified  
9 clients, we have conducted dozens of information  
10 seminars and trainings to community organizations and  
11 partners including elected officials.

12 We have also amplified awareness through a  
13 variety of public media outlets to ensure clients  
14 have ample opportunity to connect with us to mitigate  
15 any impacts of the new eligibility criteria on SNAP  
16 recipients. If you or anyone you know is a SNAP  
17 recipient and has not yet engaged with HRA, please  
18 encourage them to connect with us immediately through  
19 AccessHRA.

20 Turning to cash assistance in the Preliminary  
21 Budget, FY26 budget for Cash Assistance is \$2.76  
billion to support a caseload of 595,000 recipients  
through June 2025. HRA issued emergency rent  
payments to cover 52,000 households in FY25. Along  
with SNAP and cash assistance, HRA continues to

1 support New Yorkers with other key benefits including  
2 but certainly not limited to Medicaid, Fair Fares and  
3 HEAP.

4 With regard to Medicaid, I cannot stress enough  
5 the automatic Medicaid extensions have ended.  
6 Clients must recertify in order to keep their health  
7 insurance. We are working to ensure that everyone  
8 who remains eligible for Medicaid receives ongoing  
9 benefits. Please continue to remind all of your  
eligible constituents to renew.

10 In collaboration with the Council, we expanded  
11 Fair Fares eligibility to 150 percent of the federal  
12 poverty level in 2025. There are currently 389,400  
13 New Yorkers enrolled in the Fair Fares program.  
14 Please continue to encourage New Yorkers to submit  
for benefits as soon as possible.

15 With regard to HEAP, DSS continues its  
16 collaboration with the state to provide heating and  
17 cooling benefits to New Yorkers. In 2025, over  
18 900,000 New York City households received HEAP  
19 heating and/or cooling benefits. Keeping New Yorkers  
20 in their homes, moving families and individuals out  
21 of shelter, and helping these households remain  
stably housed are all primary goals for the agency,

1  
2 and now I want to talk about our progress in these  
3 areas.

4 First, I would like to provide a quick update on  
5 our DHS shelter population. As of March 6th, the  
6 overall DHS census was 85,471 people. Of the 85,000,  
7 approximately 55,000 are families made up with  
8 children and their adult parents and caregivers, and  
9 children make up 35 percent or more than one-third of  
10 all the people in shelter. The remaining population  
11 are made up of adult men, about 18,000, single women,  
12 about 7,000, and adult families 4,900.

13 In New York City, 97 percent of people  
14 experiencing homelessness are sheltered but that 3  
15 percent is an area of particular focus. DHS  
16 continues to aggressively expand low barrier bed  
17 capacity, which are shelter types targeted to those  
18 experiencing unsheltered homelessness, like safe  
19 havens and stabilization beds. As of March 2026, DHS  
20 had a total of 4,290 low barrier beds online. 300 of  
21 which Mayor Mamdani accelerated to be available  
during the recent cold snap. We expect an additional  
350 safe haven beds to come online before the end of  
the year.

1  
2 In conjunction with these low barrier bed  
3 contributions, on February 18, Mayor Mamdani  
4 announced a revised unhoused encampment response  
5 policy that shifts primary responsibility for  
6 encampment engagement for those experiencing  
7 unsheltered homelessness from NYPD to the Department  
8 of Homeless Services. Under the new protocol, DHS is  
9 now the lead agency responsible for issuing notices,  
10 conducting outreach and offering placements, with  
11 DSNY conducting cleanups and NYPD present only as  
12 needed for safety support.

13 The policy emphasizes daily outreach during the  
14 notice period, with DHS teams returning consistently  
15 to offer shelter placements, safe haven beds and  
16 connections to services. The Administration has  
17 committed approximately \$30 million in baseline  
18 funding for DHS outreach expansion and \$11.9 million  
19 for NYC Health and Hospitals to support increased  
20 street medicine and behavioral health engagement.  
21 This includes 66 additional DHS staff which will be  
primarily outreach workers, expanded street outreach  
and wellness units, show units, and an additional  
bridge to home site for individuals with serious  
mental illness.

1  
2 DSS remains committed to connecting New Yorkers  
3 to permanent housing and keeping them stably housed.  
4 Dss has seen record increases in the number of  
5 permanent housing placements. In calendar year 2025,  
6 nearly 17,000 households comprised of nearly 36,000  
7 New Yorkers were able to obtain permanent housing or  
8 stay in their homes using City FHEPS vouchers,  
9 reflecting a 17 percent increase year over year.

10 Through our Homebase homeless prevention  
11 services, more than 20,000 households or 52,000 New  
12 Yorkers remained in their homes and more than 13,000  
13 households or 33,000 New Yorkers received aftercare  
14 from Homebase to keep them stably housed.

15 Now for the excuse me, now for the 3rd pillar,  
16 creating economic stability. We recognize that more  
17 and more New Yorkers rely on our city's resources to  
18 make ends meet. In addition to the public benefits,  
19 rental assistance and other essential resources we  
20 offer to help get people back on their feet, HRA  
21 career services and other supports enable New Yorkers  
to secure steady income and live sustainable lives.

A good paying job is a key component to a stable,  
economically independent life and HRA offers a wide  
array of career services programs to help low income

1  
2 New Yorkers find and obtain a career that works for  
3 them.

4 In FY25, the agency's career services program  
5 continued to raise the bar, helping nearly 22,000 low  
6 income New Yorkers obtain employment. That's an  
7 increase of over 170 percent compared to FY24 and the  
8 most placement since the onset of the COVID-19  
9 pandemic.

10 Additionally, 10,500 public benefits recipients  
11 were connected to employment through HRA's Business  
12 Link Hire NYC program, a 28 percent increase over the  
13 prior Fiscal Year and a new record for the program.  
14 The PINCC program, which advances training,  
15 education, and job placements enrolled about 2,400  
16 individuals in construction and industrial training,  
17 with 1,330 completions so far. We also have placed  
18 over 1,000 individuals to jobs, of which 900 were  
19 unionized positions.

20 Going forward, we continue to invest in our  
21 career services program. The Pathways for Access to  
22 Careers and Employment or PACE contracts began  
23 October 2025 using the centralized no wrong door  
24 program model with locations throughout the boroughs.  
25 These programs first streamline and minimize travel

1  
2 burdens, maximize access to all employment and  
3 support services and foster strong client  
4 relationships. Second, establish an in demand  
5 occupation and sector focused approach that connects  
6 clients to skilled professions that offer family  
7 sustaining wages. And third, utilize labor market  
8 data to assist clients in gaining marketable skills  
9 for success and advancement in their careers. And  
10 lastly, streamline process for vendors offering a  
11 hybrid approach to engaging clients.

12 I will close by underscoring our ongoing  
13 commitment to break down government silos and improve  
14 access to services. The challenges that DSS, HRA,  
15 DHS work to confront bridge across agencies, and  
16 further, bridge across jurisdictional boundaries.  
17 Overcoming these kinds of challenges go to the heart  
18 of creating the kind of caring, compassionate  
19 communities we seek to live in.

20 We appreciate the opportunity to testify today  
21 and we welcome any questions you may have. Thank  
22 you.

23 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much  
24 Commissioner and I would like to officially welcome  
25 you uhm, to your role. We're excited to have you and

1  
2 look forward to your leadership. I'd also like to uh  
3 state for the record that we've been joined by  
4 Council Member Mealy. Uhm, okay, so we'll get right  
5 into it.

6 On January 29th of this year, the Mayor issued an  
7 executive order requiring every agency to appoint a  
8 Chief Savings Officer. The order required the CSO's  
9 to identify city funds savings of 1.5 percent in  
10 Fiscal 2026 and 2.5 percent in Fiscal 2027 at all  
11 mayoral agencies.

12 Under prior administrations there have been  
13 exceptions made for frontline workers and other  
14 essential staff that support shelter and benefits  
15 assistance programs, which make up much of DSS's  
16 staffing. Are any programs or aspects of HRA or  
17 DHS's budgets exempt from this requirement and if so,  
18 which ones?

19 ERIN DALTON: I will be relying on my colleagues  
20 here as just to note the second week on the ground  
21 and the job, so I'd love to turn that over to Chief  
22 Johns.

23 RICHARD JOHNS: Yes thank you. Uhm, yes, the uhm  
24 calculations for the targets does exclude critical  
25 and essential also mandated programs. So, uhm, you

1  
2 know we're still working out the exact targets but  
3 for the most part - I shouldn't say that. In its  
4 entirety and as the Mayor announced as part of the  
5 initiative, no services will be cut.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, no services will be  
7 cut. Could you share which programs and services  
8 specifically that may be or you're saying all of  
9 them?

10 RICHARD JOHNS: Yeah, it would include things  
11 like Cash Assistance, SNAP, uhm, you know the city's  
12 contributions for Medicaid, uhm uh and uh all of  
13 those -like sorts of mandated programs.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

15 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, I don't have the exact  
16 number - information in front of me but we'll  
17 certainly- you know we expect to submit this on the  
18 20th. We will be on time. We will meet the targets  
19 and we will be able to share at that time.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Great, thank you. The  
21 agencies were also instructed to provide a plan to  
eliminate half of all existing vacancies. As part of  
this mandate, agencies were required to determine  
which positions would be retained and which removed

1  
2 from the baselined budget prior to the release of the  
3 Executive Plan.

4 Currently while HRA and DHS have the highest  
5 vacancy rates seen since 2023, at 13.5 percent for  
6 HRA and 27 percent for DHS, there is still a need for  
7 increased staffing for direct client services,  
8 especially related to the Administration of Benefit  
9 programs. Will HRA or DHS be required to eliminate  
10 any of its vacancies and if so, how many and for  
11 which types of positions?

12 RICHARD JOHNS: Yes, uhm, I'll go ahead and take  
13 that one as well. Thank you for that question. Uhm,  
14 like the savings proposals, not all positions will be  
15 subject to the 50 percent reduction. Uhm, we are  
16 again, you know working very closely and we really  
17 value our partnership with the Office of Management  
18 and Budget to ensure here again that uhm, we're  
19 minimizing impacts and ensuring that New Yorkers uhm  
20 don't lose access to vital services.

21 Uhm, so we uhm yes, we will be reducing some  
number- of our vacancies. It will be 50 percent of  
those eligible positions. Again, which we're working  
out. Though -

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You said - sorry, you said  
3 it will be 50 percent of eligible positions?

4 RICHARD JOHNS: Yes. Yeah, it will be but again,  
5 it's not going to be all city funded positions. Uhm,  
6 we are working very closely with OMB to determine  
7 which positions will be impacted. Again, the  
8 positions that uhm, are in mandated programs, uh will  
9 largely be exempt.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Do you know which programs?

11 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, you know again, that I don't  
12 have with me and I don't think we fully decided which  
13 programs will be exempt but things like - you know  
14 where you see city funded positions and things like  
15 SNAP or cash assistance or Medicaid, you know  
16 entitlement programs, those positions should largely  
17 be exempt.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Thank you. Uhm,  
19 let's move to HR1 SNAP cost shift. So, HR1 reduced  
20 federal support for states SNAP costs from 50 percent  
21 to 25 percent starting in October 2026. We know the  
state anticipates this will result in an additional  
\$204 million in annual expenditures statewide.

OTDA has indicated that the state will cover \$36  
million of this cost and shift the burden for the

1 remaining \$168 million to localities, with \$111  
2 million shifted to the city. Have you had any  
3 conversations with the state partners about the state  
4 fully covering this funding in the enacted Fiscal  
5 2027 State Budget, rather than shifting the burden to  
6 the city and localities?

7 SCOTT FRENCH: So, we are in ongoing  
8 conversations with you know the state around what  
9 would be the plan regarding the Administrative cost  
10 shift. I don't think anything has been sort of  
11 finalized at that point.

12 Uh, but we are staying very much focused on also  
13 uh where there are cost shifts, especially around  
14 like the SNAP payment error rate that is coming.  
15 Internally, we have put into place many things to  
16 actually bring that rate down, uh so that we can  
17 minimize actually any impacts that may come to the  
18 state and/or be passed onto the city.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and so, I know you're  
20 still working it out but would the \$111 million be an  
21 additional amount that needs to be added to HRA's  
existing budget if the state does not decide to pick  
it up in the financial budget?

1 RICHARD JOHNS: Yeah uhm, I'll take that one.

2 Uhm, yes, it would be additional money. One thing to  
3 keep in mind is that the \$111 million that OTDA had  
4 announced is in a grant year. Uhm, so the SNAP  
5 Administration in uhm DSS's budget is found within  
6 both the revenue for SNAP Administration and for  
7 employment and training. So, uhm, assuming that the  
8 city does uhm have to fund the remaining 25 percent,  
9 we would see a need of about \$90 million in our  
budget.

10 I would just add, there could be other agencies  
11 that are receiving SNAP Admin uhm, that information I  
wouldn't have with me.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and then starting  
13 October 2027 under HR1, there will be a new cost  
14 shift to states that could be up to 15 percent of  
15 benefit costs. The rate will depend on the state's  
16 error processing rate. In an emergency briefing on  
17 SNAP federal regulations, HRA indicated that it is  
18 anticipating there would be a \$1.2 billion additional  
19 cost to New York State, which would result in an  
20 estimated \$705 million. An additional cost for the  
21 city if the state chose to pass the new benefit cost  
to the city. Historically SNAP funding for benefit

1  
2 payments to individuals who reside in the city are  
3 disbursed by the state, do not directly flow through  
4 the city's budget and have not required any city  
5 contribution.

6 Have you had any conversations with the state  
7 partners on this about the possibility of the state  
8 covering the additional costs?

9 SCOTT FRENCH: Similarly to the Administrative  
10 rate, we're in ongoing conversations. The state has  
11 said that they, you know, would not be able to cover  
12 the costs if you know, based on the payment error  
13 rate fully. And so, there would be an expectation  
14 that those would - some of those would actually have  
15 to be passed to New York City and other localities  
16 around the state uhm, which is why we're really  
17 focused on making sure we can bring that payment  
18 error rate down over this current federal fiscal year  
19 and get us to a place where we are not seeing a 15  
20 percent cost shift happen.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And what has HRA been doing  
to address the high payment error rate?

SCOTT FRENCH: Sure, so we've been doing a few  
things we've been working on. First and foremost,  
you know we have been focusing a lot on training, as

1  
2 you mentioned in your opening statement right. Over  
3 the last several years, we've brought on a lot of new  
4 staff. We have been funded by OMB to bring on new  
5 trainers who will actually be in the benefit access  
6 centers and other centers, so that they can do more  
7 real time remediation with staff who may be making  
8 some errors that we would like to fix. So, that is  
9 already ongoing and rolling out. We've made some  
10 additional changes as well to our existing systems  
11 where we've been able to put in additional flags to  
12 workers, to ensure that they are following all of the  
13 steps they need to and most importantly checking  
14 calculations as that's where we're seeing most of our  
15 payment error rates are related to you know  
16 calculations around earned income, which can be  
17 complicated.

18 Uh depending on you know the benefits that  
19 someone is working on. And then we're working on  
20 some other additional technological uh, uh work that  
21 we think may also create some additional you know  
22 flags and be able to identify specifically where  
23 there may be some mismatch in calculations before  
24 someone actually processes a case.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And uhm, are the 183 SNAP  
3 eligibility specialists positions included in the  
4 Preliminary Plan adequate to address this concern?

5 SCOTT FRENCH: Uh, yes, we believe those  
6 positions are adequate to address that concern to  
7 ensure we have staff to you know work on the payment  
8 error rate, as well as the rollout of the ABAWD work  
9 requirements that is ongoing.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Great thank you and uhm,  
11 speaking of those employment requirements, I have  
12 some more questions regarding that specifically.

13 On March 1st and I'd like to note that we've been  
14 joined by Council Member Brewer. On March 1, 2026,  
15 the new employment requirements for ABAWD's on SNAP  
16 went into effect. Since November of 2025, HRA has  
17 been assessing SNAP applications and recertifications  
18 based on the new criteria. HRA has also introduced  
19 two main CBO partnership pathways for clients to meet  
20 their new work requirements. With CBO's having the  
21 choice to register as a Community Service Partner,  
CSP or a Self Enrolled Voluntary Services Provider  
SEVSP. Since November, how many total SNAP  
applicants since recertifications were newly deemed  
ABAWD under the broadened federal criteria?

1  
2 SCOTT FRENCH: Certainly, thank you. Uhm, so I  
3 think when thinking about this, uh what's important  
4 to focus on is actually because it's a point in time  
5 as to the point in time how many SNAP recipients need  
6 to comply with ABAWD. So, at this point and time,  
7 there are approximately 119,000 SNAP Recipients who  
8 need to comply with ABAWD.

9 Uhm, as part of the rollout of ABAWD, we are on -  
10 we are continuing to reassess individuals at their  
11 recertification to determine if actually they would  
12 meet the new expanded criteria. It wasn't something  
13 that happened all at once. It will happen over the  
14 next year, starting November 1st, we will have gotten  
15 through everyone in the first round by the end of  
16 October. Uhm, so currently it's 119,000 and we are  
17 really staying very much focused on ensuring that we  
18 are uh, exempting as many people who are eligible for  
19 exemption. Uhm, and continue to look at ways in  
20 which we can streamline the ability for folks to  
21 submit documentation so that we can exempt them from  
this, as we know that is the most important thing.  
We want to get that number down as much as we can and  
have as many people off the list who need to comply.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Do you know how many  
3 individuals newly deemed as an ABAWD attended their  
4 initial PACE appointment for career services support  
5 and how many did not?

6 SCOTT FRENCH: So, overall uhm, for uh all  
7 ABAWD's because we sort of - everyone was getting  
8 appointments, so I'm going to split it up into two  
9 categories. There are SNAP ABAWD'S who are not on  
10 cash assistance. We call them NCA SNAPS. There's  
11 about 36,000 individuals who are in that bucket of  
12 people. Uhm, approximately 11 percent have shown so  
13 far so that is you know a low rate we continue to do  
14 extensive outreach to individuals. Uhm, we also  
15 expected in some place that the show rate, because  
16 this would all have been pre-March 1st, when actually  
17 things go into effect. So, we expect to see  
18 increases over this month uhm, and will be conducting  
19 additional outreach for those individuals who are on  
20 cash assistance and also need to comply with SNAP  
21 ABAWD's.

Those individuals are being engaged through the  
cash assistance mandatory engagement process, which  
is slightly different given cash has more expansive  
requirements. Uhm, on average each week, we are

1  
2 seeing 55 to 60 percent of individuals sew up for  
3 those appointments.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And sorry, what's that total  
5 number of cash assistance and SNAP?

6 SCOTT FRENCH: Approximately, I believe 82,000.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you and you said 55 to

8 -  
9 SCOTT FRENCH: About 55 to 60 percent each week

10 are showing up to their appointments and for cash  
11 assistance, we have an ongoing and expansive  
12 engagement process where for individuals who did not  
13 show up, we have a process to engage them and follow  
14 the cash assistance conciliation and sanction  
15 process, which happens over several weeks.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, great uhm, can you  
17 walk us through the CBO partnership pathways and how  
18 many CBO'S have applied to become partners with HRA?

19 SCOTT FRENCH: Sure, so uh I'm happy to say and  
20 also very thankful to the CBO community that over 100  
21 CBO's have stepped forward and that number actually  
increases each week. It is an open enrollment, so  
there is no deadline. Uh, as CBO's learn about it,  
we're determined it is something they think they  
might be able to do. We welcome them to submit the

1  
2 form. And then based upon the activities the CBO's  
3 have, uhm, and you know what capacity they have to  
4 support, they will either be put into one of the two  
5 pathways you had talked about. One of the pathways  
6 has a little bit more administrative support that is  
7 being brought where those organizations will a.,  
8 receive referrals directly from us as well as help  
9 track compliance and hours and report that in to us.

10 Uh, on the other pathway, that is more of a  
11 connection made between the individual and the  
12 organization. Most likely an organization that are  
13 already connected to. They may attend programming or  
14 receive other case management services where they can  
15 access volunteer opportunities and then submit to us  
16 on a monthly basis, right uh compliance with those  
17 volunteer hours.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Great thank you. Okay, we  
19 know that the agency has been warning people who are  
20 meeting ABAWD work requirements but the agency will  
21 not begin to take negative action until June 2026.  
Does DSS have an estimate on how many SNAP clients  
may lose SNAP benefits during the first month when  
the agency will begin to take action for  
noncompliance?

1  
2 SCOTT FRENCH: Uh, we do not have that estimate  
3 at the time. We're going to be tracking closely each  
4 month to see how many individuals are actually coming  
5 close to the three months. Uhm, cause that will  
6 really then give us a sense of how many people may be  
7 impacted. We'll also be able to really target our  
8 outreach and engagement closely because we'll be able  
9 to target specifically the people we know who maybe  
10 have had two months of noncompliance. So, that - the  
11 third month is really essential. So, we're happy to  
12 keep the Council updated as we see that - the first -  
13 the first data that we'll have will be in the very  
14 beginning of April when we see what happened in the  
15 month of March.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. With the  
17 reinstitution of work requirements for cash  
18 assistance clients, we know HRA has been projecting  
19 an increase in the demand for childcare vouchers for  
20 those who are on cash assistance. As of the recent  
21 PMMR in the first four months of Fiscal 2026, around  
596,000 individuals in New York City are on both SNAP  
and cash assistance. This roughly represents one  
third of the total SNAP population. How many HRA

1  
2 Cash Assistance Childcare Vouchers have been issued  
3 this month?

4 SCOTT FRENCH: Uhm, I will have to get back to  
5 you on the monthly. I can say as of right now, there  
6 are 30,000 households currently receiving childcare  
7 vouchers through HRA uhm as part of compliance with  
8 cash assistance mandatory engagement.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, so uhm, maybe you'll  
10 have to get back to me on this one as well then. How  
11 many of the vouchers were issued to clients on both  
12 SNAP and Cash Assistance?

13 SCOTT FRENCH: I'll have to get back to you on  
14 that. I will just clarify, the requirement for  
15 childcare on the HRA side is connected specifically  
16 to Cash Assistance requirements. There is not  
17 mandated childcare required on SNAP for individuals  
18 on ABAWD. They would be exempted having children  
19 under the age of 14 and on the cash side, childcare  
20 is required for individuals under who have a child  
21 under the age of 14 in the household.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Uhm, we know HRA has  
been rolling out the resumption of work requirements  
and phases over time. How much growth have you seen  
uh since in cash assistance childcare vouchers since

1  
2 this began and how does it compare to the level of  
3 vouchers seen prior to pandemic?

4 SCOTT FRENCH: Uhm, I'll get back to you on the  
5 level of growth. It is lower than prepandemic  
6 because we have been slowly rolling out mandatory  
7 engagement and we hadn't uhm actually had mandatory  
8 engagement in place for many years during the uh  
9 pandemic. We only rolled out mandatory engagement  
10 again last April of 2025 and we've been taking it in  
11 a very methodical way but we can get back to you on  
12 the trends that you asked about.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, that would be great.  
14 And does HRA anticipate needing more staffing to  
15 handle the Administration for the projected increase  
16 and demand for cash assistance childcare vouchers?

17 SCOTT FRENCH: No, at this point, we believe we  
18 have appropriate staffing to support that.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, great. Uhm, I'm going  
20 to pause here and turn it over to some of my  
21 colleagues. Uhm, starting with Council Member  
Morano.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you Chair.  
Commissioner Dalton, thank you for your testimony.  
Congratulations on your new role and good luck. You,

1  
2 in your testimony outlined billions in spending and  
3 tens of thousands of placements. The shelter census  
4 as you pointed out is still over 85,000 people. At  
5 what point do we say the current model isn't reducing  
6 homelessness and just managing it and is there  
7 anything we as policy makers could be doing to more  
8 effectively get people out of the - I don't know the  
9 shelter pipeline?

10 ERIN DALTON: I'll start uhm and then turn it  
11 over to my colleagues who will probably have a more  
12 informed answer but I think it's - it's a great  
13 question and something I want to understand better.  
14 With so many additional exits from the shelter system  
15 and perhaps fewer new entrance from asylees, I would  
16 expect to start to see declines in the shelter  
17 population. It's something you know in my first few  
18 weeks, I want to take a really good look at. I think  
19 uhm, I think what we want to do is be moving people  
20 into shelter who need it of course and then moving  
21 them onto permanent housing as quickly as possible.  
And so, I think it's worth a really good look but  
uhm, if the Administrator Fellini wanted to add  
anything, please feel free.

1  
2 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Thank you Commissioner. I  
3 would echo your sentiments, that we're looking to  
4 uhm, ensure that we're meeting the needs of those who  
5 are coming in and moving them to permanent housing as  
6 quickly as possible.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Commissioner, you stated  
8 that roughly 98 percent of spending goes to direct  
9 benefits. Does that include shelter costs,  
10 administrative overhead embedded in contracts and  
11 hotel placements? I'm wondering if you can clearly  
12 define what counts as a direct benefit to a taxpayer?

13 ERIN DALTON: I will turn that over because I  
14 certainly don't know the details of the contracts to  
15 nonprofits in particular or to hotels but I think  
16 uhm, you do see a very low administrative rate in HRA  
17 and DHS. I think the numbers I cited were 4 percent  
18 and 3 percent. So, those being low administrative  
19 rates, with the vast, vast majority of those dollars  
20 going directly to New Yorkers but let me - let me get  
21 my colleague.

22 RICHARD JOHNS: Yeah, so they uhm, the direct  
23 benefits there would include things like public  
24 assistance or Medicaid, SNAP, uhm, and the  
25 entitlement programs that uh the DSS collectively

1  
2 administers. It would not include uhm, uh, the  
3 shelter costs that you noted.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: One final question if I  
5 may. Uhm, you're expanding low barrier beds and  
6 shelter capacity. What specific steps are you taking  
7 to reduce demand so communities are continuously  
8 asked to absorb new facilities? I especially ask  
9 because in my district in Staten Island, there are  
10 plans for a new facility there.

11 ERIN DALTON: Again, I'll start and then turn it  
12 over. Uhm, I think it's a great opportunity to talk  
13 about our Homebase program, which helps to prevent  
14 homelessness and I'll let my colleagues do that. I  
15 think that program has been effective and I think  
16 just like you said, we want to be moving people as  
17 quickly as we can into permanent housing. And so,  
18 uhm, the other thing I would just say is all of the  
19 other benefits that DSS, HRA offer, are the kinds of  
20 things that prevent homelessness in the first place  
21 right? We want to be able to provide every dollar  
that New Yorkers are eligible to receive and with  
those dollars, they don't have to make you know  
choices between healthcare or childcare and housing.  
And so, making sure we really maximize and do what we

1  
2 can particularly during this time of HR1 to keep  
3 dollars in the hands of eligible New Yorkers, will  
4 hopefully also reduce homelessness but maybe an  
5 opportunity to talk about Homebase a little bit.

6 SCOTT FRENCH: Sure I can take the Homebase  
7 question. Uhm, so yeah, so the Homebase program has  
8 proven to be very successful in diverting people from  
9 shelter. You know every year, it's about 95 percent  
10 of those who engage with Homebase do not enter  
11 shelter.

12 Uh, last year they served approximately 32,000.  
13 Uhm, you know we are definitely looking at uh ways in  
14 which some of the activities Homebase currently does  
15 with uhm households to bring some of those in - back  
16 into HRA, right? Homebase is definitely taking on a  
17 lot of work around subsidies and subsidy uh  
18 management and some other complex cases that we've  
19 created a new unit in HRA so that we can handle more  
20 complex cases and they can serve more people in the  
21 community.

22 And so, we're finalizing some of those plans so  
23 that that will continue to increase Homebase's  
24 capacity to serve people you know in community and  
25 divert them from shelter.

1  
2 ERIN DALTON: And let me also ask my colleague at  
3 DHS to talk about the diversion programs we have  
4 there as well.

5 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Thank you Commissioner,  
6 Administrator and Council Member for the question.  
7 Uhm, our approach at DHS always is to explore all  
8 diversion options, right? So, if somebody comes to  
9 us, they're in a housing crisis. They're in an  
10 emergency situation. So, we first want to understand  
11 what that is and what options they have. The first  
12 step is not always placement into shelter, it's to  
13 explore all options.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thanks very much.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you Council Member.  
16 I'd like to uhm announce that we've been joined by  
17 Council Member Nurse as well and turning it over to  
18 Council Member Sanchez.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you so much Madam  
20 Chair and good morning. Congratulations Commissioner  
21 on your appointment. I look forward to working with  
you. Uhm, I want to just ask a few questions about  
City FHEPS. Uhm, City FHEPS is one of the most  
effective tools that our city has to stabilize  
families, which is why this Council passed and then

1  
2 overroad the previous Mayor's veto to expand  
3 eligibility of the program. Uhm, even as those  
4 conversations continue between the Administration,  
5 Mayor Mamdani committed as a candidate to uh, to  
6 release - uh I don't know that's not the right word  
7 but to let go of that lawsuit uhm and I want to you  
8 know just park that conversation except to say that  
9 that is a - the bills that we pass and the expansion  
10 that we legislated is very important to this Council  
11 and I want to make sure that we are honoring the  
12 original intent of that legislation.

13 But even with that aside, uhm, you know this -  
14 this budget - the Mayor has and the agency has  
15 increased funding for the existing program, \$711  
16 million more in '26, \$1.64 billion more in '27 uhm,  
17 growing to \$2.6 billion in 2030 for the City FHEPs  
18 program. Can you help us understand uh what - what -  
19 just break down the cost of this program for us.  
20 What rent levels has the city seen most commonly used  
21 with a voucher? Can you follow up with a chart and  
just data that can help us understand what rents  
we're covering, what rent levels we're covering? And  
uh, can you help us understand the cost drivers?  
Thank you.

1  
2 RICHARD JOHNS: Yeah, thank you for that  
3 question. I can take that. Uhm, so in the latest  
4 PMMR, we reported that the average subsidy for City  
5 FHEPS is \$1,908. Uhm, this is a newly released  
6 statistic. Uhm, generally speaking for City FHEPs,  
7 uhm just like any other rental assistance program,  
8 the cost drivers for the program are the number of  
9 individuals that are entering the program, you know,  
10 the number of individuals that are leaving the  
11 program and how long they stay within that program.

12 There's also a component that uhm is rent as  
13 you've noted and there we follow the payment standard  
14 as set by the New York City Housing Authority.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: So, what are we seeing?  
16 What are we seeing in terms of number of individuals  
17 entering, leaving and staying, lengths of stay? I'm  
18 sorry Chair.

19 RICHARD JOHNS: Oh yes, I'm sorry. So, uhm, the  
20 program in total enrolls about 68,000. So, what I  
21 have here are the new enrollments for uh Fiscal Year  
'25, which was about 15,000 new enrollees over that  
fiscal year.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: And how does that trend  
uhm, what are we projecting?

1  
2 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, that is a pretty consistent  
3 number. So, we are projecting the growth to stay  
4 fairly consistent over the uhm, over the period of  
5 the plan.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: So, 68,000 people per  
7 year, families per year?

8 RICHARD JOHNS: No, no, I'm sorry, 15,000 new  
9 families per year.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: New, and how long are  
11 people staying enrolled?

12 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, you know that I don't  
13 actually have available but we can get back to you  
14 with that number.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay, thank you. Just  
16 to say that the Council has for many years uhm, been  
17 asking many questions about the cost drivers and  
18 lengths of stay, rent levels and all of that. Happy  
19 to see the new statistic in the PMMR but we want to  
20 be a partner in understanding what the cost drivers  
21 are and identifying solutions to contain the cost, so  
that we can reach more families. Thank you Chair.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much Council  
Member. Uhm, Council Member Brewer followed by  
Council Member Nurse.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

3 Congratulations Commissioner. We also like Scott  
4 French very much. 24/7 calling him, two o'clock in  
5 the morning, no problem. Uhm, I have - I teach at  
6 Hunter College and this morning I was there and  
7 somebody had apparently has an idea about putting  
8 algorithms; this is about SNAP, algorithms on persons  
9 who are caught up in this Trump hell. And so you  
10 would be able to contact them more easily on their  
11 cellphone. \$25 million to be saved. So, I am going  
12 to send you this proposal; another professor gave it  
13 to me. Is that something that you're aware of? Are  
14 you using technology to help people not get caught up  
15 in Trump hell?

16 SCOTT FRENCH: Uh, yes, we are using technology  
17 that I'm very interested in reading that proposal.  
18 You know in regards to communications, right, we are  
19 pushing out also you know text messages, push  
20 notifications. We're going to be rolling out robo  
21 calls and other things directly to individuals who  
need to comply with the ABAWD requirements and always  
willing and open to look at other utilization of  
technology to make sure people have the information  
they need and we're also making it as simple as

1 possible for them to report to us any information  
2 they need to so that we can ensure that they are  
3 remaining compliant and keep their SNAP benefits.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

5 ERIN DALTON: Just one thing to add and  
6 Administrator French talked about this a little bit  
7 in some of his answers but uhm, I think it requires  
8 sort of a whole of government effort to make sure  
9 we're a., reaching out to people and b., exempting  
10 people where we can. Most of the people on SNAP who  
11 aren't already working, uhm, are exempt from working.  
12 And so, if we can make sure we understand their  
13 eligibility, any uhm, challenges they may have in  
14 working, we can exempt them forever and then they  
15 don't have to - they don't have to go through the  
16 onerous processes designed to get people off of  
17 benefits.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know- I mean I've been  
19 doing this work since 1978 and since then, people  
20 don't pay attention to anything. So, it's uh, it's  
21 hard. They just don't. They are in another world,  
so the more that you can tell them in ten times - I  
just think this technology might really help.

1  
2           Number two, just sweeps. I know uh, Scott knows  
3 I'm working on this a lot of encampment. People are  
4 difficult. They just like to stay out. So, I'm just  
5 wondering how many uh, encampments have you -  
6 obviously I know the Mayor had a position not uhm  
7 move them but I know that in some cases, you just  
8 have to. And again, some people just don't want to  
9 go to an apartment. They just want to be out but my  
10 question is how many people have you moved? Were you  
11 able to get them shelter? Uhm, how are you  
12 identifying encampments? I know they're not supposed  
13 to be called encampments but that's what I call them.  
14 And I just want to know, just generally how you're  
15 handling them and what the numbers are.

16           ERIN DALTON: So, I will start and then pass to  
17 Administrator Fellini to provide some of the details.  
18 Uhm, so as you know, this Administration has asked  
19 the Department of Homeless Services to take the lead  
20 in engaging with people staying on the street, in  
21 community and in encampments, and I think that is the  
right move. These are - these are the outreach  
workers who have built trust over weeks and years and  
these are the people who know where the resources are  
and can help meet those needs. And so, as that work

1  
2 continues with partners, I think for me, it's really  
3 important to try to offer people what they want.

4 While I agree, there are always some people, a very  
5 small number who will never come inside and some who  
6 won't come inside on that day.

7 If we can meet their needs, if we can make sure  
8 their belongings are kept uhm, if they can't take  
9 them with them to the next location and if we do  
10 treat people with dignity and respect in that  
11 process, I think a lot of folks will accept those  
12 offers.

13 And so, that was maybe enough time for the  
14 Administrator to find the numbers we have been  
15 working on so far.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, thank you.

17 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Thank you Commissioner and  
18 Council Member, yes thank you. Since January, we  
19 have conducted around 40 cleanings and have made  
20 referrals to 85 individuals into the system. I don't  
21 know how many have actually come in but we could look  
into them.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Mine got swept March 11th  
and they're right back this morning. Just FYI, so  
that's what I'm dealing with. Just also, uhm, on the

1  
2 City FHEPS, good question from my colleague but after  
3 - how much time does one have on City FHEPS and have  
4 those deadlines - I think it's five years? And then  
5 what happens? Or maybe you haven't hit that deadline  
6 yet in many cases.

7 SCOTT FRENCH: Uh, yeah, the, the, program is a  
8 five year program, right? As long as individuals  
9 keep meeting eligibility and then after five years,  
10 uhm, we will review on a case by case basis if the  
11 subsidy would continue.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay and then there's a  
13 program that we used to have where basically it was  
14 direct to housing. You know and so, I know in other  
15 places in the country, you probably know  
16 Commissioner, it exists. It was a pilot. I believe  
17 it ended. Is that something that is continuing? How  
18 much does it cost and is it effective? Because to  
19 me, it might be effective but it's probably expensive  
20 but worth the money in my opinion.

21 ERIN DALTON: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Does it exist and how  
much it costs?

ERIN DALTON: Yup, uhm, and letting my colleagues  
get to the place in the briefing book where they

1  
2 might be able to give you numbers there too. I  
3 understand it was a pilot that is continuing  
4 actually, so we continue to work with, I think it's  
5 Volunteers of America to place people directly from  
streets-

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And how many people have  
7 been placed and what's the cost?

8 SCOTT FRENCH: Sure, so uhm, I'll get back to you  
9 on the exact costs you know but people are placed  
10 uhm, utilizing uh, housing subsidies, City FHEPS,  
11 sometimes some other subsidies. Uhm, but uh we also  
12 provide a payment to uhm, support the move straight  
13 from the street into housing while we work on  
14 whatever is needed for - you know whatever  
15 applications may be needed whether it's supportive  
16 housing or otherwise. I can say uh, the current  
17 program has 81 units and since over its inception,  
18 151 street homeless individuals have housed uh, have  
19 utilized the program. Currently there are 64  
20 participants in the 81 units and we have  
21 approximately 15 clients currently scheduled to view  
the current units uhm, after being engaged by our  
outreach teams and expressing interest in  
participating in this.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, wouldn't - is it  
3 successful? Is it more successful than any other way  
4 of getting people off the street or is it not clear  
5 yet?

6 SCOTT FRENCH: Uh, I think it is another tool  
7 which we are always happy to have. Uhm, we are  
8 exploring the possibility of expanding it to see if  
9 there is a scale that might be able to be met by the  
10 program. That's still under discussion so, I'm happy  
11 to continue to you know update you on that but we are  
12 always happy to have as many tools as we possibly can  
13 that may resonate with someone when another tool  
14 would not.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, last question,  
16 coordination with other agencies. I've been to so  
17 many hearings, I can't remember but I think it was at  
18 - maybe it was DCAS. The bottomline is when people  
19 are taking other kinds of services, in other words  
20 they could then be asked about SNAP or asked about  
21 cash assistance, whatever. Is that something - how  
do you coordinate that internally or if you are? In  
other words- people - this is a new day with you know  
the guy in the White House and everything else. So,  
my question is, how are you coordinating with other

1  
2 agencies so people hear about your services. You  
3 know could be even tenant assistance etc.. My  
4 understanding is that's something that's somewhat new  
5 in this Administration.

6 ERIN DALTON: And again, I'll let my colleagues  
7 jump in here but i had a conversation with the  
8 Commissioner of health yesterday and one of his main  
9 goals -

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I think it was the  
11 Commissioner who said this, yeah.

12 ERIN DALTON: Yeah, working along side-

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: The guy from Harvard,  
14 yes.

15 ERIN DALTON: Yeah, working alongside of us is  
16 yes, to take that extra step if someone is receiving  
17 WIC. If somebody is in the medical clinic, how do we  
18 ask them about their food security, connect them to  
19 SNAP? And we can do the same, right? So, we could  
20 ask if people uhm -

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, you haven't started  
doing it but he is doing now, is that the idea? How  
- it should be on a massive scale in my opinion.

1  
2 ERIN DALTON: Great, every city worker who  
3 engages with people should be able to offer those  
4 opportunities and I think -

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: You need training- you  
6 need training. So, is that happening?

7 SCOTT FRENCH: Yeah, so we currently do have you  
8 know a lot of partnerships, which we can always  
9 expand, especially with the other agencies within the  
10 Health and Human Services portfolio, DOHMH, Aging,  
11 ACS, many others. Uhm, uh, we are working closely  
12 with the Mayor's Office of Tenant Protections and  
13 others to make sure that we are all sort of cross  
14 training and providing cross information, so that  
15 they have access to the information on our programs  
16 and vice versa uhm, but obviously very - always open  
17 to working on something that goes beyond that in  
18 scope.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay and NYCHA also, I'm  
20 just saying, I don't think it happened in the past,  
21 that's my personal experience, so it would be good to  
know exactly how that training is taking place and if  
it's really happening and what the outcomes are.  
Thank you.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you Council Member.  
3 Council Member Nurse.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you Chair. Uhm, and  
5 just want to double down on the Street to Home pilot.  
6 It's in my district. It's very successful actually  
7 and hopefully there's a way for you all to evaluate  
8 and formally say, officially say that but from my  
9 understanding in every conversation I've had, it's  
10 been very successful. I think they're looking for  
11 more referrals. So, at a more frequent rate and my  
12 understanding is there are people who have actually  
13 moved into, like fully permanent you know their  
14 permanent home that they want to be in. So, huge  
15 advocate for that.

16 I want to talk about uhm, DHS Immigration Customs  
17 Enforcement as it relates to shelters. Uhm, Gotham  
18 had an article last - the end of last year, there  
19 were about five instances of ICE agents gaining  
20 access to DHS shelters in violation of our Sanctuary  
21 laws. Two incidents where ICE was permitted to enter  
a DHS facility without providing a judicial warrant.  
Two incidents of ICE agents and NYPD Officers  
entering a DHS facility without staff permission.  
One incident of a shelter employee providing ICE

1 agents with information about a former shelter  
2 resident.

3 So, with this, what have you all done to train up  
4 your staff, make sure everyone at the front door  
5 knows what - what we should not be doing, what would  
6 be violating our city laws, uhm, are you training  
7 people in person, are you sending people out, are you  
8 doing it remote? Give us an update on how we're  
remediating this situation.

9 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Thank you for the question,  
10 Council Member. Uhm, we have had limited uhm  
11 encounters with ICE at DHS shelters. Uhm, we have  
12 taken a multipronged approach to make sure that the  
13 correct information is out there and that staff on  
14 the ground, in the middle of the night, feel  
15 supported by the agency when things do occur. So,  
16 we've reissued our facility access policy so that  
there's formal information about what DHS's directive  
is about how to handle this.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Like an email? Like an  
18 all staff email or something?

19 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Yeah, it's shared through the  
20 provider community. There's an online database of  
policies and procedures. We send it as an

1 attachment. We reference it. We make sure people  
2 have copies of it. Uhm, we have also created a flow  
3 chart when a 30 page procedure does not really help.  
4 We have a flow chart that people can have at the  
5 front desk so they know exactly what the steps are  
6 when they are ensuring that non-local Law Enforcement  
7 is properly identifying themselves and demonstrating  
8 a judicial warrant.

9 Uhm, we've also uhm shared a list of our on-call  
10 attorney's, 24 hours a day 7 days a week, so people  
11 on the ground feel supported in the moment when  
12 things are happening. Uhm, and we've also advised  
13 staff to not engage in any altercations with any uhm,  
14 agents. We are regularly engaging with providers  
15 around this after an incident. As a reminder, we  
16 have DHS staff that are responsible for ensuring our  
17 providers are implementing policies and procedures,  
18 regularly following up and every time we hear, we  
19 reiterate and make sure that everybody understands.  
20 We've done in person trainings, we've done Zoom  
21 trainings, we've done big meetings.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, and so, as part of  
what you're talking about, in the past, you all had  
stated that you implemented a most robust procedure

1  
2 for verifying arrest warrants after one of these  
3 incidents happen. Is this part of that process or is  
4 there anything you could tell us about the procedure  
change?

5 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Apologies, I'll have to get  
6 back to you.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, yeah and for it to  
8 be specific, it was that you all had somehow helped  
9 people at the front understand how to verify an  
10 arrest warrant. So, if there's a procedure change,  
11 please let us know. Uhm, in one incident, ICE was,  
12 ICE agents were given access to the residents sign in  
13 book. Uhm, have you done any follow up to see what  
names were - were uhm, they were given access to and  
taking any safety measures for those people?

14 CHRISTINE FELLINI: I am not aware of that, so  
15 we'll look into that.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, uhm, I think those  
17 are all my questions. Just want to make sure we're  
18 protecting our folks and not violating our laws.  
19 Uhm, and so, however we can be supportive of that as  
20 well, please let us know. If we can help at our  
district level, we will but we want to make sure

1  
2 folks aren't getting kidnapped. So, thank you so  
3 much.

4 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Got it and if I could Council  
5 Member.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Yeah.

7 CHRISTINE FELLINI: I just got advised, uhm, into  
8 your question about verifying arrest warrants. We've  
9 provided samples of the federal warrants and  
10 subpoenas, so staff know how to identify them as  
11 being the right type that we allow an agent -

12 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Like, that's at the front  
13 desk, like the flow chart, and those samples?

14 CHRISTINE FELLINI: We'll make sure.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay.

16 CHRISTINE FELLINI: I believe it's part of the  
17 procedure but we'll make sure.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Yeah, I think that's  
19 helpful because in the moment people panic and they  
20 forget you know where to find it. And so, just a  
21 place to reference would be helpful. Okay, thank you  
Chair.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you Council  
Member. I'd like to acknowledge that we've also been  
joined by Council Member Avilés.

1  
2 Uhm, so I want to move uh, into a different set  
3 of questions. Uhm, I'll be hoping around just a  
4 little bit here but uh regarding employees on  
5 benefits programs. While the people who work at DHS,  
6 HRA, and their contracted CBO's do invaluable work  
7 serving our city's most vulnerable, work in the  
8 provision in social services is often poorly  
9 compensated, leading to many employees relying on the  
10 same benefits they help others access. Is this  
11 something that you track and can you share the  
12 percentage of DHS, HRA, or contracted CBO employees  
13 who are receiving public benefits such as cash  
14 assistance, SNAP or housing vouchers?

15 SCOTT FRENCH: Uh, I think we'll have to get back  
16 to you on the city employees. I'm not sure that we  
17 have that data but we can check and come back to you  
18 on the CBO providers. I'm not sure how that would be  
19 possible because we don't have the full list of -

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: The details, okay but is  
21 this something that you track as far as you're aware?  
Do you know - I know you'll get back to me on the  
specific number but do you know that you have  
employees that are on public assistance?

1  
2 SCOTT FRENCH: I mean, we are aware that there  
3 are employees who may be on public assistance right.  
4 Uhm, I am not aware of tracking but I don't want to  
5 speak definitely in that statement.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

7 SCOTT FRENCH: Uhm, you know we - uh but you know  
8 we are aware that there are - as you noted you know  
9 individuals who potentially are definitely accessing  
10 some of our benefits.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And do we know how many  
12 employees are in city shelters?

13 ERIN DALTON: I don't have that number now but  
14 yes, we know that number. We can get that to you.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, great and how does DSS  
16 support its own employees who are currently enrolled  
17 in public benefits to assist them toward self  
18 sufficiency?

19 SCOTT FRENCH: Uhm, we always internally right,  
20 there is very much a commitment to developing  
21 pathways of development for staff members. I will  
say over the last you know couple of years and we can  
get back to you with some more details, right? We  
have developed a lot of uh trainings and other sort  
of like engagement and academies, including an

1 academy for frontline workers, which recently  
2 occurred over the summer for the first time ever,  
3 which was a great thing. That is really about  
4 connecting individuals to a., what internal resources  
5 are available to help develop someone's career.

6 Uh, what can we connect to them externally that  
7 also is around there? So, we are having to follow up  
8 with some additional specifics around that but I will  
9 say over the last couple of years, the agency has  
10 really focused on building out uh, our staff  
11 development efforts, so that staff have places to go  
12 to explore what options are there for them to you  
13 know build their careers at HRA and also just to  
14 think long term where they may want to be going to.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That's great. Thank you and  
16 I just want to state for the record uhm, my own  
17 advocacy for pay parity across agencies, which I've  
18 talked about previously as Chair of the Aging  
19 Committee where we see social workers and case  
20 workers and some agencies making less than the same  
21 roles in other agencies, which I think is a direct  
reflection of our values. And in that case,  
particularly we don't value older adults and the work  
that people do around older adults. And so,

1  
2 similarly, you know this is a space where frontline  
3 workers are working with vulnerable populations and  
4 they become vulnerable populations themselves. And  
5 so, anything and everything we can do to help support  
6 you and your efforts in supporting staff and  
7 employees so that they're not also receiving public  
8 benefits, I think would be great work.

9 Uhm, shelter costs new need. The Council has  
10 long called on the Administration to more accurately  
11 budget for the cost of DHS's shelter system, which  
12 has been under budgeted at adoption in recent years.  
13 We were glad to see a baseline increase of city  
14 funding for shelters included in the preliminary  
15 plan. \$586.1 million in Fiscal 2026, \$988.6 million  
16 in Fiscal 2027, and \$1.04 billion in Fiscal 2028,  
17 \$1.09 billion in Fiscal 2029 and \$1.15 billion in  
18 Fiscal 2030.

19 Additionally, there are net decreases of state  
20 and federal funding. And 146 baselined positions  
21 were added starting in Fiscal 2026. Can you tell me  
more about how the funding amounts were determined?

RICHARD JOHNS: Yes, thank you for that question.  
I'm happy to take this. So, we do coordinate very  
closely with the Office of Management and Budget on

1  
2 our projections for the census, for utilization,  
3 length of stay in our DHS program. Uhm, and we uhm,  
4 coordinate on- on that data and how it translates  
5 into the budget. So, the dollar amounts in this most  
6 recent preliminary budget reflect what we believe  
7 will be the spending for uhm, through the five year  
8 budget period. I mean obviously projections will  
9 change but this is what we think we would spend.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And uhm, what are DHS's  
11 projections for the shelter census in the coming  
12 years?

13 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Thank you for the question.  
14 We work with our partners at the Office of Management  
15 and Budget on shelter projections and I do not have  
16 those numbers at this time but we can share them.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and why is federal and  
18 state funding being decreased? What were the funding  
19 sources?

20 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, yeah sorry, so that- uhm,  
21 the adjustments that you see in the budget related to  
federal and state are mostly just cleaning up some of  
the modifications and adjustments that have been made  
at periods before the beginning of Fiscal Year. So,  
those would have been all related to say TANF and

1  
2 state contributions uhm, but the budget currently  
3 reflects what we believe will be the projected  
4 spending between city, federal and state funding.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and what are the titles  
6 and job descriptions for the 146 additional  
7 positions?

8 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, that piece we'll have to get  
9 back to you on. Uhm, the information I have here is  
10 just the total. So, we'll get back to you on what  
11 the titles are and how that dollar amount -

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and also, I would love  
13 to know when you plan to have these positions filled  
14 by?

15 RICHARD JOHNS: Of course, we could do that.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and uhm, lastly on this  
17 topic, why does the amount of city funding increase  
18 from year to year?

19 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, do you mean - I'm sorry, I'm  
20 not sure, you mean new need itself?

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yes, for -

RICHARD JOHNS: Oh, uhm, it's just simply to  
reflect the fact that city funding had not been  
appropriately budgeted in the outyears in previous

1 budgets. So, the dollar amount is increasing simply  
2 just to match our spending.

3 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Uhm, and then street  
4 homeless services new need. The Preliminary Plan  
5 included additional city funding to DHS's budget for  
6 street homeless services totaling \$9.7 million in  
7 Fiscal 2026, \$31.2 million in Fiscal '27, \$29.9  
8 million in Fiscal '28, \$30.8 million in Fiscal '29,  
9 and \$31.7 million in Fiscal 2030. There were also 66  
10 additional baselined positions added. What is this  
11 additional funding for and how was the amount  
12 determined?

13 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, great yes, great question.  
14 So, the Outdoor Structures Initiative, uhm, had  
15 funding for as you noted the 66 additional positions.  
16 In addition, we have additional funding for things  
17 like mobile cooling and warming centers, clinical  
18 services. We have an increase related to revisions  
19 that we'll make to our street start system and then  
20 there are additional transportation services. We can  
21 happily get you the breakdown on that and the 66  
heads if you'd like.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah that would be great and  
3 just confirming, are all 66 positions for street  
4 outreach workers?

5 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, it is - there are uhm, 60  
6 positions for street outreach. Uhm, we have two  
7 positions for training uhm, and four positions in our  
8 street havens. I'm sorry, our Safe Havens Program.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay great. Thank you.  
10 Uhm, how many street outreach workers are currently  
11 employed? Uhm, are agency employees versus  
12 contracted employees?

13 ERIN DALTON: I'm looking for that right now.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sure, and while you're  
15 working on that, I would love to know how you  
16 determine when it's better to hire staff verse  
17 contracted providers staffing for street outreach  
18 efforts.

19 RICHARD JOHNS: For the DHS Streets programs,  
20 uhm, we have a budgeted headcount in 26 of 190 uhm -

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I'm sorry, a budgeted  
headcount of?

RICHARD JOHNS: 190.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Oh, 190.

1  
2 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, and the actuals that I have  
3 are actually a little old, they're for the end of  
4 '25, which was 106 employees. I don't have the  
5 number of positions for the contracts. Uhm, so we'll  
6 have to get back to you on that.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And uhm, sorry, can  
8 you just talk about hiring staff versus contracted  
9 providers staffing for outreach efforts and how you  
10 make that decision?

11 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Sure, thank you Council  
12 Member and I just want to confirm, we have about 600  
13 budgeted positions at our uhm, contracted outreach  
14 providers.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

16 CHRISTINE FELLINI: So, we're constantly  
17 evaluating the need against the staffing and the  
18 providers that we have. Uhm, so depending on what  
19 the hope count says. What we're hearing from  
20 providers. We're evaluating what programs we need,  
21 where we need enhancements. Where it's better to  
contract out versus hiring onsite.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and uhm, as of the  
Preliminary Plan, approximately \$450 million is  
budgeted in each Fiscals 2026 and 2027 for street

1  
2 outreach. Spending under the prior Administration  
3 increased significantly hitting approximately \$370  
4 million in Fiscal 2025. Despite the investments over  
5 the past several years, unsheltered homelessness  
6 persists. How will your Administration approach  
7 effectively serving this population while balancing  
8 the fiscal implications?

9 ERIN DALTON: Thank you for the question and I'll  
10 start again and then if others want to add. Uhm, as  
11 I mentioned earlier, I think uhm, the work to house  
12 people that are unhoused, I mean you know very few  
13 New Yorkers are of course outside but those who are,  
14 we want to do our best work to bring them inside. I  
15 think the Mayor's switch to having the Department of  
16 Homeless Services lead the way is the right uhm, it's  
17 the right role. I think working across our partners  
18 in Health and Hospitals, uhm on issues of mental  
19 illness and substance use services and just really  
20 trying to wrap our arms around those folks who are  
21 staying outside and offer them - offer them what they  
22 need. And so, I think the additional staff will help  
23 along with strong coordination along with the right  
24 folks taking the lead and making sure that we are  
25 able to make offers that people will accept.

1  
2 Again, a challenging issue but one I look forward  
3 to taking on.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much and I'd  
5 like to acknowledge that we've been joined by Council  
6 Member Cabán on Zoom. Uhm, okay, I'd like to move  
7 into uhm, SNAP, EBT Chip Cards and state funding.  
8 So, theft of SNAP benefits is an epidemic across the  
9 United States and one of the major ways criminals  
10 steal funds is by card skimming. Using illegal  
11 devices to copy personal account information when  
12 people swipe their EBT cards. At the March 3, 2026  
13 quarterly community partners call, HRA stated that in  
14 the state's 30 day amendment to the proposed budget,  
15 \$1.8 million in state funding was added statewide  
16 with \$700,000 earmarked for New York City's  
17 implementation of chip technology for EBT cards.  
18 Will this funding be added to the Executive Plan?

19 SCOTT FRENCH: Sure, I can take that question.  
20 Uhm, so the funding in the state budget is actually  
21 for the state to uh cover the cost of the transition  
to EBT cards with chips. Uhm, the state is the uh,  
does all of those EBT cards, so the funding in the  
state budget is actually to do that actual trans- you  
know transition with a vendor, so I imagine that that

1  
2 funding is meant to support a vendor to transition  
3 the EBT cards to chip cards so that everything will  
4 be far more secure and we won't have as many  
5 instances of individuals having their benefits  
6 skimmed.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And uhm, has the state  
8 provided guidance on the implementation and timeline  
9 of chip technology across the state?

10 SCOTT FRENCH: Uh, they have not yet given us a  
11 definitive timeline but I do know that it is  
12 something they are uh trying to work on as quickly as  
13 possible.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Are you aware of retailers  
15 in the city who currently accept SNAP EBT cards but  
16 will not be able to accept payment from the new SNAP  
17 chip cards?

18 SCOTT FRENCH: Uhm, I am not aware of that but we  
19 will uh obviously work closely with our colleagues at  
20 OTDA to make sure that they are providing the right  
21 information to individuals in case stores do need to  
you know look at a change in technology to be able to  
take the chip card.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and then there are also  
some concerns about the new chip card that I'm going

1 to toss over to Council Member Avilés to get into.

2 Thank you.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you so much Chair.  
4 On those particular cards, uhm, we understand because  
5 the chips are uhm, connected to uh financial federal  
6 regulations that there are potential vulnerabilities  
7 for immigrant New Yorkers particularly in this  
8 context, which is something we considered when we  
9 developed the IDNYC, right? Which is why the chips  
10 were not part of there - have you explored deeply  
11 those vulnerabilities in this political context and  
12 what did you -

13 SCOTT FRENCH: So, we will bring that back to the  
14 oversight of OTDA, as they are actually the ones who  
15 oversee the chip cards and the determination of it.  
16 Uhm, uh and we will speak with them about you know  
17 what had they looked in and are there security  
18 measures that they are considering to ensure that  
19 people remain safe, which is a main concern for us as  
20 well.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great, it is a huge issue  
in our communities. Uhm, and we want to make sure  
that people get the benefits that they depend on so  
profoundly but at the same time, they should not be

1  
2 ensnared and in definite detention and deportation  
3 because of their status. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you Council Member.  
5 Okay, as of December 2024, the state is no longer  
6 receiving federal reimbursement for stolen benefits.  
7 As part of the state budget, there is a proposal to  
8 create a victims compensation fund for those who have  
9 had their benefits stolen through skimming. What is  
10 HRA doing to support skimming victims and would you  
11 support a state compensation fund?

12 SCOTT FRENCH: Certainly, so as you mentioned,  
13 the ability to reimburse you know SNAP skimming was  
14 stopped by the federal government. Uhm, I can't say  
15 that you know since the beginning of the ability to  
16 replace benefits. HRA did work to replace over \$50  
17 million in benefits to individuals who submitted  
18 claims to us. We can still take claims from  
19 individuals who have had their cash assistance  
20 benefits skimmed. So, I encourage anyone who has had  
21 any of their cash assistance benefits skimmed to  
still submit that to us because we are able to  
reimburse those funds and we are very much open to  
working with our state colleagues on identifying

1  
2 other funds that can replace benefits for individuals  
3 who had them stolen by somebody.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Great, thank you. Uhm, okay  
5 the closing of Bellevue Men's Shelter and Intake  
6 Site. The Administration recently announced it will  
7 be temporarily shutting down the Bellevue Men's  
8 Shelter and Intake Center by mid-March. Sites on  
9 East 3rd Street and Bowery and Manhattan will assume  
10 shelter intake in Bellevue's 250 single male  
11 residents will be rehoused beginning May 1st at  
12 shelters to be determined. Can you tell me more  
13 about how this decision was made and the logistics of  
14 shutting down Bellevue and relocating residents?

15 ERIN DALTON: Sure, thank you for the question.  
16 Uhm and as you all know, that location at 30th Street  
17 has been the front door to the homeless services for  
18 many years in New York City and so, I don't think  
19 anyone takes lightly that a move would need to  
20 happen. As folks also probably know, uhm, that  
21 building has been in disrepair for many years and  
while the city has attempted to keep up with the  
maintenance, it has just become a time when that  
can't be done piecemeal anymore and we need to find a

1  
2 safer place for the people we serve and our employees  
3 as well.

4 And so, we've been working with partners on that  
5 transition. So, as of Sunday I think, March 16th,  
6 uhm, we no longer have assessment beds in 30th Street  
7 and that transition went well. Intake and assessment  
8 is still happening onsite. Uhm, of course, we will  
9 continue to have staff long after the transition who  
10 can help to direct people to other resources up to  
11 the new sites. We expect that for some time, people  
12 will continue to see that site as a resource and we  
13 will continue to staff it so that people may get to  
14 intake and assessment sites throughout the city.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you and have you  
16 identified which shelters will be rehousing Bellevue  
17 residents and if so, can you tell me how you chose  
18 the new sites and do they have the same support  
19 services and accessibility as Bellevue?

20 ERIN DALTON: Uhm, I can start but I want to make  
21 sure I am fully understanding the question.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sure.

ERIN DALTON: So, there's the issue of intake and  
assessment and I can talk about that. And then there  
is the issue of where people are being sheltered for

1  
2 that short period and I might uhm, uhm, take some  
3 support to make sure I'm answering that correctly.

4 And so, I think uhm, yes the DHS team as well as  
5 other teams have assessed a variety of sites that  
6 would meet the needs for intake and assessment and we  
7 believe that the sites that uhm, we have chosen offer  
8 comparable and better intake and assessment  
9 accessibility to the folks who we'd be serving there  
10 and are working with our partners at Project Renewal  
11 and others to make sure that there's continuity of  
12 care for the clients that they're serving in those  
13 spaces as well.

14 And let me turn to my colleagues and see what I  
15 might have missed and if I misstated anything, please  
16 feel free.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: From what I've heard, I  
18 think you've covered most of it, if not all of it.

19 CHRIS GONZALEZ: Yeah and I was just going to  
20 confirm that and say that uhm, uh, the assessment  
21 beds have been transitioned to uh sites in Brooklyn.  
Uhm, but uhm and you know as the Commissioner said,  
those you know, those have already been transitioned  
out. So, uhm, you know we're fully on the path to uh

1  
2 taking on what is going to be a difficult transition,  
3 obviously away from 30th Street.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you and uhm how  
5 many substance use or mental health treatment beds  
6 uhm did Bellevue have and how many individuals are  
7 currently housed in these beds? And has DHS  
8 identified which shelters will rehouse these  
9 individuals and how you'll ensure there isn't a gap  
10 in the specialized care they're receiving?

11 ERIN DALTON: Thank you for the question. Uhm,  
12 Bellevue served as our assessment and overnight uhm  
13 compliment of beds. So, there were no program beds  
14 there. So, once somebody was assessed, if the  
15 determination was they needed a substance abuse bed,  
16 they were placed in a substance abuse shelter.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, separate from the  
18 site.

19 ERIN DALTON: From 30th Street, correct.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, will any of the new  
21 need funding added in the Preliminary Plan for  
shelter costs go toward housing, services or staffing  
for the shelters taking in the Bellevue residents and  
will any go towards the intake sites that will be  
taking over for Bellevue?

1  
2 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, yes, the positions that were  
3 added will go towards uhm, these efforts. I don't  
4 know that we uhm, that I have the information on  
5 which ones go where but we can get back to you with  
6 that when we give you the breakdown of the 146.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you and do you  
8 plan to add additional funding or headcount for these  
9 sites in future plans?

10 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Thank you. I believe the  
11 additional headcount of the 146 should address the  
12 need but I think when we look at the breakdown uhm, I  
13 think that we'll find that it's sufficient.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, uhm, sufficient by  
15 your standards?

16 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Well, when we take a very  
17 centralized, complex program that existed at Bellevue  
18 for many years and we have to decentralize it, we did  
19 need to stand up essentially multiple intake  
20 programs.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

CHRISTINE FELLINI: So, that's where the  
additional headcount is. We believe the 146 should  
be sufficient to operate intake in the disbursed way  
that we had to approach it.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. Just give  
3 me one second. Let me turn it over to Council Member  
4 Brewer for a second.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. This may have  
6 been worked out but Project Renewal was hysterical  
7 about the timeframe. Has that been worked out where  
8 it's not as fast and you have more time at their  
9 facilities in Lower East Side? And, they have a  
10 clinic there, uhm, they want to make sure it retains  
11 because it's very hard to restart it etc., etc.,  
12 etc., since I am swamped with phone calls.

13 ERIN DALTON: Yeah, thank you and we're very  
14 grateful to the partners at Project Renewal. We know  
15 this is not something that they've had a lot of  
16 warning about and something that they've had to work  
17 closely -

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's putting it mildly  
19 but yes.

20 ERIN DALTON: Closely with us. We uh, we also  
21 have deadlines of doing intake and assessment as of  
May 1st uhm in the new sites. And so, we're working  
closely with Project Renewal on programs that can  
stay in space and programs that might be better off  
perhaps in an additional space. Uhm, so we're

1  
2 working with state partners on the substance use  
3 treatment program, uhm, which again, I think we've  
4 worked out with them can stay and that's space, so  
5 those folks will be stable and then to your point,  
6 there's an outpatient clinic that we're working with  
7 them on as well as a federally qualified health  
8 center in our Article 28 site that we see as really  
9 integral to the intake and assessment function and  
10 look forward to working with them. Uhm, certainly  
11 this plan is still in flux. There are state partners  
12 involved. There are - there's Project Renewal and  
13 uhm, I think the important thing to know is that  
14 we're all working really hard to make sure that we  
15 can - where transitions need to be made, uhm, make  
16 sure that they're done safely and with care and, and  
17 support those clients going forward.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Do you think the  
19 federally qualified health center will be okay to  
20 stay there or are you still working that out?  
21 Because that is very hard to replicate.

ERIN DALTON: We absolutely wanted to stay there  
and in fact, again, see it as a really integral part  
of that intake and assessment function, getting  
people connected to services. Uhm, the things we're

1  
2 working through are construction issues. How do we  
3 build out the intake and assessment components of  
4 that program and keep the Article 28 clinic intact?  
5 Those are the kinds of issues we're working through  
6 right now.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And thank you Council Member  
9 Brewer. Uhm, I was getting to that line of  
10 questioning next but also just want to you know  
11 state- state for the record that uhm, the beds that  
12 are there currently at the 3rd Street site that are  
13 operated by uhm Project Renewal, uhm, are really  
14 unique and have unique needs and the people who are  
15 residents there and so, you know we want to make sure  
16 that we're doing everything to keep those programs  
17 and services whole and I don't know uhm, and this is  
18 -I'm actually saying, I do not know uhm, you know  
19 whether the move is going to allow those services to  
20 stay whole and I think, uhm as Council Member Brewer  
21 mentioned, the federally qualified health uhm center  
is a particular concern because I don't know if that  
money can actually be moved into a different  
location, physical location. So, those are things  
that we want to make sure you all are talking as

1  
2 Project Renewal about. Thank you. Okay, uhm, DHS  
3 vacancy rate. In July 2025, DHS's actual headcount  
4 was 1,733 and it has been steadily declining every  
5 month since. As of January 2026, DHS has a vacancy  
6 rate of 27 percent, the highest it has been in the  
7 last three years. Why has DHS's headcount been  
8 declining over the last few months?

9 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, thank you for that question.  
10 Uhm, so, when you look at this period of time, there  
11 are a few things happening that kind of challenge how  
12 we look at headcount. First, you know we moved the  
13 housing services division from DHS to HRA. So, you  
14 would see that actual headcount from one agency to  
15 the other.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And how many was that, do  
17 you know?

18 RICHARD JOHNS: Oh, sorry, it was 107.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. And you said  
20 that went from DHS to HRA?

21 RICHARD JOHNS: Correct.

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, so those - do those  
23 107 positions represent the 27 percent vacancy rate?

24 RICHARD JOHNS: No, so the 27 percent vacancy  
25 rate is also - a lot of that is driven from the new

1 needs that we received in the uhm, uh Preliminary  
2 Budget. So, if you were to you know remove those,  
3 the vacancy rate is probably closer to 14 percent.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, still high, I would  
5 argue.

6 RICHARD JOHNS: Of course.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Uhm, and so, just going back  
8 to the transfer then. What is the actual and  
9 budgeted headcount for the Housing Administration  
Program?

10 RICHARD JOHNS: Give me one second, I'm sorry.  
11 Housing services, uh you know uh -

12 SCOTT FRENCH: While they're looking for that, I  
13 can say for rental assis- for the Rental Assistance  
14 program right, uh the headcount that we have is uhm,  
15 161 but I would caution to think that is the only  
16 number of people who are actually focused on moving  
17 people out of shelter. Specifically around City  
18 FHEPs. There are many other staff both internal to  
19 our agency, as well as in partnership with our  
20 providers that actually work along the continuum of  
21 moving people out of shelter. So, I just would  
caution that that is not the only number of people  
focused on that work and that it is really focused

1 specifically on rental assistance. There are  
2 additional staff who obviously work in the affordable  
3 and supportive housing side of our operations that  
4 connect people to other types of permanent housing.  
5 And we can, if we need to, get back to you with the  
6 total number.

7 RICHARD JOHNS: Yeah, I'm sorry, we will have to  
8 get back to you. I'm sorry.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Oh, okay. What I'm trying  
10 to get at is whether or not the budgeted headcount  
11 was revised for the Preliminary Plan to account -  
12 bless you - to account for the transfer of this  
13 program.

14 RICHARD JOHNS: The transfer uhm, happened in  
15 uhm, the - the budgeted headcount had moved prior to  
16 uhm, the November budget or moved in the November  
17 budget but the actual headcount moved uhm, later.  
18 So, you're sort of - we're seeing a sort of a  
19 disconnect between when the budgeted headcount was  
20 moved. Only because we had to move them as part of  
21 uhm, financial plans and when the actual heads moved,  
which was later in the fall.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, uhm, what is DHS doing  
3 to fill vacant positions and to reduce the attrition  
4 rate amongst staff?

5 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, thank you yeah. That's a  
6 great question. So, uhm, they are - our Human  
7 Resources Administration has a number of initiatives  
8 that they've taken to try to reduce the staff, uhm,  
9 the vacancies in staff.

10 I mean, on an internal level and at the higher  
11 levels, we're working to ensure that all of our  
12 positions are posted and that staff have an  
13 opportunity for growth within the organization. Uhm,  
14 when we are looking to bring in staff from outside of  
15 the organization, we are doing the traditional civil  
16 service hiring pools. Uhm, we post everything on our  
17 jobs website and try to advertise our positions  
18 outside of just the city's website. Uhm, we've done  
19 numerous career fairs. We've collaborated with HRA's  
20 career services division, done hiring hauls across  
21 the city. Uhm, and we've also worked within our  
office of marketing to create recruitment videos for  
uhm positions that are hard to recruit.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and what would you say  
3 is uhm, an acceptable or ideal vacancy rate? If not,  
4 zero.

5 ERIN DALTON: Yeah, I would say as close to zero  
6 as possible. Uhm, it will never be you know zero and  
7 it takes time to recruit new staff but uh, I'm  
8 certain this agency wants to have everybody on board  
9 that we can and also, for the benefit of the other  
10 staff who are here, who are taking on so much work on  
11 behalf of people. And so, while it's difficult to  
12 attract uhm talent and it's - and of course, I  
13 suspect this bureaucracy like all are challenging to  
14 work through. Uh, I think it's a great opportunity  
15 to look at that process, streamline it as much as  
16 possible and get folks uh, in the door. So, I would  
17 say we would be striving to have that be as low as  
18 possible.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, uhm, okay, on February  
20 19th, DHS released an action plan for the integration  
21 for asylum seekers into the DHS system. The plan  
laid out the following goals: Close the last  
emergency asylum shelter. Bring single adult  
shelters into compliance with capacity limits and

1  
2 comply with regulations requiring families with  
3 children to have access to cooking facilities.

4 The plan mentions that within the next six  
5 months, DHS will open several new shelters, which  
6 were delayed by the previous administration. Can you  
7 tell me how many shelters are set to open and who the  
8 shelter providers are?

9 ERIN DALTON: Sure, we'd love to. We're really  
10 excited about the new shelters. Uhm, while folks are  
11 finding the specific information for you all, I'll  
12 just say I was at a ribbon cutting for Magnolia  
13 Gardens last week and it's a beautiful space built  
14 with the nonprofit and community, working together.  
15 You know those are the kinds of spaces we want to be  
16 able to move our families and others into. Places  
17 with services on site that fit the fabric of the  
18 community. It was just a wonderful opportunity to  
19 see those kinds of - that kind of shelter open and  
20 uhm, while I'm sure there's always concerns when  
21 shelters are cited. What I saw there that day was so  
much community excitement for the space.

There's community rooms that could even be used I  
think by - by community members and so, just a real  
celebration.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I was sorry to miss that -  
3 that ribbon cutting but I'll be visiting Magnolia  
4 Gardens soon.

5 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Thanks Commissioner and Chair  
6 for the question. I was conferring with Chief  
7 Gonzalez. We know the sites. We know the addresses.  
8 We'll have to get back to you on the providers.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay uhm and what about a  
10 breakdown of the populations that will be served.  
11 The facility types, the boroughs, and how many  
12 residents these shelters are able to house?

13 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Yes, I can certainly answer.  
14 The population will be single men. So, these sites  
15 are opening to absorb the clients that are being  
16 transferred out the last remaining Kirk site.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and after the opening  
18 of these additional shelter sites, that are already  
19 in the pipeline. Do you anticipate needing more  
20 shelter sites?

21 CHRISTINE FELLINI: We're constantly evaluating.  
Part of our large capacity management plan and the  
third item that you mentioned from that 45 day plan  
is to ensure that families are out of hotels that  
don't have cooking facilities. So, that's uhm a task

1  
2 and in order to move families out of hotels, we need  
3 a robust pipeline. So, we're continuing to identify  
4 high quality, safe, uhm, facilities to uhm allow us  
5 to exit hotels.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And uhm, do you know how  
7 many you might need? Like how many shelter sites?

8 CHRISTINE FELLINI: I think we'd need to get back  
9 to you. The number changes as we go, right. So,  
10 when that plan was established, the census was a  
11 certain number. We know how many families were in as  
12 of the day. It's something we're constantly  
13 monitoring and I mentioned earlier, we work with uhm,  
14 our colleagues at OMB on the shelter projections to  
15 kind of tie what the expected census will be to the  
16 beds we're going to need to have available at that  
17 time.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. The action plan  
19 states that goals will be met in part by converting  
20 some families with children, hotel units for use by  
21 single men. How many families with children, hotel  
units are there currently and how many can be  
converted for use by single men?

1  
2 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Yeah, we'll have to get back  
3 to you on the total number of family hotel units.

4 Uhm, we don't want to give you the incorrect number.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, I just want to state  
6 for the record that we shared all of these questions  
7 with you all in advance and we're hoping to have the  
8 numbers shared here today. So, it's a lot of follow  
9 up.

10 CHRISTINE FELLINI: We'll work on that.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Uhm, one thing, I want to go  
12 back to very quickly about uhm Magnolia Gardens,  
13 which as you mentioned Commissioner is a great new  
14 facility. Uhm, the provider however, did mention  
15 that funding was cut for the PETS program and I think  
16 when folks first started talking about the PETS  
17 program, it was probably something that was, uhm,  
18 undervalued.

19 Uhm, and people didn't realize or understand how  
20 important PETS can be and are to families and  
21 especially those experiencing trauma and domestic  
22 violence and things of that nature. So, uhm, it  
23 seems to be a much more uhm widespread or robust  
24 program across the shelter system. And so, uh, do

1  
2 you know anything about the funding for the PETS  
3 program specifically at Magnolia Gardens?

4 CHRISTINE FELLINI: I will need to get back to  
5 you about the specific funding there.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That one I sprung on you, so  
7 I'm going to allow it.

8 CHRISTINE FELLINI: But I certainly agree that we  
9 shouldn't ask people to make hard choices about the  
10 people and the animals that they love. Uhm, and so,  
11 as long as we can create a safe environment for  
12 everyone staying there uhm, we should do that  
13 whenever we can.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, great, thank you so  
15 much. Uhm, okay and then going back to the asylum  
16 seekers in DHS system. Uh, where do you plan to move  
17 the approximately 8,100 families with children  
18 currently in hotel shelters and how will you minimize  
19 disruption to these families' lives and to the  
20 children's schooling? I know you talked about uhm,  
21 you know doing everything we can and identifying new  
sites and of course we know, everybody knows we have  
a crisis of housing and shelter here in New York City  
but for the families with children specifically, uhm,  
what's your plan to minimize disruption?

1  
2 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Okay, thank you for the  
3 question uhm Chair. Uhm, first and foremost, uhm  
4 outside of any need for an emergency transfer, we are  
5 looking to ensure that families are not transferred.  
6 Families with school age children until after the  
7 school year whenever possible. Uhm, that's one of  
8 our approaches and I just want to uhm, confirm for  
9 you the number of family hotel units that we have,  
10 11,084.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: 11,084. Thank you so much.

12 ERIN DALTON: And just to build on that point  
13 because I've asked about it a little bit as well.  
14 So, in addition to whenever possible not changing -  
15 asking younger children to - children that are school  
16 age to change schools.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

18 ERIN DALTON: Uhm, I know we're providing  
19 transportation if people want to stay in home  
20 schools. We believe in obviously the - the education  
21 stability and making sure there's continuity there.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Great, thank you and given  
that asylum seekers often have unique needs different  
from the general DHS population, how do you plan to  
serve them after they've been integrated into the

1  
2 DHS, while also keeping them safe from immigration  
3 customs enforcement officers?

4 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Sure, thank you for the  
5 question Chair. Uhm, throughout the process of  
6 integrating asylum seekers into our general shelter  
7 population, uhm, everyone is treated the same. So,  
8 everyone is assessed in the same way. Service plans  
9 are delivered in the same way and the specific needs  
10 around asylum seekers, whether it's legal or  
11 immigration services, get added to the service plan,  
12 just as they would if child care was needed or  
13 employment services were needed. We partner with the  
14 Mayor's Office of Immigration Affairs to make sure we  
15 have the most current and client forward uhm, facing  
16 materials and resources. Our providers, uhm just  
17 like they would for medical providers or employment  
18 programs, are responsible for making sure they have a  
19 network of resources to refer clients in need too.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Uh, I'd like to  
21 acknowledge that we've been joined by Millennium High  
School from here in Manhattan. Welcome students from  
Millennium High School. This is a Preliminary Budget  
hearing for the General Welfare Committee, which has  
oversight over Department of Social Services, which

1 includes the Department of Homeless Services and uh,  
2 the Human Resources Administration. So, welcome to  
3 City Hall.

4 Uhm, okay, disability and aging accomodations in  
5 shelter. As the former Chair of the Council's  
6 Committee on Aging, I've seen how older New Yorkers  
7 have unique needs and I'm concerned about uhm, and  
8 how DHS is meeting the needs of this population in  
9 the shelter system. Can you provide an estimate of  
10 how many people in shelters are 60 years old or  
older?

11 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Thank you for the question.  
12 We will get you an estimate of the number of people  
13 in shelter 60 or older.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Uhm, okay, you don't have  
that?

15 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Not at my fingertips, no.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

17 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Apologies.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: What specialized support  
services does DHS provide to this population?

19 CHRISTINE FELLINI: We have a few sites uhm, that  
20 are designed specifically for this uhm population.  
Uhm, they tend to be lower density. They tend to be

1  
2 more accessible for those with mobility or chronic uh  
3 medical issues. Uhm, some of the providers that  
4 operate these sites also have their own housing  
5 programs, supportive housing programs and we ensure  
6 that working - we're working with our HRA partners  
7 and other city agencies for any housing options that  
8 are dedicated specifically to uhm, this population.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And what specialized support  
10 services are available to shelter residents with  
11 disabilities?

12 CHRISTINE FELLINI: So, yeah, uhm, our Office of  
13 Disability Affairs is always available to assist our  
14 shelter providers with any needs uhm, that they feel  
15 that they need to assist a client in order to meet to  
16 make sure that they have full access to services that  
17 we offer. We have a robust reasonable accommodation  
18 process that allows uhm, at the people we serve to  
19 request accommodations, whether it's a change in  
20 policy or procedure or additional time with an  
21 application or having information read to them, to  
22 make sure that they're fully aware and participating  
23 in their service plan.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And what does uhm, what does  
25 the review process for those requests look like? And

1 based on what you're saying, basically the  
2 information is presented to the person and then they  
3 would you know- know what their options are or are  
4 there cases where people are asking specifically for  
5 specific accommodations?

6 CHRISTINE FELLINI: We certainly get uhm, those  
7 instances as well as it's our responsibility also to  
8 pay attention to proactively uhm see if they're -

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Identify needs.

10 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Yes, visible and apparent  
11 needs. So, for example, if somebody comes in and  
12 applies for shelter uhm, and we're looking for a  
13 placement, we're going to look for one for somebody  
14 in a wheelchair, who uses a wheelchair, then  
15 elevator.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right and some disabilities  
17 are invisible-

18 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Right.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: But I recognize that for  
20 those that are visible you do your best at intake.

21 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Right and for those that are  
invisible or for things that arise when somebody is  
placed in shelter. The individual who is in receipt  
of shelter, can apply directly for reasonable

1  
2 accommodation on their own by submitting a form. The  
3 shelter staff is there also to assist them uhm in  
4 completing the form and it's likely that we're going  
5 to need documentation. So, shelter staff is also  
6 there to help them gather that documentation and make  
7 sure it gets to us.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, uhm, would lack of  
9 documentation prevent one from receiving a reasonable  
10 accommodation?

11 CHRISTINE FELLINI: It depends. It depends on  
12 what the - the need is.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, can you give me an  
14 example of when somebody might be denied a reasonable  
15 accommodation for lack of -

16 CHRISTINE FELLINI: For lack of documentation?

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah.

18 CHRISTINE FELLINI: So, if somebody in shelter  
19 uhm, submits a reasonable accommodation, they need  
20 their own unit and their own bathroom. Uhm, we would  
21 ask for medical documentation that would indicate  
that that is in fact a need.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

1  
2 CHRISTINE FELLINI: And if that documentation was  
3 not provided, uhm, the reasonable accommodation will  
4 likely be denied.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, at that time? But  
6 there's an opportunity for -

7 CHRISTINE FELLINI: And again, the shelter staff  
8 is responsible for helping uhm, people to secure the  
9 documents that they need.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. How many DHS shelters  
11 are wheelchair accessible?

12 CHRISTINE FELLINI: I'll get back to you on that.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and uhm, does DHS take  
14 age and disability into account when placing clients  
15 into shelters?

16 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Yes, as I mentioned, we do  
17 have a few shelters that are uhm designed.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Specific, hmm, hmm.

19 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Yeah, so as uhm, if there are  
20 available beds there, we would certainly place them  
21 as long as it was appropriate. And as those sites  
uhm have permanent placements and beds become  
available, we would be transferring appropriate folks  
in.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and I assume you take  
3 into consideration the availability of community  
4 services and amenities and access to public  
5 transportation and other factors that those  
6 vulnerable populations would need?

7 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: How does DHS coordinate with  
9 agencies such as uh NYC Aging and the Mayor's Office  
10 for People with Disabilities to better serve older  
11 adults and people with disabilities who are  
12 experiencing homelessness.

13 CHRISTINE FELLINI: We're constantly engaging  
14 with our sister agency partners around best  
15 practices, any new services. Uhm, pushing for  
16 additional housing supports. Uhm, making sure that  
17 our providers are aware of all the services that are  
18 offered by our sister agencies as well.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you and uhm I'm going  
20 to go to Council Member Avilés for a few more  
21 questions and then I have a question here from  
Council Member Thomas-Henry whose joined us online  
but unfortunately, we don't have quorum at the moment  
and so, I'll have to ask her question for her.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you so much Chair.  
3 Thank you uhm to the whole team for your work and  
4 being here today. Uhm, so I want to talk a little  
5 bit about uhm the Immigration Legal Services. Uhm,  
6 in the Preliminary Plan includes \$6.7 million of city  
7 funding added in Fiscal '26 and \$21.3 million added  
8 in Fiscal '27, \$20.9 million added in Fiscal '28.  
9 Uhm, and continuing on in outyears. Uhm, can you  
10 tell us what this funding is for specifically and  
11 what programs are going to be impacted by the  
12 additional funding?

13 SCOTT FRENCH: So, it actually - it supports a  
14 variety of immigration services across different uh  
15 programs and different agencies. So, it will support  
16 IOI, which is at uh HRA, under our Office of Civil  
17 Justice. It also supports -

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Can you tell me how much  
19 for each program, what would be the breakdown? So,  
20 IOI at HRA at what amount?

21 SCOTT FRENCH: Okay, so we'll provide the  
breakdown on each specific agency. Uhm, if they  
don't have it in there but IOI then the Office, End  
GBV, End Gender Based Violence is also has programs  
that will receive some of that funding. Uhm, uh, our

1  
2 colleagues at MOIA also receive some of that funding.  
3 Additionally, we have a low wage worker protection  
4 program at HRA that will also receive some of the  
5 additional funding and we'll get back to you with the  
6 specific amounts for each one of those programs, but  
7 it crosses a variety of programs that focus on  
8 supporting uh, individuals who may experience  
9 immigration issues that need legal representation.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great, so when you report  
11 back, we'd love to see the breakdown across and then  
12 across years.

13 SCOTT FRENCH: Yes.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you. In terms of  
15 the uhm, the Preliminary Plan also includes uhm \$11.6  
16 million in city funding added to the baseline  
17 starting in Fiscal '27 for immigration legal support  
18 centers operated by MOIA. Are there specific MOIA  
19 legal services or programs that the funding is for?  
20 And what providers will be part of this program?  
21 Also, will there be a new RFP?

SCOTT FRENCH: We will have to get that  
information from our colleagues at MOIA as we uh  
wouldn't have those specific details as to what  
they're planning but we will follow up with you.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great, also in terms of  
3 uh, in terms of the Office of Asylum Seeker  
4 operations, it looks like the Preliminary Plan  
5 includes a reduction of \$880,000 in state funding and  
6 eight positions in Fiscal '26, only we were curious  
7 about how that funding amount was determined and  
8 whether OWASSO has been officially disbanded.

9 RICHARD JOHNS: Yes, uhm, so uh, the OWASSO staff  
10 and uhm, funding have been absorbed by uh, the very  
11 city agencies, primarily by DSS. Uhm, the state  
12 funding in the budget was just the - the modified  
13 budget that was in there. I have to get back to you  
14 on what that funding represented but uhm, yeah, I'd  
15 say OWASSO- OWASSO is -

16 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Is no more?

17 RICHARD JOHNS: Yeah, yeah.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Okay, long overdue. So,  
19 the eight, the eight positions are now part of the  
20 DSS general budget have been reallocated?

21 RICHARD JOHNS: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Okay great, thank you.  
Uhm, and then lastly, just to follow up on uh Council  
Member Nurses questions about uh the shelter, ICE  
enforcement. Uhm, in particular, we are aware that

1 uhm, many of the security services that are in  
2 shelter are contracted services. Obviously they also  
3 are under the obligation of meeting our laws. We've  
4 talked a lot about it in the past. Uhm, but can you  
5 tell us uh again for the record, uhm, how uh security  
6 contractors are informed and held to account on  
7 maintaining uhm responsibilities for our laws?

8 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Thank you Council Member.

9 Uhm, as we mentioned earlier in response to Council  
10 Member Nurses question, these trainings, the  
11 communications, our contracted security providers, or  
12 the providers contracted securities were invited and  
13 did participate.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: And in terms of the two  
15 instances where uhm, ICE was able to enter a facility  
16 without permission, uhm, what measures have you taken  
17 to ensure that contractors will never have this  
18 problem? They will never experience this failure  
19 again.

20 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Yeah, again, thank you for  
21 the question. I think as we mentioned just  
constantly reiterating the process. Speaking with  
the teams after the incident. Also, to debrief to  
understand what kind of happened, so that we can talk

1 through next time. Uhm, but it is an ongoing effort  
2 to make sure that everybody understands the way to  
3 handle this, especially in the emergency situation.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great and Chair, if I may  
5 just one more question?

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I'll give you two more.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Oh, she's so kind. So  
8 many questions, so little time. And of course, I  
9 can't find it now that I'm under the pressure of  
10 performance. Uhm, I'd like to move back to Homebase.  
11 Uhm, let me - okay here we go. Uhm, could you tell  
12 us uhm so, we know that HRA's Homebase supports City  
13 FHEPS in community clients to maintain stable  
14 housing. Uhm, we know it's a network of community  
15 based organizations that provide these homelessness  
16 prevention services. What's the current Fiscal '26  
17 budget for Homebase uhm, and is that amount  
18 baselined?

19 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, the current budget for  
20 Homebase is \$67.9 million. There is baselined  
21 funding in the budget that does fluctuate a bit to  
\$66.6 in '26 going to \$63.9 million in '27 and '28.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: So, 90 percentage amount  
are baselined for that funding?

1 RICHARD JOHNS: Yeah, largely baselined yeah.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Uhm, in terms of uhm  
3 what's the actual spending to date in Fiscal '26?  
4 And how much was oh- uh yeah what was the actual for  
5 Fiscal '25?

6 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, so through Fiscal - uhm  
7 through February for Fiscal Year '26, we've spent  
8 \$46.5 million. The actuals for '25 were \$67.9  
9 million.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Okay and then in terms of  
11 uhm, in multiple City FHEPS oversight hearings, we  
12 had heard from the public that the demand for the  
13 City FHEPS application renewals and other rental  
14 assistance services that Homebase provides can't be  
15 met with the current level of funding budgeted.  
16 We've also heard that CBO's are having difficulty  
17 hiring and maintaining adequate staff levels. Uhm,  
18 as the PMMR notes, in the first four months of 2026,  
19 the program had over 12,000 enrollments, which is  
20 14.2 percent increase compared to the same period of  
21 year. How many contracted providers are within the  
Homebase program?

SCOTT FRENCH: Sure, there are 7 providers with  
16 contracts and I believe it is 23 locations but I

1 will confirm that last uh piece for you. Uhm, we are  
2 aware that for some Homebase providers right, uh, uh,  
3 there are wait times to be seen. I will say every  
4 Homebase provider does an initial triage for everyone  
5 who reaches out to determine if there is an emergency  
6 need, such an imminent eviction or other, other  
7 activity that needs to be addressed and those  
8 individuals will be seen either that day or within  
9 you know the next day or two but we are - as I  
10 mentioned before, looking at ways in which we can uh,  
11 shift some of the responsibilities that have been  
12 taken on by Homebase over the years back into HRA so  
13 that we can expand capacity for them to uh serve more  
14 people in the community. That includes you know  
15 looking at things that we're doing around subsidy  
16 work that they currently work on and especially  
17 around State FHEPS as well as some other complex case  
18 work that they do that we think we are able to bring  
19 back into the agency uh to expand their capacity.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: So, since we've  
18 acknowledged there is a capacity issue, uhm, do you  
19 know what the current case ratio would be for  
20 Homebase staff at this moment?  
21

1  
2 SCOTT FRENCH: Uhm, it doesn't work on a case  
3 ratio basis in that manner. I will say you know uhm,  
4 uhm, last year, they did exceed their service  
5 targets, right, which was 30,000 served and they did  
6 serve uh, uh, 32,000 last year. So, it is something  
7 that we're tracking closely and we're in  
8 conversation, ongoing conversation with the Office of  
9 Management and Budget around resources for the  
10 program.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: And, and, what's the  
12 funding that you anticipate given what we know to  
13 date? The program Uhm, the program would need to  
14 operate optimally?

15 SCOTT FRENCH: So, that is something we're still  
16 discussing with OMB to identify what additional  
17 resources would be appropriate to help you know  
18 respond to the community need.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: And lastly, so what is  
20 the directive when uhm - so it sounds like the  
21 Homebase providers are asked to prioritize and triage  
emergencies. How, how, is the agency uhm conducting  
oversight and evaluation that those triages are  
actually happening and happening promptly.

1  
2 SCOTT FRENCH: So, we uh, speak quite frequently  
3 with our Homebase providers uhm, uh, to assess what  
4 is happening. We talk to them about uh, where they  
5 may be seeing wait times. Uhm, and how that is  
6 manifesting itself within their work uhm and I will  
7 also say that they are uh - they definitely come  
8 forward to us when they are finding that there may be  
9 some challenges, especially if it's relating to uh  
10 serving those who are showing up with an emergence  
11 need that needs to be addressed immediately.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Okay, thank you Chair.  
13 I'll be back.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You're welcome. I think  
15 that was about 4 questions that you actually asked.  
16 Uhm, but important ones, so thank you. Okay, I'm  
17 going to ask a couple questions on behalf of Council  
18 Member Thomas-Henry who is on Zoom. What is the  
19 process for someone in a shelter to apply for  
20 formerly homeless set asides in new housing  
21 developments? From her experience, shelter residents  
are applying directly through Housing Connect and the  
Housing Coordinators at some of the shelters do not  
seem to be well informed on the application process  
for the set asides or availability of new sites.

1  
2 SCOTT FRENCH: Uhm, I will take part of that and  
3 then we might get back to you and the Council Member  
4 with some additional details and I'll ask my DH  
5 colleagues to weigh in as well. Uhm, so for HPD  
6 homeless set asides, right? Uh, the provider network  
7 is aware of the different availabilities that we  
8 have. Uhm, to apply for an HPD unit, you do have to  
9 submit through HPD Connect. I know that we do have  
10 data shares that we are doing with HPD to sort of  
11 share information on those individuals who have  
12 applied and are eligible but we'll have to get back  
13 to you with some more specific details to map it out  
14 but obviously, we do want to know if our shelter  
15 providers right, if we're hearing that some staff  
16 aren't fully aware of the process in which it  
17 happened, that is something that we will uh discuss  
18 about and make sure that we're pushing out  
19 information that's clear and simple so that folks  
20 will ensure our individuals who could maybe you know  
21 benefit from those set asides, know that they're  
available to them.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Great.

ERIN DALTON: Yeah, thank you Administrator and I  
will add that uhm, it is uhm, first and foremost part

1  
2 of the rehousing strategy for clients in shelter to  
3 have HHA submitted, so it is the job of shelter staff  
4 to ensure that that's done, that it's done accurately  
5 and when changes occur that things like income are  
6 updated.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: We can connect Council  
8 Member Thomas-Henry with you all uhm to see if  
9 there's a specific location that might need some more  
10 assistance. Thank you and then second question from  
11 her. Last year, a former JFK Hilton Hotel in Queens  
12 was converted to over 300 affordable apartments for  
13 low income and formerly homeless New Yorkers. As  
14 someone who represents a district with an airport  
15 that is surrounded by hotels that have been converted  
16 to shelters, is there a long term plan to replicate  
17 this model of converting hotels into permanent  
18 housing?

19 SCOTT FRENCH: Uh, certainly so yes, so that  
20 conversion uh was part of the affordable housing  
21 services program that we have, uhm which you know we  
are definitely very supportive of and looking to  
expand if possible. I do know that there is sort of  
an overall interest as well across the Administration

1  
2 to look at how other hotels could be transitioned to  
3 more affordable housing.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Great, thank you. I'm going  
5 to kick it over to Council Member Brewer before I  
6 continue on with my line of questioning.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. West 74th  
8 Street would be great permanent housing, I'm just  
9 saying because I am - you know the issues there  
10 Scott, oh my God. Alright, uhm, one question, how  
11 many city run shelters are there compared to run by  
12 nonprofits?

13 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Thank you Council Member.  
14 There are five city run shelters. When we exclude  
15 two intake facilities, Path and 30th Street.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay and are they going  
17 to be continuing? Are you going to have more or  
18 you're probably going to stick with the nonprofit?

19 CHRISTINE FELLINI: I think all plans are in  
20 discussion for those sites.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Next is uhm, I get  
a lot of calls about APS, Adult Protective Services.  
According to the uhm, Preliminary Management Plan,  
there's an increase with like in the specifics as I  
think many of us are getting older, probably why but

1  
2 there are many more requests and that's an increase  
3 in cases. So, what is driving these increases except  
4 maybe age? How have you been able to handle the  
5 caseload, the referral volume, uhm and how many are  
6 denied? I must admit I get a lot- hoarders, which is  
7 a big problem. So, tons and tons of hoarders, APS,  
8 etc., and I think this is going to be a growing  
9 problem, a growing challenge. So, you obviously need  
10 case workers, you need a budget, uh home attendants.  
11 So, I'm just wanting to know how and generally, how  
12 you're going to be addressing either budgetwise,  
13 staffing-wise, uhm, the issue of case workers and APS  
14 and the hoarding issue, which is prevalent.

12 SCOTT FRENCH: Hmm, absolutely, thank you for the  
13 question. Uhm, so uhm I can say in regards to case  
14 workers over the last couple of years, we've hired an  
15 additional 107 case workers. We obviously track very  
16 closely uhm caseload ratios, uhm, the budget as well.  
17 You know I will say we are within our time limit  
18 rates to be assessing cases that are referred to us.  
19 I will also note that eligibility for APS is very  
20 clearly defined by the state and other regulations  
21 uhm and it's sort of very specific criteria that  
needs to be met for someone to be identified as an

1  
2 APS client, which includes sort of a combination of  
3 things of an individual. Needs to be 18 years or  
4 older uhm and they need to be mentally or physically  
5 impaired. They have to be unable to manage their  
6 resources, carry out the activities of daily living,  
7 or protect themselves from abuse, neglect,  
8 exploitation or other hazardous situations and have  
9 no one available who is willing or able to assist  
10 them responsibly. And so, we - all of those criteria  
11 need to be met to be deemed eligible for APS,  
12 otherwise the case would be declined at that moment.  
13 Uhm, but it is something that we're tracking very,  
14 very closely. Uhm, I agree with you with you know  
15 the aging of the population as well. We want to make  
16 sure that we're supporting individuals and we will  
17 assess and discuss with OMB as well where we see  
18 additional resources.

19  
20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Do you have a contract  
21 for hoarding to clean out or do you do that  
internally because I do a lot of it myself.

SCOTT FRENCH: We have a deep cleaning contract  
that we utilize when uh, uh, a hoarding situation has  
been encountered and we realize that some type of  
deep cleaning is necessary.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Could you let us know how  
3 much that is? How much it's increased and if you  
4 think it needs to be more increased? Because it's -

5 SCOTT FRENCH: Yeah, we will follow up with you  
6 on that.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. Thank you  
8 Madam Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you Council Member.  
10 Okay, addressing chronic under budgeting in City  
11 FHEPS and cash assistance. In recent years,  
12 financial plans have not appropriately accounted for  
13 costs of HRA's City FHEPS and cash assistance budget  
14 at a level proportionate with recent expenditures.  
15 The chronic underbudgeting of these vital programs  
16 has been of concern to the Council and was raised in  
17 every Preliminary Budget responses since Fiscal 2019.  
18 The Council was pleased to see that the Preliminary  
19 Plan fills a fiscal cliff for City FHEPS and cash  
20 assistance. Increasing the baseline budget for both  
21 programs starting in Fiscal 2027.

The funding added in the Preliminary Plan for  
City FHEPS brings the total Fiscal 2026 budget to  
\$1.78 billion growing to \$3.04 billion by Fiscal

1  
2 2029. How do HRA and OMB forecast the growth of the  
3 City FHEPS program?

4 RICHARD JOHNS: Yes, thank you for that question.  
5 So, as I noted earlier, uhm, I think in relation to  
6 shelters, we work very closely with the Office of  
7 Management and Budget. We work very closely with the  
8 Office of Management and Budget. We share data with  
9 them. Uhm, and we uh, you know work on Fiscal  
10 forecasts for this and other programs and reconcile  
11 those but based on what we're seeing in the program  
12 themselves, in cases of rental assistance, the growth  
13 we're seeing, uhm, the anticipated growth for the  
14 rental assistance vouchers and so forth.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, can you provide a  
16 breakdown of the primary factors that drive the cost  
17 increases across the plan period.

18 RICHARD JOHNS: Sure, yeah, I mean the increase  
19 there is again, new entrances into the program, which  
20 I noted earlier was about \$15,000 for FY25. Uhm, we  
21 project with the voucher increases would be again, we  
- we follow the New York City Housing Authority and  
their payment standards. Those payment standards are  
set by HUD. Uhm, so we project the growth and  
payment standards uhm and overall, you know when you

1  
2 look at the new entrances, the people that are  
3 leaving and the rental assistance, that's how we  
4 project and what we think the populations would be.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: How much has been spent to  
6 date in Fiscal 2026 on City FHEPS?

7 RICHARD JOHNS: Give me one second. Uhm, so our  
8 spending through January was \$1.1 billion.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Wait, through January?

10 RICHARD JOHNS: Through January.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So, that would be- okay,  
12 \$1.?

13 RICHARD JOHNS: \$1.1 billion.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and then how much was  
15 spent in Fiscal '25?

16 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, Fiscal '25, we spent uhm  
17 just under \$1.4 billion.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and how much of that  
19 went towards client benefits?

20 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, that full amount was for  
21 just rental assistance. So, everything.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

RICHARD JOHNS: That's rental assistance, City  
FHEPS.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Hold on. We've seen  
3 consistent and significant growth in spending and  
4 enrollment in the program each year since inception.  
5 When does HRA believe the program may plateau?

6 ERIN DALTON: So, I'll just, I'll jump in. I  
7 mean, just looking at the program which you know with  
8 the two weeks I've had on the ground. Uhm, there's a  
9 lot of need and desire to use this program clearly  
10 and it's helping people. If we keep of course  
11 letting people into the program and that's good and  
12 they're moving in and out of the shelter or avoiding  
13 shelter in the first place, uhm, but if there's no  
14 exit to that program, it continues to grow,  
15 essentially endlessly. There's really two degrees of  
16 freedom right? There's ins and outs and if ins are  
17 always going to exceed outs and they are, without any  
18 other strategies, then it will continue to grow.  
19 There's only so much of course that could be done in  
20 the middle, we should do our best job to run an  
21 efficient program to make sure that we meet rent  
standards but with increasing people entering the  
program uh and very few exits, it continues to grow.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Understood. As of the  
Preliminary Plan, cash assistance makes up 19.4

1  
2 percent of HRA's Fiscal 2026 budget at \$2.76 billion  
3 and is baselined at 2.74 billion starting in Fiscal  
4 2027. More households are enrolled in and staying on  
5 cash assistance for longer periods of time.

6 According to the PMMR, the number of people  
7 receiving cash assistance that was - the number of  
8 people receiving cash assistance was 604,000 for the  
9 first four months of Fiscal 2026, which shows an  
10 increase from that period last year. How do HRA and  
11 OMB forecast growth for cash assistance?

12 RICHARD JOHNS: Cash assistance again, you know  
13 we work pretty closely with OMB to project the uhm,  
14 the population for cash assistance. Uhm, you'll see  
15 in the budget the uhm outyear budget or really  
16 '26-'28 is flat. Uhm, one piece that admittedly is  
17 the changes to mandatory engagement. So, uhm, we are  
18 you know working closely with our partners at OMB to  
19 try and refine those models uhm, cash assistance  
20 though is admittedly more - a more difficult program  
21 for us to forecast.

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and how much was  
23 actually spent on cash assistance in Fiscal 2025?

24 RICHARD JOHNS: In '25, it was just under \$2.7  
25 billion.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And what about to date in  
3 Fiscal '26?

4 RICHARD JOHNS: Through January, we've spent \$1.6  
5 billion.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Uhm, as of March, how  
7 many cash assistance recipients, individuals and  
8 households are there?

9 SCOTT FRENCH: Uh, so the overall cash assistance  
10 uh case load currently is 585,339 individuals, which  
11 is 327,059 cases.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: 330's?

13 SCOTT FRENCH: 327,059 cases.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you and how has this  
15 number changed over the past several years?

16 SCOTT FRENCH: Uhm, I - over the past several  
17 years, we've seen the cash assistance caseload  
18 increase. Uhm, over time, I would say over the last  
19 few months we have seen for the first time it  
20 actually began to decrease a bit. Uhm, uh, but I  
21 think that is a trend that we're continuing to track  
to determine if that is actually a trend or some  
other sort of-

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: An anomaly perhaps.

SCOTT FRENCH: An anomaly perhaps.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Because I was going to ask  
3 why there's been such a big increase over the years.

4 SCOTT FRENCH: Uh, I think a big increase over  
5 the years is really reflective of the need that has  
6 been out there in the community. Uhm and you know  
7 cash assistance, the eligibility determination is  
8 very much based upon income and someone is income  
9 eligible or they are not. So, we as an agency  
10 continue to do you know that assessment starting in  
11 2023 especially we saw a significant increase in  
12 monthly cash assistance uh applications each month  
13 and that has really continued. We've seen some  
14 abating of that but you know we were seeing on  
15 average between 45,000 and 50,000 applications for  
16 like a multiyear period and many of those people were  
17 uh, income eligible for cash assistance. So, they  
18 were - were added to the caseload. So, I think it is  
19 a - it was a reflection of you know economic  
20 realities for uh, low income individuals in New York  
21 City and we also made it easier to apply for cash  
assistance during that period of time. We shifted it  
to online so individuals did not have to come into  
one of our sites, which allowed people to also apply  
whenever it was convenient for them.

1  
2 Uhm, and I think that also led to an increase in  
3 the applications and access to the program.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Uhm, that's great. That  
5 work is great and would love to see more ways that we  
6 can make it easier for people to access benefits.  
7 Uhm, what services is HRA providing to clients to  
8 help them transition from the City FHEPS program to  
9 full self sufficiency? And I guess this goes back to  
10 your statement Commissioner. Uhm, just you know what  
11 effort really are we making to get people out of the  
12 program once they've been in?

13 ERIN DALTON: Yeah, no thank you for the  
14 question. I think it's a really important point and  
15 effort we should - we should work on together. So,  
16 looking at how we can reduce costs of the program.  
17 How we can of course move people to self sufficiency.  
18 Over that five years, there will be a number of  
19 people who we can engage in our career and training  
20 programs. We can engage in other subsidy programs to  
21 reduce the cost of the program overall. And so, I  
think there are really some strategies we can use to  
help people move to self-sufficiency and to limit the  
cost of the program so that we can serve more people.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Uhm, what have you done  
3 already to date? I know, you know you're talking  
4 about things you would like to do in the future,  
5 which is all great, but I'm wondering what's already  
6 been done?

7 SCOTT FRENCH: Certainly, so to date, you know  
8 much of that work would have been focused on  
9 individuals who are also on cash assistance and  
10 receiving City FHEPS. Uhm, and engaging those  
11 individuals in the robust career services programs  
12 that we have either through our PACE providers, uhm,  
13 as well as other programs such as PINK, Jobs Plus,  
14 and our business link program, which offer a variety  
15 of different connections to both training, education,  
16 as well as we've developed a lot of very robust  
17 partnerships with employers in the community. Uhm,  
18 and connecting people to active employment. So,  
19 that's work that we have been doing that has been  
20 really focused on the cash assistance clients uhm,  
21 and I think to what the Commissioner is talking about  
is looking at ways in which we can really expand that  
to others, people on City FHEPS who could also  
benefit from those programs.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And what about specifically  
3 for City FHEPS, not just Cash Assistance?

4 SCOTT FRENCH: Right so, we don't have a separate  
5 specific program for City FHEPS at this time but I  
6 think that speaks to some of what the Commissioner  
7 was talking about in regards to you know looking  
8 forward as well. Uhm, looking at things that can  
9 really be targeted at individuals on City FHEPS who  
10 may not be connected to other benefits.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

12 ERIN DALTON: Right, I think as the Administrator  
13 said, there wasn't a focused effort for City FHEPS  
14 only clients. It's a great opportunity to work with  
15 people toward self sufficiency, not waiting till year  
16 five. You know starting early, engaging folks and  
17 making those pathways out of the program.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Great. Uhm, and do you  
19 track how many City FHEPS clients have fully  
20 transitioned to self sufficiency?

21 SCOTT FRENCH: We can get that number. I know  
our data, we are tracking City FHEPS quite closely.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That would be great. And we  
would love to see for Fiscal '25 and the Fiscal '26  
to date, as you've been sharing. Thank you.

1  
2 Uhm, okay, moving to Community Food Connection,  
3 CFC funding. Community Food Connection is a vital  
4 resource providing much needed food to the city's  
5 vast network of food pantries and soup kitchens.  
6 This program is especially important given the  
7 current changes to SNAP as a result of the Federal  
8 HR1 bill.

9 In the Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Budget response,  
10 the Council called on the Administration to increase  
11 and baseline the budget to \$100 million to help  
12 combat the high levels of food insecurity in the city  
13 which persists today.

14 I was glad to see that as of the Preliminary  
15 Plan, the Fiscal 2026 budget for CFC totals \$79.5  
16 million. For the first time in the history of this  
17 program, the Preliminary Plan increased the baseline  
18 funding by \$53.6 million to \$74.5 million starting in  
19 Fiscal 2027. Is the current Fiscal 2026 budget for  
20 CFC an estimate of the need for the whole year or do  
21 you expect to add more funding in the Executive plan?

RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, no, we believe that this  
will be the full amount for the budget.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and how will you  
3 allocate the additional funding across the CFC  
4 network in Fiscal 2027 and the outyears?

5 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, that's a good question.  
6 We're still working across our network to work on the  
7 distribution plans and our various pantries.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Uhm, while increasing the  
9 baseline to 474.5 million is a substantial add. Food  
10 insecurity in the city has continued to increase and  
11 the inflationary increase in the cost of food puts a  
12 burden on the city's food pantries.

13 Will HRA consider adding annual adjustments to  
14 the CFC budget to account for inflation and the  
15 increased cost of food procurement?

16 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, we can talk to our partners  
17 at OMB and our partner agencies and explore that yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I'll take that yes at the  
19 end there. What is the actual spending thus far in  
20 Fiscal 2026 and how much was spent in Fiscal 2025?

21 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, through January, we've spent  
\$37 million. In Fiscal Year '25, the program spent  
\$59.1 million.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Okay, moving on  
to HRA staffing levels, uhm, as of January 2026, the

1  
2 actual headcount for the agency was 10,821 with 1,696  
3 positions vacant or 13.5 percent vacancy rate. What  
4 are the main challenges the agency has been  
5 experiencing in hiring new candidates?

6 SCOTT FRENCH: I mean I think some of it has been  
7 similar to what uh, Chief Johns has said before.  
8 Uhm, you know in particular when focusing on uh case  
9 management and case worker type of positions but I  
10 think we have taken a lot of very you know innovative  
11 approaches to a., recruiting, uh, nontraditionally as  
12 well. So, uh expanding where we are recruiting  
13 talent from and where we can you know uh, uh, uh,  
14 utilizing incentives, which is we work - we utilize  
15 something for the hiring of case workers around that  
16 and you know we will continue to sort of focus with  
17 our Office of HR solutions to identify additional  
18 ways in which we can sort of expand recruitment  
19 efforts so that more people know about city  
20 opportunities and the pathways that can provide.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Uhm, many of the agency's  
frontline workers such as eligibility specialists and  
others involved with the processing of benefit  
applications and recertifications are in very  
challenging jobs with low levels of pay. Has the

1  
2 agency done an evaluation of salary increases for  
3 these positions to improve retention and hiring?

4 SCOTT FRENCH: Uhm, we're always looking at  
5 retention and hiring and salaries. Uhm, those are  
6 conversations that uh we would also have with the  
7 City Office of Labor Relations as salaries are  
8 baselined within negotiations and agreements with the  
9 individual unions that oversee those workers.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Uhm, what is the agency's  
11 hiring plan, especially as it relates to frontline  
12 client service positions, which I think you got into  
13 that a little bit earlier.

14 What are the priority positions the agency is  
15 hiring for?

16 SCOTT FRENCH: I can speak for HRA. Uhm, I would  
17 say for HRA, you know we are always remaining focused  
18 on uhm, our benefit opportunity specialists that are  
19 in cash assistance, the ES's who work in SNAP as well  
20 as the case workers who work across several of our  
21 specialized service programs including APS, HASA uhm  
and Domestic Violence Services.

ERIN DALTON: And I think frontline workers will  
always be where we focus our efforts, whether on the  
DHS side or on the HRA side.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Uhm, what percentage of  
3 candidates offered positions accept them?

4 SCOTT FRENCH: We'll have to get back to you on  
5 that. We'll at least get that data from our HR.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, do you have any  
7 anecdotal information about the top reasons folks may  
8 turn some of these positions down or leave the  
9 positions after short periods of time?

10 SCOTT FRENCH: I mean, for turnover I will say  
11 and acknowledge what you had said, right? Frontline  
12 positions in our agency and others uhm, are very  
13 challenging right. Uh, we are there to support New  
14 Yorkers who may be experiencing a particularly  
15 challenging time and so, that is something that we  
16 really want to focus on. Uhm, and make sure that we  
17 are really providing supports to our staff, right  
18 whether it's through Work Well or other wellness  
19 initiatives that really helps to balance and really  
20 talk about like self care and what can we bring into  
21 these spaces, so that staff can really access those,  
as well as looking at ways in which we can really  
show staff that we are invested in them and we want  
to have them with us for a long time. So, the  
development of the staff development that I had

1  
2 talked about before as well, to really especially for  
3 frontline staff workers, outline right, what are  
4 pathways within the agency that one can really sort  
5 of advance uhm within an NC you know across DSS, HRA,  
6 DHS that this is a place to create a career, which we  
7 have you know, many - you go to many sites and you'll  
8 find people who have worked for our agency for 30, 35  
9 plus years.

8 ERIN DALTON: And I'll just add, that's a great  
9 indication of people wanting to continue to work with  
10 the agency and we'll still always create a need for  
11 more frontline workers, right. So, even in that  
12 scenario, we're creating - we're creating that gap.  
13 People are moving on to other jobs, that's a great,  
14 that's a great story and we will always like -  
15 there's just always will be a full court press on  
16 frontline staff and creating the pathways I think  
17 into those careers, so that people can see their  
18 future.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.Uhm, alright,  
18 benefits assistance processing and hiring plan.  
19 According to the PMMR, there has been a steady high  
20 participation rate in cash assistance and SNAP, with  
21 604,000 individuals receiving cash assistance and

1  
2 \$1.75 million individuals receiving SNAP in the first  
3 four months of Fiscal 2026. What is the average  
4 monthly volume of new applications and  
5 recertifications for each SNAP, Cash Assistance and  
6 Medicaid? And would love a comparison to prepandemic  
7 levels if possible.

8 SCOTT FRENCH: Of course, I do have that. Uhm,  
9 so uh the average monthly cash assistance application  
10 volume is \$46,901 for FY26 to date. Uhm and that is  
11 an increase of 77 percent from the same period in  
12 FY1, which was an average of \$26,494 per month.

13 On SNAP THE average FY26 to date monthly  
14 application volume is \$29,454 and that is an increase  
15 of 14.9 percent from the same period in FY19, which  
16 was an average of \$25,630. And then for Medicaid,  
17 the FY26 year to date application volume is \$28,553,  
18 which is a 9 percent decrease from the FY19 year to  
19 date average of \$26,186. I'm sorry, that is an  
20 increase, not a decrease.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Oh, thank you.

SCOTT FRENCH: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You said the \$28,553 is year  
to date for FY26.

1  
2 SCOTT FRENCH: FY26 and then it's a 9 percent  
3 increase from FY19, which is \$26,186.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, got it. Uhm, what  
5 percentage of applications and recertifications are  
6 denied?

7 SCOTT FRENCH: Uhm, I will - I don't want to  
8 speak uh extemporaneously, so I will get back to you  
9 on the specific numbers because I know it has  
10 transitioned and I think it might be in my book but I  
11 don't know that I underlined that, so we'll get back  
12 to you.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and the reasons for  
14 denial would also be helpful.

15 SCOTT FRENCH: ]Absolutely.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Uhm, and are there bigger  
17 delays in each program processing new applications or  
18 recertifications?

19 SCOTT FRENCH: Uh, no, there are not. We have  
20 the extensive delays and backlogs we saw several  
21 years ago have been cleared and we have remained -  
they have remained clear.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Have been fully cleared?

SCOTT FRENCH: Yeah, the backlogs have been fully  
cleared and have remained cleared. We obviously

1  
2 still focus on our timeliness rates right and are  
3 always looking to increase those but I will say you  
4 know uh, uh, for a majority of like applications that  
5 maybe are not uh, done within the 30 day window, they  
6 are done shortly afterwards.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, uhm, according to the  
8 PMMR, in the first four months of Fiscal 2026, the  
9 cash assistance processing timeliness rate was 67  
10 percent and the SNAP processing timeliness rate was  
11 89.9 percent. While these are improvements from the  
12 prior year, they're still below your target of having  
13 95 percent of benefit applications processed within  
14 the states required 30 day timeframe. What is the  
15 current timeliness rate for cash assistance and SNAP  
16 for Fiscal 2026?

17 SCOTT FRENCH: Uh, the cumulative rate, I will  
18 have to get back to you, though it is remaining  
19 consistent with those. I will say on cash  
20 assistance, there are some managerial systems, things  
21 that we are soon to be implementing that will  
increase that as well. There's - I don't want to get  
too weedy but there's -

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Get weedy.

1  
2 SCOTT FRENCH: There's different - on cash  
3 assistance, there are certain cases called single  
4 issuance or one shot deals where uh, the benefit is  
5 giving to an individual but there may be a system  
6 delay in actually officially closing the case but the  
7 timeliness is only calculated on the closingness of  
8 the case, so we're working on making sure that that  
9 closing of the case can happen automatically so it  
10 will truly reflect that -

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Automatically at the time of  
12 the one shot deal -

13 SCOTT FRENCH: Of issuance of the benefit right?

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay because my question was  
15 going to be, what would cause the discrepancy between  
16 the issuance and closing the case?

17 SCOTT FRENCH: It may be a staff member delay and  
18 going back to officially close the case.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Oh, okay.

20 SCOTT FRENCH: And other things, so we're just  
21 looking at instances there.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sounds like a simple fix.

SCOTT FRENCH: So, we definitely still you know  
we still have a ways to go but we're implementing a  
variety of you know management and tracking tools to

1  
2 further increase timeliness to get the 95 percent  
3 targets.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and I think that was  
5 everything from here. Okay, staff retention rate,  
6 going back to this. While the Preliminary Plan has  
7 included additional positions for Adult Protective  
8 Services, case workers and SNAP eligibility  
9 specialists, there's a growing concern over staff  
10 retention and lack of institutional knowledge, which  
11 both have a direct impact on agency operations,  
12 client service and benefits processing time. IBO  
13 found that many APS caseworkers hired leave within  
14 one year of their start date and that more than 40  
15 percent of the active eligibility specialists  
16 processing cash assistance or SNAP applications have  
17 less than three years of experience. Given that many  
18 hires are new to the subject matter of their roles,  
19 how is HRA ensuring that APS case workers are able to  
20 meet the demands of job - of the job and navigate the  
21 technical complexities of their work?

SCOTT FRENCH: Certainly, so we focus a lot on  
training and onboarding of new members. Uh, there's  
also uhm, you know lots of desk training and other  
training going on within the offices. So, newer

1 workers you know uh, uh, are joining right? We make  
2 sure that we utilize workers that have far more, a  
3 longer experience time, right to help individuals and  
4 explain to them what's going on. Uhm, and we are  
5 constantly evaluating right, uh, what additional  
6 trainings can we provide to APS workers. Similarly  
7 to what we're doing on the SNAP side, right in  
8 regards to in the SNAP world, yes we and cash  
9 assistance, we onboarded over a thousand new staff  
10 members over the last several years uhm, and you know  
11 have really focused on training and those instances,  
12 especially increasing in person trainings versus  
13 virtual trainings and as we said on the SNAP payment  
14 error rate, we've been able to onboard 20 new  
15 trainers who actually spend their time in these  
16 locations working with the uh benefit workers to  
17 address any gaps in knowledge and uh address any  
18 changes that need to be done regards to how  
19 individuals are processing their work.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And what are the current  
18 retention rates for the key benefit staff, including  
19 cash assistance, SNAP, APS, Medicaid, and City FHEPS?

20 SCOTT FRENCH: I believe we'll have to get back  
21 to you with those rates on those programs.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. Uhm, we'd  
3 like to get a better understanding of the budgeted  
4 and actual staffing levels for key benefits programs.  
5 How many budgeted positions are there for roles that  
6 support the Administration of each of the following  
7 programs, SNAP, cash assistance, Medicaid and City  
8 FHEPS?

9 SCOTT FRENCH: So, uh budgeted for SNAP is 1,324  
10 cash assistance is 1,718, Medicaid is 855, and then  
11 City FHEPS is uh, 161 but I would say that with the  
12 same caveat I did earlier in regards to that's like  
13 specific processing but there are far larger numbers  
14 of people who work on the City FHEPS program.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. So, 1,300 people for  
16 SNAP to manage almost well, 29.5 thousand uh  
17 applications monthly? Is that accurate?

18 SCOTT FRENCH: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and 1,700 people for  
20 46,000, almost 47,000 cash assistance roles?

21 SCOTT FRENCH: Yup.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: 855 for almost 29,000 a  
month for Medicaid and 161 plus we'll say for well,  
we didn't get that one for you for the City FHEPS,

1  
2 okay. Alright, I think the uhm, caseload sounds  
3 extreme.

4 SCOTT FRENCH: Uhm, it is large numbers. I will  
5 say uhm, you know the SNAP, Cash Assistance and  
6 Medicaid programs uhm, and City FHEPS, they don't  
7 operate on a caseload basis in regards to like a  
8 worker is assigned specific cases.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

10 SCOTT FRENCH: Uhm, that's how we used to work  
11 uh, when individuals had to be assigned to a specific  
12 center and that's the only place they could receive  
13 services. Uh, when we move to a citywide uh,  
14 approach to this, uh, the way in which things work is  
15 we have systems where workers can just take the next  
16 case that is in front of them. It can be from  
17 anywhere across the city, which is a far more  
18 efficient way for us to actually process the work and  
19 make sure that we are moving through the work uh  
20 correctly but yes, it is a large -

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I guess workload is maybe  
the word I should have used but either way, it sounds  
like it's a lot of work for not that many people.

Uhm, by program how many of these positions are  
currently filled?

1  
2 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, sure. For SNAP, uhm, the  
3 latest number I have is 1,093. For cash assistance,  
4 uhm, I have - you know I don't have the headcount for  
5 cash assistance.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, what about Medicaid  
7 and City FHEPS?

8 RICHARD JOHNS: Uh, you know actually City FHEPS  
9 also, I only have the programmatic budget. So, we'll  
10 get back to you on that one.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and Medicaid?

12 RICHARD JOHNS: And Medicaid 710.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: 710.

14 RICHARD JOHNS: I would also note I think our  
15 numbers are a little older so we'll make sure - we'll  
16 follow up with more accurate account numbers.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay thank you and what's  
18 the average salary for each position?

19 RICHARD JOHNS: I'll also have to get back to you  
20 on that. We didn't - I don't have that with me.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, uhm, is the need  
greater than what is budgeted? So, given the  
workload, you know and the number of employees that  
you have and the retention rate, uhm, and the

1  
2 timeliness rate, do you think that the number of  
3 employees you have currently is sufficient?

4 SCOTT FRENCH: Uhm, I think our uh headcount as  
5 budgeted is sufficient. I think as uh, we discussed  
6 earlier, making sure that we are keeping all of our  
7 vacancies filled is really a priority for us. Uhm,  
8 and then that will really indicate to us if there are  
9 still gaps in staffing or not. Uhm, but uh I do  
10 believe you know the budgeted headcount we're seeing  
11 in the SNAP, cash and Medicaid program you know, we  
12 are able to you know manage the volume. There are  
13 obviously months that may be a spike that is anomaly  
14 uhm but our focus is really on making sure that we're  
15 keeping - we're as close to the headcount as possible  
16 and then that can inform to us if we think there  
17 might be an additional need and if so, we would then  
18 have a conversation with OMB.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, that's fair. Is HRA  
20 currently using overtime to meet the demand?

21 SCOTT FRENCH: We are currently. We do utilize  
overtime within the programs as needed. Uhm, uh, you  
know we have not had to utilize mandatory overtime in  
a very long time except in a few specific instances  
that were again anomalous.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, uhm, would you happen  
3 to know how many hours and what the cost is for the  
4 few occasions you've had to use it?

5 SCOTT FRENCH: For mandatory overtime, we'd have  
6 to get back to you on that or -

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Any type of overtime.

8 SCOTT FRENCH: Right, I think on - we'll get back  
9 to you on that. I'm assuming it's in relation to  
10 those programs you're talking about, correct?

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yes and uh, we just talked  
12 about this but I was doing just my own, I didn't even  
13 do the math. I'm just looking at the numbers but I  
14 would love to know if you have the current case ratio  
15 for SNAP, cash assistance, Medicaid and rental  
16 assistance and how that compares to the optimal case  
17 ratio?

18 SCOTT FRENCH: Sure, we can get back to you on  
19 that uhm, I think we need to talk to our folks about  
20 cash and SNAP because we don't think about it in case  
21 ratio.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I was going to say perhaps  
work ratio or whatever metric you want to call it.

SCOTT FRENCH: We can come back to you on that.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay great, alright moving  
3 into uh, City of Yes. The City Council secured \$5  
4 billion in commitments as part of the City for All  
5 housing plan in recognition of the importance of  
6 advancing a holistic housing plan that could support  
7 working and middle class New Yorkers and invest in  
8 solutions that meet their housing needs. Of the \$5  
9 billion dollars, 187 million was committed over ten  
10 years for City FHEPS vouchers and social services to  
11 create permanent homes for those in the DHS shelter  
12 system. This commitment included an investment of  
13 \$122 million over 10 years for affordable housing  
14 service contracts. Was the funding added as a new  
15 need for affordable housing services in the  
16 Preliminary Plan part of this commitment?

17 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, yes it was. Uhm, we did as  
18 part of the uhm Preliminary budget - hold on one  
19 second. I'm so sorry. Uhm, it looks like uh we have  
20 \$215 million for the City FHEPS vouchers.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: \$215?

22 RICHARD JOHNS: Yeah, let me make sure, hold on.  
23 I'm sorry. You know that actually is part of the  
24 original commitment, which covered Fiscal Years '25  
25 and '26, so.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So, no it wasn't added as a  
3 new need?

4 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, it would have been but not  
5 in the Preliminary Budget, the previous budget.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sorry?

7 RICHARD JOHNS: It was added previously.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: It was added previously -  
9 oh, affordable housing services specifically? Not  
10 overall City FHEPS.

11 RICHARD JOHNS: Oh, I'm sorry. Uhm, yeah, I mean  
12 uh no, the affordable housing services money that was  
13 added to the budget uhm, like the rest of our cliffs  
14 was added to cover our anticipated spending for the  
15 AHS program. As per the uhm, uh previous  
16 Administrations commitment.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, are you working with  
18 other city agencies on this?

19 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, I mean, we do work with  
20 other city agencies uhm on the construction. AHS is  
21 a program that uhm, largely develops new affordable  
housing programs. So we would work with the normal  
city agencies uhm, like HPD or uhm, City Planning and  
Department of Building on AHS.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and how many new units  
3 will be available with this funding?

4 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, right now we have - we  
5 financed about 491 new units. Uhm, we have  
6 additional units in our pipeline.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: How many additional?

8 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, uh 226.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: 226, okay thanks.

10 RICHARD JOHNS: Oh, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.  
11 Uh, I gave you the wrong- I gave you last year's  
12 numbers. The current number of active units is 561  
13 and we have an additional 226 in our pipeline.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: 226, okay and then how many  
15 of them are currently used by voucher holders?

16 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, AHS is -

17 SCOTT FRENCH: They all would be. AHS is uh -

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: 100 percent?

19 SCOTT FRENCH: Financed uhm, based upon City  
20 FHEPS.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and when do you expect  
all of the new units to come online? Those  
additional 226?

SCOTT FRENCH: Uhm, one building I believe is  
more imminent uhm, but I can get some clarity from my

1  
2 uh development team to - to understand when those  
3 two, we should see them available and see moveouts.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and what's HRA's  
5 process for selecting and placing City FHEPS voucher  
6 holders in those units?

7 SCOTT FRENCH: Uhm, we look at it in the same way  
8 that we look at uhm, any rent above a building in  
9 regards to we will work closely with our DHS  
10 colleagues uhm to you know let them know that a new  
11 building is coming on in a certain number of units  
12 and then we will work together to uh target  
13 appropriate referrals to those buildings. Those  
14 buildings, I will say, tend to often rent up  
15 relatively quickly.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: It's crucial that the  
17 funding allocated as part of the City for All  
18 commitment is targeted to those at the highest risk.  
19 How is HRA ensuring that the most vulnerable people  
20 are reached with this funding.

21 SCOTT FRENCH: SImilarly- similar process we work  
very closely with our colleagues at DHS depending on  
uh the affordable housing you know site and what  
specific services it may or may not offer - so  
because we want to make sure that we are making the

1  
2 most successful permanent housing connections as  
3 possible.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Great. Okay give me just  
5 one moment please. Okay, uhm, rental assistance  
6 programs and source of income discrimination. In  
7 March 2026, a panel of five upstate judges ruled  
8 against the landmark state law that bans  
9 discrimination against people who use government  
10 assistance to pay their rent, stating that it  
11 violates the constitutional rights of property owners  
12 because the program requires building safety  
13 inspections.

14 Has HRA evaluated the potential implications of  
15 this ruling for the city? And specifically for the  
16 City FHEPS program?

17 SCOTT FRENCH: I think we are currently assessing  
18 its potential implication for the city.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, it can't be good I  
20 would state. Uhm, to date, how many source of income  
21 discrimination complaints have been filed by HRA  
clients attempting to use City FHEPS vouchers in  
Fiscal 2026?

1  
2 SCOTT FRENCH: So, source of income  
3 discrimination complaints would actually be directed  
4 to CCHR.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: CCHR yeah, but you don't  
6 know how many of your clients might -

7 SCOTT FRENCH: I don't have that information  
8 here. We can look to see if we have anything but  
9 CCHR would have the official numbers.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, we'll make sure to ask  
11 them on that. Uhm, and then how does HRA work with  
12 CCHR to address source of income discrimination  
13 complaints from clients attempting to use City FHEPS  
14 vouchers? Is there anything like do you - you know  
15 make sure people know their rights, the law etc.?

16 SCOTT FRENCH: Yes, we - throughout the process,  
17 we make sure uh when individuals are utilizing a  
18 subsidy that they have information on their rights.  
19 If they think that they are being discriminated  
20 against, how they can go about filing a complaint?  
21 Uhm, and then obviously if CCHR reaches out to us, we  
would engage with them fully to support uhm whatever  
they might be looking at uh that impacted our  
clients.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Uhm, and an ongoing concern  
3 - sorry, I'm moving to domestic violence services.  
4 An ongoing concern of both the Council and advocates  
5 for several years has been the adequacy of the city's  
6 DV Shelter capacity to fully meet the need. Many  
7 individuals who would benefit from the specialized  
8 services available in DV facilities, end up in the  
9 DHS shelter system where such support services are  
10 not available, even though they are deemed eligible  
11 for DV Shelter. I understand that the current DV  
12 capacity includes 2,290 emergency beds and 628 units  
13 in DV Tier 2 facilities. These figures have not  
14 changed since Fiscal 2024. Does the current DV  
15 shelter system have enough capacity to meet the level  
16 of demand? And also, I would just ask and I don't  
17 know if you have this or not but I know that uhm, the  
18 DV cases of domestic violence went up significantly  
19 during the pandemic and so, I'm wondering if those  
20 numbers now are similar to those numbers or if  
21 they're more similar to prepandemic levels?

18 SCOTT FRENCH: I do not have that data with me  
19 but we can look into it. Uhm, and you know you are  
20 correct on the number of uh domestic - DV Shelter  
21 beds that we have. I will say though that we work

1  
2 closely with our DHS providers and they are required  
3 to make sure that they are connecting families who  
4 are experiencing domestic violence with appropriate  
5 services. Uhm, and uhm you know at times there are  
6 uh decisions made by families who would choose to -  
7 would prefer to actually go into the DHS system  
8 rather than come into the DV system. So, we're  
9 constantly -

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: What are some of the reasons  
9 for that, do you know?

10 SCOTT FRENCH: Uhm, I think that uh there are in  
11 the DV system, there are some additional sort of  
12 rules and requirements that uhm need to be complied  
13 with in the system that aren't necessarily the same  
14 rules and requirements in the DHS system. Much of  
15 the DV system is the emergency system especially is  
16 overseen by the Office of Children and Family  
17 Services at the state. So, they really dictate to us  
18 uh, all of the real regulations and they are more of  
19 the direct oversight of those systems, even though we  
20 facilitate on our end. Uhm, much of the operations  
21 of that system are really dedicated by OCFS.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Can you share any details  
3 about additional Tier 2 units for emergency beds that  
4 might be in the pipeline?

5 SCOTT FRENCH: Uhm, we don't have anything  
6 specifically that is currently in the pipeline. Uhm,  
7 but we are constantly you know looking and assessing  
8 and discussing with our partners at OMB if more beds  
9 would be you know appropriate. I think one of the  
10 challenges in the DV system as well is for a family  
11 or an individual, a single adult, uhm, there may be  
12 multiple factors that need to be taken into account  
13 around placement. Uhm, which is why we're very  
14 thankful to our colleagues at DHS. Uhm, you know  
15 that sort of provides additional coverage because too  
16 I think map out and try to understand within the DV  
17 system, the location size and other units that we  
18 would need across uhm is challenging, which is why  
19 the close partnership with DHS helps to ensure that  
20 we're able to place families and individuals.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Uhm, what's the average  
vacancy rate for Tier 2 units and DV emergency beds?

SCOTT FRENCH: So, uh, the Tier 2, oh, I'm sorry,  
the emergency beds, has an occupancy rate of as of  
December, of uhm approximately 85 percent. Uhm, and

1  
2 I will get back to you on the Tier 2 because I don't  
3 seem to have that here on the sheet but we'll get  
4 back to you.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and how is DHS working  
6 to better address the unique needs of those impacted  
7 by domestic violence who reside within the regular  
8 DHS shelter system?

9 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Thank you for the question  
10 Chair. Uhm, as we do uhm around all needs of our  
11 clients constantly working with our city partners,  
12 including the Mayor's Office to End Gender and  
13 Domestic Violence around best practices, training  
14 materials, engagement strategies, going out into  
15 shelters to make sure that our staff, our provider  
16 staff is comfortable having conversations around  
17 domestic violence. That they're doing it with  
18 sensitivity and empathy. Uhm and making sure that  
19 the warm handoffs from the DV system continues so  
20 that if they're nonresidential services that somebody  
21 is receiving, they continue to get those with us.

SCOTT FRENCH: And we also - I'd just say also  
make sure that we coordinate closely HRA runs a  
series of nonresidential programs as well as our

1  
2 colleagues at NGBV. So we have closely connected  
3 referral pathways between us as well.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. Okay,  
5 going back to asylum seeker response, uhm as of  
6 February 28th this year, there were 29,809 asylum  
7 seekers in the city's care, mostly in the DHS system.  
8 DHS will be taking over as the lead agency in the  
9 city's response and integrating asylum seekers into  
10 its existing shelter system as we discussed. Uhm,  
11 DHS's Preliminary Plan includes \$1.15 billion in  
12 Fiscal '26, \$1.2 billion in Fiscal '27 and \$498.4  
13 million in Fiscals 2028 and 2029 for asylum seeker  
14 expenses. How were these costs estimated and what  
15 services are provided with these funds and how do  
16 they address the unique needs of asylum seekers.

17 You addressed that earlier but how are the costs  
18 estimated and what services are provided?

19 RICHARD JOHNS: The uhm, special population  
20 support services funding uhm in the budget is  
21 somewhat of a legacy budget. If you recall, when  
other agencies were operating different shelters, all  
of the budget - budgeted funding was uhm placed  
within DHS's budget. And then it was allocated on a  
periodic basis. So, uhm, the budget that we have now

1  
2 is based on our best projections of how many asylees  
3 that we would serve. Uhm, but the - the dollar  
4 amount uhm and how it was set is largely done on uhm,  
5 earlier right, on earlier projections from past  
6 years.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you and the  
7 enhanced cost of the provision of shelter for asylum  
8 seekers during the Adam's Administration was a result  
9 of the reliance on emergency contracts, including  
10 those for hotels that were held by agencies outside  
11 of DHS. You may know that the Speaker's Bill on  
12 Emergency Contracting, Intro. Number 2 is now on the  
13 Mayor's desk awaiting signature. It limits emergency  
14 contracts to 90 days unless prior approval is granted  
15 by the Comptroller and requires audits 15 days after  
16 execution. If a contract is not submitted for audit  
17 within 15 days, the contract would be voided.

16 The Council passed this bill to save the city  
17 money on expense of emergency contracts and to ensure  
18 procurement goes through the proper channels. Does  
19 DHS have any remaining emergency contracts related to  
20 asylum seekers?

20 ERIN DALTON: We're currently in the process of  
21 transitioning uhm, emergency contracts that will end

1  
2 in June to new contracts effective July, standard  
3 shelter contracts.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, so uh no additional  
5 services or programs will be contracted post July?

6 ERIN DALTON: I can speak only to the shelters  
7 that were under contract under the emergency  
8 contracts.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. Uhm, and  
10 how much do you anticipate the full integration of  
11 asylum seekers into the DHS system will impact costs?

12 ERIN DALTON: I would defer to Chief Johns,  
13 however, our system is integrated in that as clients  
14 are coming in, they're being placed in the shelters  
15 that are available at the services that are  
16 available. So, I'm not sure that there's a -

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I mean if the outyear  
18 projections are accurate, then it seems like there  
19 will be a cost savings but.

20 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, yeah, I mean generally  
21 speaking, uhm, the shelters, they're moving into the  
standard shelters would be cheaper.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Uhm, okay this might be a  
little redundant but will there be any cost savings

1 realized by this integration given that DHS already  
2 has experienced in the provision of shelter?

3 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, no, I mean we are not  
4 projecting cost savings as it relates to that. I  
5 mean, if you look at the budget historically, you  
6 would have seen adjustments made to the budget  
7 related to the uhm, the change in the population but  
8 uhm, not related to the integration.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. Uhm, okay  
10 and then just uh some follow up to Council Member  
11 Nurses questions earlier. Uhm on February 19th,  
12 Gothamist reported that the Administration would  
13 restart homeless encampment sweeps, which had been  
14 paused earlier in the year. Given that the Mayor had  
15 been critical of sweeps conducted under the de Blasio  
16 and in Adams Administrations, this was a bit  
17 surprising. The Administration has stated that DHS  
18 will be the main responding agency for future sweeps,  
19 whereas NYPD was the primary responding agency in  
20 prior sweeps.

21 Can you share more about what this would look  
like and how it would be different from past sweep  
operations?

1  
2 ERIN DALTON: Sure, I'm happy to start here.  
3 Uhm, and as I said, I think the move to have the  
4 Department of Homeless Services to take the lead  
5 makes good sense. And I personally don't think of  
6 these as cleanings or sweeps or moves but as focused  
7 housing efforts. We focus our housing efforts on all  
8 different parts of the population, whether it's at  
9 the end of the subway line or I've heard about you  
10 know the top 50 list of people we're really focused  
11 on who have really entrenched needs. Why not focus  
12 on people who are staying in a specific place and  
13 make sure that they have focused outreach and support  
14 around housing and next steps. So, yes, I think DHS  
15 is the right lead. These are the outreach workers  
16 who have built the relationships. We know where the  
17 spaces are. Then we can also hear first hand what  
18 people need and want and make sure that those  
19 offerings are available as we do our planning for the  
20 future. Uhm, making sure that peoples uh - peoples  
21 stuff, uh, is cared for, understanding their family  
situation and making sure they're placed in the best  
possible environment.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. And uhm,  
what if the sweeps encounter a homeless individual in

1 the encampments who doesn't want to enter shelter?

2 How will that be handled?

3 ERIN DALTON: Yeah and I haven't even had a  
4 chance to sit in with the teams yet to understand  
5 what they do. So, I don't want to answer there but I  
6 think you know we do want to be pursuing relentless  
7 engagement and we certainly cannot force people to  
8 take shelter options.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I would say that's a good  
10 answer.

11 ERIN DALTON: Okay.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Uhm, alright, how will - how  
13 will folks who are encountered, be connected to  
14 services in shelters? So, I know you're not deep  
15 into this yet but my understanding is that you have  
16 some experience in this area, so maybe we can speak a  
17 little aspirationally about what should happen and  
18 what the best -

19 ERIN DALTON: Yeah, I would love to. Uhm, I  
20 think it is actually important to set kind of  
21 non-negotiables for the way we engage with people. I  
did want to know in my previous job and want to know  
here, uhm, the by name list of people that we're  
engaging. Uhm, their housing preferences, we had a

1  
2 specific housing preference form to understand what  
3 people preferred and other social services they  
4 needed. I want to know what we offer to people and I  
5 want to know what we offer to people. Uhm and I want  
6 to know what they will do given that the place that  
7 they've been staying will no longer be a place that  
8 they can stay in the future. And I think uhm, in my  
9 experience, which may vary as I come here, uhm most  
10 people, if offered the things that they really need,  
11 will take those offers. Uhm, and be stably housed at  
12 least for some period where we can start to provide  
13 other social services.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, uhm, a common  
15 criticism of sweeps in the past has been that many  
16 unsheltered peoples belongings were thrown away. How  
17 will you ensure that this doesn't happen?

18 ERIN DALTON: And I will be happy to let the  
19 Administrator speak about this as well but I think  
20 that uhm, you know that that kind of practice should  
21 not be allowed. We should understand what people  
have with them, what they will be able to take with  
them and what they want to take with them and make  
sure that that uhm, those materials get inventoried  
and that they can retrieve them. And then anything

1  
2 that is left, we mark as left, right? I think it's  
3 also really important to our partners who do the  
4 actual cleanups to make sure that we haven't left  
5 something behind that people want right. We have to  
6 leave that space clear for them to do their proper  
7 work. So, I think the issue of people's belongings  
8 is a really important one.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and uhm you know I know  
10 again you're still just getting your feet under you  
11 but in past cases we've seen you know Department of  
12 Sanitation, that's usually engaged in these types of  
13 sweeps. Literally throwing peoples belongings right  
14 in front of them into the back of the sanitation  
15 trucks. Uhm, items for their children. Uhm, you  
16 know and obviously just valuable items to them uhm  
17 deemed invaluable by you know city employees. So,  
18 just flagging that for your awareness.

19 Did you want to add anything Administrator?

20 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Thank you Chair. I would  
21 just add as the Commissioner mentioned, especially  
for those who have accepted placement, making sure  
that we are working with them to bring in items  
within limit, things that are important to them but

1  
2 also ensuring that we're maintaining the health and  
3 safety of all of our clients.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Understood. Do you have  
5 lockers or storage for sweeps?

6 CHRISTINE FELLINI: Yes, there uhm is storage  
7 that DHS manages, so we will kind of inventory with  
8 the individual what they are not going to take with  
9 them and we will store that for them.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And I assume that's free of  
11 cost?

12 CHRISTINE FELLINI: It is free of cost.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. And uhm,  
14 again you may not have this direct information right  
15 now but how will DH- but you might actually. So, how  
16 will DHS identify encampment sites for sweeps? Like  
17 do you have already a list of locations identified?

18 CHRISTINE FELLINI: We do and we work with our  
19 partner agencies, elected officials, uhm, community  
20 members to identify and assess areas of concern. So,  
21 this is an ongoing uhm practice.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. Okay,  
alright, I think we're getting into the home stretch  
here. Uhm, capital plan budgeting. In the recently  
released Preliminary Capital Commitment Plan for

1  
2 Fiscals 2026 - 2030, both HRA and DHS had virtually  
3 no changes in funding since the adopted capital plan.  
4 No funding was adjusted for any of the major HRA  
5 capital projects, such as computer equipment and  
6 technology upgrades, improvements to HRA facilities  
7 or communication systems. In DHS, no funding was  
8 added for the single room shelter units in upper  
9 Manhattan that the Administration announced in  
10 February the Bellevue Men's Shelter and intake  
11 facility, which will be closing this month for  
12 repairs, also did not receive any additional funding,  
13 nor did the East 3rd Street and Bowery Shelter sites,  
14 which will become intake centers following Bellevue's  
15 closure and may require capital funding to  
16 accommodate more clients.

17 Why were there no adjustments to the capital  
18 budgets for HRA and DHS?

19 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, yes, thank you for that  
20 question. Uhm, so part - so there are a number of  
21 initiatives that you had noted. Some of them uhm, we  
didn't have the estimates prior to the Capital Plan  
locking. Uhm, but for the most part, we've worked  
really closely with the - our partners at the Office  
of Management and Budget particularly through uhm,

1  
2 uhm, the last you know number of months to align our  
3 capital budget. So, while we didn't add money, we  
4 are moving money around to ensure that we have funds  
5 in the places that we think we'll need it.

6 Uhm and we also have uhm, money in lines where we  
7 can move it and make it available uhm, but at the  
8 time of the capital budget, we did not have uhm, a  
9 need to make a request for additional funds.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. That sounds like uhm,  
11 a bit of a budget dance there. You're saying you're  
12 just going to move funds for certain projects to  
13 other projects?

14 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, no what I think what I'm  
15 saying is that there are some needs like uhm, uhm,  
16 Bellevue, which we didn't know at the time of that-  
17 the budget lock. So, there will have to be  
18 adjustments made for that but there are some needs  
19 that we are aware of. We've been uhm at some of our  
20 sites that -

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That you're saying you have  
the funding for, okay, alright.

RICHARD JOHNS: Yeah.

ERIN DALTON: For example, and at the risk of  
adding an example where I could be wrong but uhm

1  
2 being at 83rd a few times now, uhm, I believe for  
3 example that there's an elevator upgrade that has  
4 already been budgeted as part of the normal capital  
5 planning uhm for the existing site.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, got it, okay thank  
7 you.

8 Uhm, so and I guess this goes back to your  
9 earlier statement, has capital needs assessment been  
10 conducted since adoption?

11 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, that's a good question. Uh,  
12 I'll have to get back to you, that's not in my area  
13 but uhm, we'll get back to you on that.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and how often are  
15 capital needs assessments required?

16 RICHARD JOHNS: Uhm, again, yeah, I'm sorry, I'm  
17 just not aware of that. I mean we will get the  
18 information to you.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Uhm, okay then you  
20 might have the answer to this one. Has an assessment  
21 been made of what repairs are necessary at Bellevue  
and what the capital cost may be?

ERIN DALTON: I don't think there's been an  
assessment of that done at this time.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Alrighty we'll follow  
3 up on all of those. Okay, alright, thanks, okay.  
4 Uhm, okay more City FHEPS. Uh, City FHEPS has grown  
5 exponentially since the inception of the program in  
6 2018. The initial budget for City FHEPS was only  
7 \$26.3 million growing to \$1.78 billion in Fiscal 2026  
8 as of the Preliminary Plan and growing to a projected  
9 budget of \$3.04 billion by Fiscal 2029.

10 As the program is approaching the one decade  
11 mark, we would like to discuss key takeaways and what  
12 the future of City FHEPS could look like. Can HRA  
13 detail what has worked effectively within the City  
14 FHEPS program? What has not worked? And what  
15 lessons have been learned since its inception?

16 SCOTT FRENCH: I think we're very happy to set up  
17 a separate time to sort of go more in depth there on  
18 that but I think the- you know I think the program  
19 has been very successful in moving people out, right,  
20 connecting people to permanent housing.

21 Uhm, I think you know it's very clear that the  
program has effectively done that. I think as the  
Commissioner said, right, we do need to look at you  
know ongoing of the program right from a  
sustainability point of view. Uhm, but I think that

1  
2 you know it has proven itself to be a respected tool  
3 within the community and connecting with landlords.  
4 So, uhm that I think you know is proven in the 66,000  
5 or 68,000 households currently utilizing the program.  
6 Uh, there are obviously things we're going to be  
7 looking at in regards to ongoing you know management  
8 of the program and how can we make sure we're  
9 effectively connecting people to services that also  
10 offer a offramp from the program because we've  
11 connected people to good paying jobs and employment  
12 that allows them self sustainability and those are I  
13 think some of the- some of the key things but we are  
14 happy to set up time to discuss at further detail.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, that sounds good. I  
16 look forward to it but uhm just to clarify some of  
17 the workforce programs, it sounds like are  
18 improvements that you might want to make in terms of  
19 -

20 SCOTT FRENCH: Uh, yeah, some of the - the City  
21 FHEPS specific targeted programs that we had  
discussed before. We hadn't had just one that was  
specifically focused on City FHEPS. So, that is I  
think one of the things we would be looking at to  
connect more individuals to services that can support

1  
2 them in, you know the progression of an individual's  
3 career.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, sounds good. What is  
5 the number of City FHEPS voucher holders who lost  
6 their housing and subsequently returned to shelter  
7 within one year in each of the Fiscal's 2024, 2025,  
8 and 2026 to date.

9 SCOTT FRENCH: We'll have to get back to you with  
10 that data.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And also, I'd like to  
12 know how many return to shelter within two years.  
13 So, within one year and within two years.

14 SCOTT FRENCH: Okay.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Uhm, there have been  
16 multiple studies and reports analyzing whether the  
17 efficient utilization of City FHEPS could offer  
18 potential savings for the DHS shelter system by  
19 providing New Yorkers permanent housing and helping  
20 them avoid shelter. Can you walk us through how the  
21 monthly cost of shelter compares to the monthly cost  
of rental assistance vouchers?

RICHARD JOHNS: Yes, yeah, I'm sorry, uhm, yes I  
can do that. So, the- the shelter system is paid on  
a per diem rate. Uhm, so if we think about just a

1 uhm, single adult, it's probably a little bit easier.

2 Uhm, it would be about \$4,600 per month for shelter  
3 and that would compare to uhm, it would be about

4 \$4,600 per month for shelter and that would compare

5 to uhm -

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sorry, what was that number?

7 RICHARD JOHNS: Uh, \$4,600 for shelter.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

9 RICHARD JOHNS: Yeah. Uhm, and comparing that to

10 the City FHEPS rate, uhm where a studio apartment

11 would be \$2,646 is our payment standard.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, in the long term, how

13 do the cumulative costs of shelter in City FHEPS

14 compare?

15 RICHARD JOHNS: You know that's a good question.

16 Uhm, and it's a hard one to answer. I mean, a lot of

17 the driver for the two programs is on length of stay.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Is on what?

19 RICHARD JOHNS: Length of stay.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Oh, length of stay hmm, hmm.

21 RICHARD JOHNS: And generally speaking, people

would stay in rental assistance or housing longer

than they would in shelter.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, has DSS seen DHS  
3 shelter savings as a result of the current City FHEPS  
4 program?

5 ERIN DALTON: So, I shouldn't answer that  
6 question, especially when we've got the shelter  
7 numbers in front of us and a direct kind of  
8 correlation or causation even between those two  
9 programs but I think just to add that uhm, I think  
10 the way you're thinking about it, the questions that  
11 you're asking are the way I'm thinking about it as  
12 well.

13 If we're going to invest in programs that help to  
14 support people into affordable housing with  
15 subsidies, we've got to see savings somewhere and I'd  
16 love to see them in the shelter population. I think  
17 that's where everyone would love to see them, all  
18 things being equal, everyone prefers housing to  
19 shelter, whether that's the individuals being served.  
20 Us I think uh as officials as well as the community  
21 right. So, we want to see that happening. So, that  
is the way I'm starting to as you know in the first  
couple of weeks, looking at both of those budgets  
together and how do they impact one another so that

1  
2 we can house as many people as possible and see  
3 reductions in shelter.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. City FHEPS is a  
5 crucial program for helping families and individuals  
6 leave and avoid reentering the shelter system. We've  
7 seen consistent and significant growth in spending  
8 and enrollment in the program each year since  
9 inception. City FHEPS enrollment is reaching a point  
10 where voucher holders are entering their sixth year  
11 and beyond in the program. We would like to learn  
12 more about the specific subset of voucher users.  
13 Currently, by household, how many City FHEPS voucher  
14 holders are in each year for and five of the program  
15 and how many are in six or beyond?

16 SCOTT FRENCH: Uh, we can get back to you with  
17 that data. We have it, I just don't have it here  
18 with me but we can follow up with you.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. How many households  
20 have been in the program for less than four years?  
21 Is that where the other numbers are?

SCOTT FRENCH: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, so for that, I would  
like four years and then three, two and one year.  
Basically -

1  
2 SCOTT FRENCH: How many are in each - how many  
3 people are in each year of the program. Got it.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, you got it. Thank  
5 you. Uhm, on average, how long do clients stay in  
6 the City FHEPS program?

7 SCOTT FRENCH: Uhm, we uh uhm have seen that year  
8 to year, there is not a lot of drop off where folks  
9 are renewing and they continue to be eligible. Uhm,  
10 so uh, we don't see an extensive amount of drop off  
11 you know throughout the program but we can follow up  
12 with some more details on that.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, this goes back to your  
14 earlier point Commissioner, that once you're in,  
15 you're basically in the program. It's not really -

16 ERIN DALTON: Right, unless we do the work that  
17 the Administrator has been describing to really work  
18 with people early on.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, uhm, how many City  
20 FHEPS households currently have earned income?

21 SCOTT FRENCH: uH, it is, we can get you the  
specific number but I think it is about 25 to 30  
percent, in that range.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Uhm, and then on average  
3 what is the household contribution amount for City  
4 FHEPS voucher holders?

5 SCOTT FRENCH: Uh, it's 30 percent of income. We  
6 can get back to you what those dollars may look like  
7 but uhm, it's 30 percent of income.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah. Okay, that concludes  
9 my questions. Thank you all very much for your  
10 patience and uhm Commissioner, I will just say that  
11 uh, usually you all leave and then we have public  
12 testimony, much of which i think you should be  
13 present to hear and thank you and I'm making this as  
14 a general statement for your awareness. Uhm, we're  
15 always told by the Administration that somebody in  
16 some room somewhere is watching online, which I  
17 believe to be true. Uhm, but I do think it's really  
18 important, especially given this topic that folks  
19 stay. And so, I recognize that you're not always  
20 going to be able to stay for the entirety of the  
21 time. Uhm, I certainly as the Chair am committed to  
being here for the entirety of the time but I would  
ask that whether now or at future hearings that you  
make a real concerted effort to ensure uhm, that  
members of high level, senior members of your

1 administration remain in the room to hear public  
2 testimony. Thank you.

3 Okay, I think we're going to take maybe just a  
4 three minute break to transition here, thanks.

5 I am now opening the hearing for public testimony  
6 and I want to remind members of the public that this  
7 is a government proceeding and that decorum shall be  
8 observed at all times. As such, members of the  
9 public shall remain silent at all times. The witness  
10 table is reserved for people who wish to testify. No  
11 video recording or photography is allowed from the  
12 witness table. Further, members of the public may  
13 not present audio or video recordings as testimony  
14 but may submit transcripts of such recordings to the  
15 Sergeant at Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.  
16 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please fill  
17 out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms and  
18 wait to be recognized.

19 When recognized, you will have two minutes to  
20 speak on the Preliminary Budget for General Welfare.  
21 If you have a written statement or additional written  
testimony you wish to submit for the record, please  
provide a copy of that testimony to the Sergeant at  
Arms. You may also email written testimony to

1  
2 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov) within 72 hours of this  
3 hearing. Audio and video recordings will not be  
4 accepted.

5 The first panel is and forgive me in advance for  
6 mispronouncing any names, Anthony Lackham, Chandra  
7 Smith, Lisa Rhymer, Nevien Swailmyeen, Mun Clifford,  
8 Abby Biberman and Melodie Crowell.

9 Okay Abby Biberman is that, no okay. Oh, okay  
10 but she's not here? Abby will go on the next one.  
11 Thank you. Okay, thank you so much. We will begin  
12 with Anthony.

13 ANTHONY LACKHAM: Hi, I'm actually here for  
14 support.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, as in you're not  
16 testifying? You're just -

17 ANTHONY LACKHAM: Yes, I'm just here to support.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, no problem. Thank you  
19 for your support. Chandra.

20 CHANDRA SMITH: Hello, my name is Chandra Smith.  
21 I am an Eligibility Specialist for uh, the Human  
Resources Administration. I work in Brooklyn and I  
process SNAP benefits for congregate care facilities  
and Social Security recipients.

1  
2 Uhm, the recent budget cuts have impacted us  
3 tremendously. We are working under staff and the  
4 human aspect is really lessening. What we want is  
5 uhm, to be able to process the applications and know  
6 who we're processing for. The people in the  
7 community are our neighbors. Uhm, the people that  
8 come in that need social services or need to have a  
9 human interaction and with AI, we can't really uhm,  
10 get that human interaction for the whole uhm - to  
11 better the experience. Alright, when they're  
12 applying, they have different circumstances uhm, all  
13 of the people are not the same and with AI coming in  
14 uhm, what they do is pretty much generalize  
15 everything that - they lump them into different  
16 categories and that experience has led to uhm, some  
17 people not getting the benefits that they need.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And I'm sorry, just to  
19 clarify, AI is being used currently as part of the  
20 application process?

21 CHANDRA SMITH: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

CHANDRA SMITH: Yes, yes, it is less uhm, staff  
and uhm, with the system being updated constantly,  
it's causing a lot of issues. Some applications are

1  
2 not being processed in a timely manner. There are  
3 applications that are being denied because of the  
4 machinery and it's just -

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Do you know when uhm, do you  
6 recall when AI - when you started to use AI?

7 CHANDRA SMITH: No, I don't recall.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, we'll follow up with  
9 the agency.

10 CHANDRA SMITH: I don't recall.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, let me just run  
12 through the full testimony and then I'll come back to  
13 you. Is that the end of your testimony?

14 CHANDRA SMITH: Uhm, I guess so, yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you so much.  
16 Uh, Lisa.

17 LISA RHYMER: Hi, my name is Lisa Rhymer. I'm  
18 also an eligibility specialist. I work for SNAP as  
19 well but I work at a Bronx location. Uhm, the  
20 reality of it all is that uhm, machines do not have  
21 the capacity to practice empathy. And when people  
come into the centers looking for help from the Human  
Resources Administration, as an eligibility  
specialist, you are making a determination on what is  
happening right before your eyes in real time.

1  
2 Again, just to piggyback off of what Chandra said,  
3 uhm, you watch it as it happens. When you're going  
4 to work, when you're leaving from work, it's our  
5 neighbors, it's our families. It's people who know  
6 uhm our communities as well. Uhm, and if a machine  
7 is allowed to make this determination, there will be  
8 a lot of homely families, which makes other things  
9 happen because it's a raindrop effect, right?

10 Uhm, so it's imperative that we keep the personal  
11 touch because what is occurring with people is not  
12 happening to a machine. Uhm, so with the delay in  
13 services being processed for families, individuals,  
14 our community so to speak, uhm, when there's an  
15 error, you need a person to fix that error. Because  
16 if the person is entitled to the benefits, then they  
17 should receive them in a timely manner. Uhm, so,  
18 again, with all of the updates and the things that  
19 they are making interact with our jobs, it often  
20 causes confusion and there's a constant state of  
21 hysteria. Uhm, because we are mandated to make sure  
the benefits are secured in issue to said families  
who deserve these benefits, but they don't think  
about how the machine is messing up the function.

1  
2 So, again, a delay that you need a person to fix.  
3 So, it's very important that we use it as little as  
4 possible, if not at all.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

6 LISA RHYMER: Uhm, you have to worry about like  
7 just the kids, watching the kids and going to school  
8 and if they can't eat, your brain needs food to  
9 function.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah.

11 LISA RHYMER: Uhm, how are you preparing them for  
12 anything better? And if we are showing them the way  
13 by keeping the people in their jobs to do what is  
14 needed for our communities and for the City of New  
15 York, then you know it's very important that they  
16 weigh it. We should not cause families to be  
17 collateral damage.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

19 LISA RHYMER: Because we're trying to save money.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, thank you so much for  
21 your testimony. Thank you both.

LISA RHYMER: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Uhm, Nevien Swailmyeen.

NEVIEN SWAILMYEEN: Hi, my name is Nevien. I  
want to start by thanking the folks on the panel for

1  
2 their testimony and thank you Chairperson Hudson. My  
3 name is Nevien Swailmyeen, I'm the Health Justice  
4 Advocacy Manager in the Health Justice Program at New  
5 York Lawyers for the Public Interest.

6 We urge the Council to continue and strengthen  
7 support for the Immigrant Health Initiative. A  
8 program that saves lives every day. It funds more  
9 than 20 nonprofits including NYLPI to provide legal  
10 help, community education, hospital partnerships and  
11 critical medical advocacy for immigrants across our  
12 city. Access to healthcare remains limited for more  
13 than 400,000 undocumented and uninsured New Yorkers.  
14 Uhm, with the Council's support, we've increased  
15 enrollment in state funded Medicaid and the essential  
16 plan changes that are life saving and cost saving for  
17 the city and the state.

18 In 2025, NYLPI screened 85 people with serious  
19 health conditions such as end state renal disease and  
20 HIV for immigration and health benefits. We also  
21 trained hundreds of case workers, medical providers,  
community groups, and legal service organizations  
citywide.

As more New Yorkers are detained in immigration  
jails, NYLPI remains one of the few organizations

1  
2 addressing the severe health risks inside these  
3 facilities. We continue to provide culturally  
4 competent legal representation including for  
5 transgender, gender expansive, and those living with  
6 HIV.

7 Yet major gaps remain. HRA needs staffing,  
8 multilingual capacity and targeted funding to reach  
9 Black and LGBTQIA immigrants who are facing the  
10 highest health disparities. HRA, which serves over 3  
11 million New Yorkers, continues to struggle with  
12 delays, high case loads and inconsistent case  
13 handling.

14 When HRA is under-resourced, people go without  
15 food, medical care and housing. We see the impact  
16 daily. One of our clients, a Black LGBTQIA asylum  
17 seeker with a chronic health condition spent months  
18 trying to secure Medicaid despite being eligible,  
19 repeatedly turned away, denied interpretation  
20 services and was ultimately hospitalized. Something  
21 that was entirely preventable.

22 New York needs more navigators, stronger training  
23 on immigrant eligibility and disability pathways and  
24 clearer multilingual material, so people can enroll  
25 and stay enrolled.

1  
2 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today  
3 and we look forward to doing this critical work  
4 together.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Mun  
6 Clifford, Melodie Crowell. Oh, okay yes sorry, we'll  
7 put you on the next panel. Thank you. Melodie  
8 Crowell.

9 MELODIE CROWELL: Good afternoon. Uhm, my name  
10 is Melodie Crowell. Thank you for allowing us to  
11 speak today. I am an Associate Bias Opportunity  
12 Specialist, ABOS uhm, for the past almost 8 years but  
13 before that I was a regular worker of ABOS. I've  
14 seen a lot of transition in HRA during this time. I  
15 don't like it. Uhm, you know I've seen a lot of  
16 outflux of BOS and ABOS retiring, resigning. It's a  
17 lot of pressure. Uhm, especially with the different  
18 programs that has been implemented in the last couple  
19 of years, such as CA Demand, SEEMS, some of those  
20 programs to me don't make any sense because what we  
21 already have been using worked effectively and  
efficiently, so I didn't understand- like why are we  
doing this? And then a certain part of those  
particular programs don't carry over certain  
functions, so we ran into a little bit of a lot of

1 error. As my uh, coworkers have said over here  
2 before. Uhm, also, people are dealing with, like I  
3 said, a lot of stress with management practices that  
4 are not that great. The increase in applicants for  
5 cash assistance, uhm less staffing, uhm, we  
6 voluntarily have to work on the weekend to keep up  
7 with our cases and processing, you know single  
8 issuance, grants, single issuance cases,  
9 recertifications, etc..

10 I do it because I know the work has to get done.  
11 We have a job to do, a service to do to the people  
12 that we serve in this wonderful city and I'd just  
13 like to be able to continue to do my job efficiently  
14 and effectively with the best support as possible.  
15 So, thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Uhm, and then  
17 did you want to add something?

18 ANTHONY LACKHAM: Yes please.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Go ahead.

20 ANTHONY LACKHAM: So, I saw you asked the  
21 question about AI. So, first Anthony Lackham, I'm  
actually President of Local 5949.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Before I started that role,  
I was an Eligibility Specialist uhm, working in

1  
2 homecare. I say that to tell you everything everyone  
3 said on here, I agree with. Last year, during the  
4 holidays, uh, the agency reached out to myself and  
5 371 and other unions to ask us to have our workers  
6 work overtime mandated over time and we asked why and  
7 they said because a private agency that they had  
8 hired who uses AI messed up and there were over  
9 30,000 cases that were not going to be completed  
10 because AI couldn't do it or messed it up and then my  
11 eligibility specialist had to pick up the slack to  
12 get that completed.

13 So, when we're talking about AI, not having the  
14 ability to feel, it also doesn't have the ability to  
15 complete the work to be done in a timely manner.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I'm sorry. When did you say  
17 this occurred?

18 ANTHONY LACKHAM: So, Thanksgiving Day, I was  
19 working -

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Of just last year?

21 ANTHONY LACKHAM: Yes ma'am.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

ANTHONY LACKHAM: While everyone was working, I  
was - Thanksgiving, I was working.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And I just wanted to  
3 confirm, you're talking about mandated overtime. You  
4 mentioned you work, you voluntarily work. Does that  
5 mean you're getting paid overtime and you're just  
6 volunteering to do the work on the weekends and get  
paid overtime.

7 MELODIE CROWELL: That is correct but there was a  
8 time that we were also mandated as well. I didn't  
9 want to put all of that in my testimony but yes.  
There was a time.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, well because what the  
11 Administration just told me was that they haven't had  
12 mandated overtime in quite some time. So, do you  
know when the last time was mandated overtime?

13 ANTHONY LACKHAM: Sure, mandated overtime ended  
14 in January 6th.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Of this year?

16 ANTHONY LACKHAM: Or January 19th of this year.  
17 It continues in social services, homecare, and  
probably ended sometime in February for the Es's.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Mandated overtime?

19 ANTHONY LACKHAM: Mandated overtime. I can  
20 provide emails if you require proof of that.  
21

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, we'll follow up.  
3 Thank you.

4 ANTHONY LACKHAM: Absolutely.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you all so much  
6 for your testimony. We really appreciate you being  
7 here, thank you.

8 PANEL: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and the Sergeants will  
10 just get your email addresses, okay so that we can  
11 follow up directly. Uhm, Ana Champeny next from  
12 Citizens Budget Commission. Thank you. You can  
13 begin when you're ready.

14 ANA CHAMPENY: Okay, is this good?

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Hmm, hmm.

16 ANA CHAMPENY: Okay, thank you. Good afternoon  
17 Chair Hudson. I am Ana Champeny, Vice President for  
18 Research at the Citizens Budget Commission, a  
19 nonpartisan, nonprofit think tank and watchdog that  
20 advocates for the smart fiscal, operational, and  
21 policy choices to deliver a better future for all New  
Yorkers.

Our report, False Choice, presents our assessment  
and recommendations on the Fiscal year '27  
Preliminary Budget. We commend Mayor Mamdani for his

1  
2 more accurate and transparent budget that reflects  
3 the true cost of current services, but find the  
4 proposed budget risks the city's affordability,  
5 competitiveness, and preparedness for what may come.  
6 Rather than raising taxes and raiding reserves, the  
7 city should eliminate wasteful spending and improve  
8 efficiency so that government can deliver  
9 high-quality, essential services that remain  
10 affordable over time.

11 To demonstrate what's possible, we present five  
12 actions that could save \$2.6 billion annually,  
13 including one I will discuss today, keeping the  
14 number of housing vouchers flat to restrain  
15 unaffordable spending growth without impacting  
16 current recipients. Capping City FHEPS program would  
17 save \$330 million in Fiscal Year 2027 budget and \$3.0  
18 billion over the next four years without taking away  
19 vouchers from current recipients.

20 City FHEPS is the nation's second largest voucher  
21 program, only behind NYCHA's Section 8 program, and  
is a radical outlier among locally funded voucher  
programs. Its cost has tripled in the last three  
years, from \$499 million in Fiscal Year 2023 to a  
projected \$1.7 billion this year. The Preliminary

1  
2 Budget projects spending will increase another 24  
3 percent to \$2.2 billion next year and 44 percent over  
4 the following three years.

5 While increasing rents drive some of the cost  
6 growth, most of it stems from the growing number of  
7 vouchers. In just one year, from October 2024 to  
8 October 2025, the number of vouchers grew 31 percent,  
9 an additional 15,046 vouchers, reaching a total of  
10 64,439 households. The average subsidy grew 13.2  
11 percent over that same period. The Preliminary  
12 budget adds \$9.5 billion for City FHEPS, on top of  
13 the previously budgeted \$3.1 billion. The City needs  
14 just two-thirds of the \$9.5 billion to cover baseline  
15 funding for current vouchers. The remaining  
16 one-third would fund new vouchers, allowing the  
17 program to continue growing.

18 We estimate this would lead to 70,000 vouchers at  
19 the end of Fiscal Year 2027 and over 100,000 at the  
20 end of Fiscal Year 2029. The City cannot voucher its  
21 way out of the homelessness crisis. Not only is the  
program fiscally unsustainable, but even as the  
number of vouchers has more than tripled, the number  
of households in shelters has not shrunk. In fact,

1  
2 excluding migrants and asylum seekers, it has  
3 increased 21.5 percent.

4 Now is the time to cap the number of City FHEPS  
5 vouchers at the current level. No one would lose a  
6 voucher and the City should certainly not be pursuing  
7 an unaffordable expansion that would explode costs  
8 even further.

9 Turnover would allow the city to issue vouchers  
10 to some new households and priority should be given  
11 to those with the greatest need. This smart choice  
12 would save \$330 million in Fiscal Year 2027 and \$3  
13 billion as I said. City FHEPS can and should be part  
14 of the city's housing strategy but the housing crisis  
15 can only be solved by leveraging state and federal  
16 housing subsidy programs and partnering with a  
17 private sector to increase housing production.

18 Expanding City FHEPS beyond current levels would  
19 compromise the city's ability to deliver core  
20 services and potentially jeopardize the viability of  
21 the program for current voucher holders. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much for your  
testimony. Uhm, and I do want to acknowledge that uh  
Deputy Commissioner Hooks is here, so thank you for  
staying. Thank you.

1  
2 Okay, I'm going to call up the next panel. Thank  
3 you so much. Molly Eckerle, Yesmine Vega, Carlos  
4 Rodriguez, Alyson Rosenthal, Beth Williams, Rachel  
5 Sabella, and Nicole Hunt. And we can start with  
6 Molly.

7 MOLLY ECKERLE: Good afternoon Chair Hudson.  
8 Uhm, thank you for holding this hearing today. My  
9 name is Molly Eckerle and I'm here on behalf of Met  
10 Council to join our fellow antihunger advocates and  
11 calling on the Council to baseline fund Community  
12 Food Connection at \$100 million and to continue to  
13 invest in the incredibly impactful Feeding our  
14 Communities Council Initiative by increasing its  
15 commitment to \$25 million.

16 For over 50 years, Met Council has been one of  
17 America's largest Jewish charities dedicated to  
18 fighting poverty, providing wrap-around social  
19 services that include the nation's largest Kosher and  
20 Halal emergency food network and serving more than  
21 320,000 New Yorkers annually.

22 New York City's emergency food system is at a  
23 tipping point. Nearly 1.3 million New Yorkers  
24 experienced food insecurity in 2025, exceeding COVID  
25 era highs and this was before the federal staff cuts.

1  
2 These devastating cuts will cause hundreds of  
3 thousands of New Yorkers to lose SNAP benefits in the  
4 coming months and SNAP provides 9 meals for every 1  
5 that a Food Bank provides for the same cost. When  
6 SNAP is cut, the need does not disappear, it shifts  
7 onto providers that are already stretched beyond  
8 capacity.

9 New York City is also home to the largest Jewish  
10 and Muslim populations in the country and too often  
11 these New Yorkers must choose between their religious  
12 observance and accessing emergency food. CFC's  
13 unique flexibility allows providers to select food  
14 that meets their communities specific needs including  
15 Kosher and Halal uhm that are not available through  
16 other funding streams.

17 Investing in CFC means combating the limiting  
18 SNAP cuts while advancing equity in New York City's  
19 emergency feeding system. Feeding our communities  
20 has also enabled Council and our partners Hispanic  
21 federation and Catholic Charities to connect  
underserved communities to culturally appropriate  
food where a traditional emergency feeding falls  
short.

1  
2 We urge the Council to continue and expand  
3 feeding our communities to \$25 million, ensuring that  
4 we can continue this important work. By baselining  
5 CFC at \$100 million and continuing feeding our  
6 communities at \$25 million, the Council can support  
7 both providers and hungry New Yorkers. Thank you and  
8 we look forward to continuing to work with this  
9 Committee.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much, perfect  
11 timing. Yesmine Vega. No, okay, Carlos Rodriguez.

12 CARLOS RODRIGUEZ: How about now? There we go.  
13 Thank you, Chairwoman Hudson and Members of the  
14 General Welfare Committee for holding today's hearing  
15 on New York City's Budget for Fiscal Year 2027.

16 My name is Carlos Rodriguez, and I have the  
17 privilege of serving as President of City Harvest,  
18 New York's first and largest food rescue  
19 organization. I want to thank the City Council first  
20 and foremost for its steadfast support of food  
21 security initiatives and City Harvest over the years.

22 This year, our plan at City Harvest was to rescue  
23 and deliver 86 million pounds of food to millions of  
24 New Yorkers. We thank the City Council for its  
25 continued support in that effort, including

1  
2 investments in Feeding our Communities Initiative  
3 that was established this past year. Because of that  
4 investment, we actually project being able to rescue  
5 90 millions pounds in this important year by the end  
6 of June.

7 As an organization that's been fighting hunger  
8 for over 40 years, it's clear to us that this year is  
9 not business as usual. City Harvest network of over  
10 400 pantries across New York City, some of whom are  
11 sitting uh at this table with us are seeing over a  
12 million additional pantry visits per month. That's  
13 an 87 percent increase compared to pre-COVID data  
14 from 2019.

15 We have already taken significant steps in  
16 response to this growth and need. Since 2019, we've  
17 increased our food distribution by over 30 percent  
18 with a focus on high need neighborhoods with pantry  
19 food supply gaps, and at risk populations. We  
20 started recruiting new pantry partners over the last  
21 18 months. Now, we are also rescuing over 6 million  
pounds of local food from New York State, more than  
most other organizations in our area.

We want to connect New York City neighbors with  
food from our upstate farms. We have expanded our

1 policy and advocacy efforts so that our neighbors and  
2 pantry leaders alike are represented in the halls of  
3 government.

4 However, charity alone, cannot and should not be  
5 expected to replace effective and equity public  
6 policy, so we ask for three basic things. First, the  
7 expanded expansion of CFC and continued funding of it  
8 at \$100 million to fully fund HRA SNAP enrollment  
9 operations and SNAP outreach programming so they can  
10 support and to make sure they're actually utilizing  
11 it as well, which I know has been an issue in the  
12 past.

13 And to restore access to healthy, grocer  
14 incentive programs, in addition to the other funding  
15 lines that support our frontline partners and  
16 pantries as well. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Alyson  
18 Rosenthal.

19 ALYSON ROSENTHAL: Hi Chair Hudson and Members of  
20 the General Welfare Committee. Thank you so much for  
21 this opportunity to testify and for your continued  
commitment to addressing food insecurity in New York  
City.

1  
2 My name is Alyson Rosenthal, and I am the Chief  
3 Program Officer and Registered Dietitian at the West  
4 Side Campaign Against Hunger. We are an anti-hunger  
5 organization that, for 47 years, has been focused on  
6 providing access to healthy, fresh food and direct  
benefits enrollment to New Yorkers in need.

7 WSCAH is one of the founding members of The  
8 Roundtable, Allies for Food Access. The Roundtable  
9 is a coalition of nine of the largest and most  
10 innovative emergency food providers in New York City  
11 and includes organizations like Citymeals on Wheels,  
12 Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen, Met Council, New York  
13 Common Pantry, Part of the Solution, Project  
Hospitality, St. John's Bread and Life, and The  
Campaign Against Hunger.

14 Together, our members serve communities in all  
15 five boroughs and collectively support a network of  
16 more than 800 pantries, soup kitchens, and feeding  
17 providers that feed more than one million New Yorkers  
18 each year. I am speaking today on behalf of WSCAH  
and The Roundtable.

19 As the Council considers priorities for the  
20 upcoming fiscal year, we urge you to continue  
21 investing in frontline emergency food providers'

1  
2 innovative, community-based solutions that address  
3 food insecurity at a scale and strengthen the  
4 emergency food system that so many New Yorkers rely  
5 on.

6 First, we strongly support establishing \$100  
7 million as a permanent annual baseline for the  
8 Community Food Connection program. CFC is the  
9 backbone of the city's emergency food network,  
10 providing flexible funding that allows more than 500  
11 food pantries and soup kitchens to serve neighbors  
12 experiencing food insecurity.

13 Second, we encourage the City Council to  
14 strengthen collaboration and accountability across  
15 the city's food policy infrastructure. We ask for  
16 the establishment of a dedicated City Council  
17 Committee on Food that would elevate food policy as a  
18 citywide priority and ensure consistent oversight of  
19 programs addressing hunger and food access.

20 Finally, we urge the city to broaden leadership  
21 within FeedNYC to include frontline emergency food  
22 providers. Earlier today, you asked HRA how they  
23 were going to allocate their resources and the  
24 organizations on FeedNYC that advise that do not  
25 include any frontline emergency food provider and we

1  
2 need to make sure that the frontline perspective is  
3 also included in how resource allocations get made.

4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Beth.

6 BETH WILLIAMS: Hi, thanks Chair Hudson. My name  
7 is Beth Willians, and I am the New York State Policy  
8 Director for Hunger Free America, a national direct  
9 service and advocacy organization. We're  
10 headquartered here in Manhattan and we have an office  
11 in the Bronx. I am here today on behalf of the 1.2  
12 million New Yorkers who are experiencing hunger. As  
13 you all know, we've talked about today, we're in a  
14 massive crisis in the city that's only going to be  
15 made worse by the HR1 bill. We need a massive  
16 coordinative response from both the city and the  
17 state to deal with this crisis.

18 Right now, one in five children in New York City  
19 are dealing with hunger and almost half the children  
20 in the Bronx are dealing with hunger. The cost of  
21 living continues to increase in the city as salaries  
don't match that.

We believe the most impactful way to fight hunger  
is through increasing participation and keeping folks  
on uhm, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance

1  
2 Program, SNAP. Uhm, as we know with HR1, up to  
3 one-third of SNAP participants in New York City are  
4 going to have their benefits threatened. Just in the  
5 month of December in 2025, 1.7 million city residents  
6 received \$415 million in federal grocery support  
7 through SNAP. And so, in order to help these folks  
8 maintain their benefits - oh and also mentioned this  
9 morning, you know what we were going to do to help  
10 folks stay on SNAP, uhm all of that was really  
11 mentioned was just you know, screening folks for work  
12 requirements at their recertification meetings in the  
13 next year and we believe that more needs to be done  
14 for that along with working with the state.

15 We believe that the final budget deal needs to  
16 provide extra money for DSS to work with nonprofit  
17 groups to help SNAP recipients meet their work  
18 reporting requirements by being both screened for  
19 mental and physical disabilities, offering work and  
20 paid employment, participating in job training, or  
21 performing volunteer service. And we also support  
the increase in the Civic Impact Fund to fund  
nonprofit organizations to host SNAP recipients as  
volunteers to meet their work requirements. Thank  
you.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much for your  
3 testimony. Rachel.

4 RACHEL SABELLA: Thank you Chair Hudson. Thank  
5 you for hosting this hearing and thank you to all the  
6 Council Staff Members that have worked so hard to  
7 make sure all of the thorough questions were asked  
8 today.

9 My name is Rachel Sabella and I have the honor  
10 and privilege of serving as the Director of No Kid  
11 Hungry New York. We're a national organization  
12 working to end childhood hunger and poverty. You  
13 will have my written testimony with all the data,  
14 with all the wonky requirements but what here today,  
15 I want to say is how important it is for this Council  
16 and the Mamdani Administration to work together to  
17 connect New Yorkers with meals. I want to ditto  
18 everything my colleagues at this table said and I  
19 could not be more grateful that these are the  
20 organizations on the ground providing New Yorkers  
21 with meals as we face one of the most devastating  
times that we have ever had as a society. HR1 has  
been mentioned a lot today. That was when on July  
3rd, the United States Congress voted to decimate the  
SNAP program. \$200 billion in cuts to benefits but

1  
2 also cost shifts and new requirements. And that's  
3 why it's more important than ever that we listen to  
4 what the earlier panel said about the workforce and  
5 how they are there for people as we look through  
6 this.

7  
8 New Yorkers are struggling. One in four children  
9 face hunger. Our recent poll told us that three  
10 quarters of families in New York City are choosing  
11 whether to pay the rent or to pay for food for their  
12 families. Parents skipping meals. They are going to  
13 grocery stores and buying filler meals. We have to  
14 do better but our immediate needs that we need to  
15 make sure the city's budget responds to are the cost  
16 sharing effects of HR1. One is the SNAP  
17 Administrative costs.

18  
19 As of October 1st, the federal government is  
20 expecting states to put in 75 percent of  
21 administrative costs. In the past, it was 50  
percent. That would increase costs in New York City  
by more than \$100 million. And while I'm sure  
there's negotiations going on. Could the state put  
this in? Could the city put it in? We need to make  
sure that money is there so there is no stopping this

1 program as families are facing the work requirements.

2 The support is there. The enrollment is there.

3 The last thing I will mention is that as of  
4 October 1, 2027, states could be on the hook for  
5 paying partial benefit costs. It's all based on a  
6 state's error rate and that's something we also want  
7 to make sure is reflected in this budget. So, that's  
8 where those staffing lines are so important. Is  
9 there technology? Is there training? How is New  
10 York City working together with New York State to do  
11 this? We stand at the ready to work with this  
12 Council. We know New Yorkers support these programs.  
13 We know how important they are to the economy and we  
14 are here to make sure that we protect the SNAP  
15 program. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Nicole.

15 NICOLE HUNT: Alright, hello, thank you Chair  
16 Hudson and everyone on the General Welfare Committee  
17 staff for being here today. My name is Nicole Hunt.  
18 I have the honor to serve as Director of Public  
19 Policy and Advocacy at Food Bank for New York City.  
20 The city's largest hunger relief organization serving  
21 over 800 community based organizations across the

1  
2 five boroughs and all 51 New York City Council  
3 districts.

4 I'm here today because New York City must act in  
5 the face of the coming hunger crisis. As changes  
6 from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act continue to take  
7 effect. This bill will slash \$186 billion from SNAP  
8 over the next ten years, putting 408 million meals  
9 at risk right here in New York City in that same  
10 timeframe.

11 As many here know, New ABAWD rules take effect  
12 this month and approximately 180,000 New York City  
13 SNAP recipients are at risk of losing this critical  
14 benefit beginning in June of this year. Not because  
15 of any change in their circumstances, but because the  
16 rules have shifted underneath them.

17 We know many of these New Yorkers will turn to  
18 the food assistance network. We will do all we can  
19 to close that gap but our network was never designed  
20 to replace federal assistance and yet that is  
21 increasingly what we are being asked to do.

Our ask for the city budget and I'm also going to  
submit written testimony with all this written out  
but uhm, are \$100 million in baseline funding for CFC  
to bolster the food assistance network during this

1  
2 time. Support for SNAP outreach programs and  
3 administration and the HRA Workforce to help preserve  
4 benefits for as many New Yorkers as possible.  
5 Investments in key Council Food Initiatives such as  
6 the Food Pantries Initiative, food access and  
7 benefits and feeding our communities to allow  
8 flexible and innovative programming. And funding for  
9 programs that promote food access and healthy  
10 nutrition such as Get the Good Stuff, Health Bucks  
11 and groceries to go.

12 These are not luxuries, they are the backbone of  
13 a food security system that millions of New Yorkers  
14 depend on and that is currently at risk. Thank you  
15 for your time and the opportunity to testify.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Thank  
17 you all for your testimony, really appreciate you  
18 being here.

19 Okay, the next panel is Mun Clifford, Abby  
20 Biberman, Anna Arkin-Gallagher, Montel Cherry, and  
21 Shervon Small. Servon? Servon? Thank you. Okay,  
we'll start with is it Mun?

MUN CLIFFORD: Mun.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Mun, okay thank you.

1  
2           MUN CLIFFORD: Thank you Chair Hudson. Alright,  
3 good afternoon. My name is Mun Clifford and I am the  
4 Attorney in charge of the Housing Practice at the  
5 Legal Aid Society. Thank you Chair Hudson and the  
6 members of the Committee for the opportunity to  
7 testify today regarding the budget.

8           We also want to acknowledge that uh, that  
9 Commissioner, Ms. Dalton uhm for her leadership and  
10 engagement on the issues of homelessness prevention,  
11 housing stability and the supports families need to  
12 remain safely housed.

13           When a tenant is wrongfully evicted, when a  
14 mother loses SNAP benefits to skimming fraud, when a  
15 survivor of domestic violence cannot safely navigate  
16 a divorce or when an immigrant New Yorker is detained  
17 without counsel, the consequences are immediate and  
18 devastating. Families lose income, people enter  
19 shelter, vulnerable New Yorkers are pushed deeper  
20 into crisis. That is why this budget hearing  
21 matters.

          With an annual caseload of nearly 200,000 legal  
          matters, the Legal Aid Society takes on more cases  
          for more clients who cannot afford private counsel  
          than any other service provider in the country. Our

1  
2 work is amplified by volunteer help from law firms,  
3 corporate law departments and expert consultants.  
4 Together we bring a depth and breath of perspective  
5 that is unmatched in the legal profession.

6 Legal Aid's unique value lies in our ability to  
7 go beyond any one case to create more equitable  
8 outcomes for individuals and brother more powerful  
9 systemic change for society as a whole.

10 For our civil practice, the Executive Budget and  
11 the City Council's investments provide crucial  
12 funding for Legal Aid's work, representing tenants  
13 facing eviction, helping families access benefits and  
14 supports, preventing homelessness and stabilizing  
15 communities. We are grateful for that partnership  
16 and for the Council's longstanding commitment to  
17 preserving and strengthening the promise of the right  
18 to counsel. We appreciate the conversation today  
19 regarding homelessness prevention.

20 We are encouraged by what the Administration and  
21 the Council have said about addressing homelessness  
and stabilizing families and communities. We welcome  
the emphasis on practical tools that can help keep  
people housed.

1  
2 As we approach the 10th year of the Right to  
3 Counsel, it is important to reflect both on how much  
4 has been accomplished with the support of the Council  
5 and what still remains unfinished. Right to Counsel  
6 has transformed the landscape of Housing court in New  
7 York City. It has helped tenants remain in their  
8 homes, prevented countless evictions and made Housing  
9 Court fairer and more just.

10 We are proud to have partnered with the Council  
11 in this city and helping realize that vision and  
12 remain committed to working together to fulfill it  
13 more completely. However, the program remains not  
14 fully funded. I'm going to wrap up.

15 In another critical sense, there is still a  
16 significant number of income eligible tenants who go  
17 unrepresented. Even with all that has been  
18 accomplished, the city has not yet fully realized the  
19 promise that every eligible tenant who needs counsel  
20 will receive it.

21 We are grateful for the Council's partnership for  
the Administration's engagement and for the  
opportunity to continue to build on what has already  
been achieved. As we mark nearly ten years of the  
right to counsel, we should celebrate what the city

1  
2 has made possible but we should also remain clear  
3 eyed about what is still needed. With continued  
4 partnership, adequate investment, stronger data and a  
5 shared commitment to full implementation, New York  
6 City can continue leading the nation in protecting  
7 tenants and preventing homelessness.

8 Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.  
9 I will submit more fully written testimony.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Abby.

11 ABBY BIBERMAN: Thank you. Good afternoon Chair  
12 Hudson. My name is Abby Biberman, I'm Associate  
13 Director of the Public Benefits unit at the New York  
14 Legal Assistance Group. I want to highlight a few  
15 urgent issues today. First, is the access to public  
16 benefits. Uhm, NYLAG continues to see clients  
17 improperly denied public assistance SNAP and  
18 emergency rental assistance because of systemic  
19 failures, long phone wait times, delays and failure  
20 to index documents and applications that are not  
21 processed within the legally required timelines.

22 Clients applying for rent arrears grants  
23 routinely wait more than 30 days, pushing them to the  
24 brink of eviction.

1  
2 And the DSS 1 Number remains nearly impossible to  
3 reach. Some clients can't complete critical steps in  
4 the application process or they can't obtain  
5 information that they need uhm, crucial information  
6 about their public assistance uh cases.

7 These administrative failures create turn,  
8 increased homelessness risk and ultimately drive up  
9 city costs. We also have concerns about the  
10 additional burdens that are going to be on the agency  
11 as it implements these federal changes.

12 Second, is City FHEPS. NYLAG supports the  
13 Council's expansion of City FHEPS and we understand  
14 the city is facing a deficit but there is a need for  
15 long term investment, as it would not only get  
16 families out of shelters and keep people housed, but  
17 it will also save the city money.

18 Even for those who do not qualify for City FHEPS  
19 - I'm sorry, even for those who do qualify for City  
20 FHEPS, administrative delays are preventing families,  
21 landlords and caseworkers from resolving routine  
issues. The city is failing to move people out of  
shelter because of these delays and this is for  
people who already have shopping letters.

1  
2 Expanding staffing, improving communication and  
3 digitizing documents, would dramatically shorten  
4 shelter stays. We haven't really heard what the city  
5 plans to do uhm, in terms of concrete plans.

6 Third, I just want to wrap it up with some DHS  
7 shelter services. Uhm, according to the Mayor's  
8 Management Report, 43 percent of families are  
9 receiving behavioral health and developmental  
10 supports due to staffing shortage and uneven  
11 distribution across shelters.

12 Uhm, families are also now spending an average of  
13 401 days in DHS family shelters, which is more than a  
14 full year of a child's life spent in temporary  
15 housing. These delays reflect the systemic barriers  
16 to accessing permanent housing and require urgent  
17 coordination.

18 Lastly, we urge the continued support for Right  
19 to Counsel, Legal Services and increased uhm- and all  
20 of our initiative asks will be in the written  
21 testimony.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Can you just give me that  
number again? 401 days?

ABBY BIBERMAN: Uhm, that was what was from the  
Mayor's Management Report but yes, 401 days average.

1 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. ANNA.

2 ANNA ARKIN-GALLAGHER: Hi, good afternoon. My  
3 name is Anna Arkin-Gallagher. My name is Anna  
4 Arkin-Gallagher. I am the Associate Director of the  
5 Civil Justice Practice at Brooklyn Defender Services.  
6 Thank you Chair Hudson and Members of the Committee  
7 for the opportunity to testify today and thank you to  
8 the New York City Council for its continued support  
9 for Legal Services programs like ours.

10 BDS serves more than 40,000 people each year  
11 across our Brooklyn Queens offices who have  
12 historically been unable to access traditional legal  
13 services or whose unique issues caused or exacerbated  
14 by criminal, family, or deportation proceedings  
15 require specialized knowledge to address. With the  
16 generous support of the City Council Speakers  
17 Initiative, our civil justice practice works to  
18 minimize the consequences of system involvement and  
19 provides early intervention legal services to ensure  
20 our clients keep their jobs, stay in their homes and  
21 acquire essential benefits and services. And it's  
here that the Council funding we rely on truly has an  
impact, allowing us to intervene quickly by providing  
upfront legal advocacy to avoid the kinds of

1  
2 protracted litigation that can drastically  
3 destabilize the lives of the people we serve.

4 To give you just two examples, we routinely avoid  
5 public benefits issues and nonpayment proceedings for  
6 families whose children are temporarily removed from  
7 their care, by ensuring rental assistance budgets and  
8 housing vouchers remain unaffected by a change in  
9 household size, which can avoid nonpayment  
10 proceedings being filed and the prospect of eviction.

11 We also make sure clients of our criminal defense  
12 practice understand their employment rights, work to  
13 verify their employers following New York State and  
14 City antidiscrimination laws and affirmatively  
15 advocate with employers who have violated these  
16 rules.

17 Often our early intervention means a worker is  
18 able to get back to work and litigation is entirely  
19 unnecessary. Funding through the New York City  
20 Council Speakers initiative allows us the flexibility  
21 to provide these types of preventative legal  
assistance services and ensures more New Yorkers have  
the chance to avoid the types of legal problems that  
can irrevocably disrupt their lives.

1  
2 We respectfully request that the Council increase  
3 this critical funding, so we can continue to provide  
4 the proactive, high quality advocacy that keeps New  
5 Yorkers in their homes and their jobs. Thank you for  
6 the opportunity to testify today and for your  
7 continued support of the people, families, and  
8 communities we represent. Our written testimony  
9 provides further details on the program initiative  
10 and discretionary funding requests we are making to  
11 ensure we can continue to do this work.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Montel.

13 MONTEL CHERRY: Good afternoon Chair Hudson and  
14 the Committee on General Welfare and thank you for  
15 the opportunity to testify today.

16 My name is Montel Cherry and I am the Deputy  
17 Director and Director of Litigation for Mobilization  
18 for Justice. Our mission is to achieve justice for  
19 all. For over 60 years, Mobilization for Justice has  
20 provided free civil legal services to New Yorkers who  
21 with low-incomes, who are disenfranchised, and who  
have disabilities.

We also conduct community education, advocate for  
policy reform, and bring impact litigation. Every  
year, we handle more than 10,000 cases from across

1  
2 New York City in the broad areas of Housing,  
3 Disability and Aging Rights, Economic Justice, and  
4 Children's Rights.

5 Through our services we prevent homelessness,  
6 help seniors and people with disabilities live  
7 independently, help families maintain economic  
8 stability, support immigrants and children with  
9 mental health disabilities, and address racial  
10 disparities.

11 We're speaking here today in the midst of several  
12 crises: surging homelessness, skyrocketing cost of  
13 living, marginalization of the vulnerable, and a city  
14 struggling to meet the needs of its existing  
15 residents, let alone those of our newest neighbors  
16 who come here seeking safety, stability, and  
17 opportunity. And we're tackling these issues in the  
18 face of a federal administration openly hostile to  
19 the ideals of public service and the public good.

20 The nonprofit community in New York City has  
21 faced severe delays in contract payments and hiring  
obstacles amidst the challenges of pay parity for  
public service work. It has been a tough couple of  
years, especially for our clients. I'm respectfully  
asking you to ensure the following initiatives are

1  
2 fully funded and enhanced. Legal services for low  
3 income New Yorkers and working class New Yorkers,  
4 legal services for family advocacy and guardianship,  
5 immigrant opportunity initiative, AAPI community  
6 support and community housing preservation  
7 strategies. Thank you for your time.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much for your  
9 testimony. Shervon.

10 SHERVON M. SMALL: Good afternoon Chair Hudson  
11 and members of the Committee and staff. Thank you  
12 very much for the opportunity to testify today.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Hold on one second. I'm  
14 going to start - there you go.

15 SHERVON SMALL: My name is Shervon Small, I am  
16 the Executive Director of Legal Services NYC or LSNY.  
17 The largest provider of free civil legal services in  
18 the country.

19 At its core, our work is about stability. We  
20 help people stay in their homes, access benefits,  
21 maintain income, and avoid crises that would  
otherwise push them to the shelter system with deeper  
poverty. That work is not secondary, it is central  
to the city's infrastructure.

1  
2 We are part of the New York City's homelessness  
3 prevention system and its broader anti-poverty safety  
4 net. Operating at the intersection of housing,  
5 public benefits and their nonprofit systems that this  
6 Committee oversees.

7 Today, I want to focus on two structural issues.  
8 Whether these homelessness prevention programs are  
9 funded at their cost and whether the nonprofit sector  
10 delivering them is financially stable.

11 First on cost, New York City made history when it  
12 enacted their access to counsel law, commonly known  
13 as the Right to Counsel program. Recognizing that  
14 legal representation in housing court is essential to  
15 fairness, stability and preventing homelessness. But  
16 a right only exists if it can actually be exercised.  
17 A right without funding is not a right. It is a  
18 promise we cannot keep.

19 At present, funding provided through the right to  
20 counsel contracts only cover a fraction of the need.  
21 Each year more than 120,000 eviction cases are filed  
in New York City, yet the current contracts fund  
representation for only a third of those tenants. We  
estimate that the true cost of delivering high  
quality holistic eviction defense is approximately

1 7,500 per case. Current contract rates fall  
2 significantly below that. What that means in  
3 practice is that nonprofit providers are being asked  
4 to subsidize the public program. For years, we've  
5 done that using federal funding, state resources and  
6 private philanthropy to close that gap. But that  
7 model is becoming increasingly unsustainable.  
8 Federal funding through the Legal Services  
9 Corporation faces growing uncertainty. State funding  
10 streams such as IOLA are subject to spending  
11 restrictions and fiscal pressures. Private  
12 philanthropic dollars are crucial to our work but  
13 they are not intended to backfill structural funding  
14 gaps in government programs. When case rates fail to  
15 reflect the true cost of services, providers are  
16 forced into impossible choices. We are forced to  
17 borrow across the city. My partners here - I'm just  
18 going to skip right through it. My partners here are  
19 forced to borrow each and every day to meet our  
20 obligations to our staff to meet payroll and instead  
21 of the money going into our communities, they go  
directly into the banks. And I do not think that's  
what the Council intended. I believe the Council  
should fully fund this program, continue to pay us on

1  
2 time so that we don't have to borrow and put money  
3 into the pockets of the banks. Thank you Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I don't disagree with you  
5 but I would also argue the Administration should  
6 fully fund the program.

7 SHERVON SMALL: Absolutely, I really appreciate  
8 that, thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Thank you all  
10 for your testimony.

11 PANEL: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, the next panel will be  
13 Alison Wilkey, Victoria Leahy, Lauren Schuster, Jade  
14 Vazquez, Catherine Trapani, Brendan Cheney. Thank  
15 you. Thank you. Alison.

16 ALISON WILKEY: Hi. My name is Alison Wilkey.  
17 I'm the Director of Government Affairs and Strategic  
18 Campaigns at the Coalition for the Homeless. Thank  
19 you for having this hearing and for trying to get  
20 through all the detailed information as quickly as  
21 possible but with thoroughness, really appreciate  
that.

Uhm, so I mean, to start I'll just say simply  
that the solution to homelessness is easy. It's  
housing. Uhm, but the fact of the matter is that for

1  
2 every 100 extremely low income families in the New  
3 York City metro area, there are only 35 apartments  
4 that are available and affordable to them and it is  
5 that gap that we are grappling with and that we are  
6 grappling with in our city's budget.

7 City FHEPS is a really important part of meeting  
8 that gap and there's a lot of talk about how costs  
9 have ballooned, the program is growing exponentially  
10 and that is all true but it is because the program is  
11 successful. It's because we are moving people out of  
12 shelter with it. Uhm, you know in FY25, according to  
13 the Mayor's Management Report, there were 21,266  
14 subsidized exists from DHS shelters and from the  
15 testimony of DSS today, they said 15,000 people moved  
16 out of DHS shelters because of City FHEPS, so that  
17 means that City FHEPS is about 70 percent of how  
18 people are moving out of shelter into subsidized  
19 housing and we know that that keeps people out of  
20 housing. It's an investment that we have to make and  
21 continue to make. Uhm, and you know the Council  
passed laws to expand the program that need to be  
implemented. I mean the shelter census is a function  
of how many people are coming in and how many people  
are leaving and if we are not addressing both ends of

1  
2 that spectrum, the shelter census will continue to  
3 grow. If we hadn't had City FHEPS, then we would  
4 have far more than 100,000 people in shelters at this  
5 moment. So, it's an important program that we need  
6 to continue to invest in. Of course, it is not the  
7 only program. It's not the only thing we need to be  
8 doing. We need to be doing - we need to be building  
9 deeply affordable housing. Uhm, we need to use all  
10 of the tools that we have but I think the suggestion  
11 earlier that instead of funding more City FHEPS, that  
12 we should cap it and rely on state and federal  
13 resources is a farce. Those state and federal  
14 resources are not there. I mean we are fighting for  
15 those all the time. Really, the city is left with a  
16 moral choice here, of do we invest in City FHEPS to  
17 house people and make sure that our people, our  
18 residents have a home or do we leave people in  
19 homelessness? That's a simple choice.

20 Uhm, the other thing I'll just mention briefly is  
21 uh, our unsheltered neighbors and funding for safe  
havens. The city says continually that there's over  
4,000 safe havens. I think most recently in the  
press they said that there's 4,200. Uh, I've never  
seen the census beyond 3,900 and if you're talking

1  
2 about online units, uhm, what's my date here? As of  
3 March 13, there were 3,710 online safe haven and  
4 stabilization beds.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Can you give me that number  
6 again?

7 ALISON WILKEY: Yeah, 3,710 they were online and  
8 available. Uh, I shouldn't say available but being  
9 you know, most of those are being used. So, we need  
10 to invest more in safe havens. If we're really  
11 serious about getting people off the streets, out of  
12 public spaces, that is a key part of it and you know  
13 we're asking the city to add 2,000 more safe haven or  
14 stabilization beds. That would be a cost move out.  
15 \$98 million but that's an investment worth making in  
16 the system so that we can uh help people get off the  
17 streets, get into shelter and ultimately into  
18 permanent housing.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Can you. Can  
20 you just tell me the statistic that you gave at the  
21 top of your testimony? How many -

ALISON WILKEY: Yeah, so it's - for every 100  
extremely low income families in the New York City  
metropolitan area, so that does cover a little bit of

1  
2 New Jersey. There are only 35 available and  
3 affordable rental units.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

5 ALISON WILKEY: Yup and that comes from the uhm,  
6 National Low Income Housing Coalition from their -  
7 the Gap report.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Victoria.

9 VICTORIA LEAHY: Uh, good afternoon. My name is  
10 Victoria Leahy and I am the Director of Policy and  
11 Planning at Homeless Services United. HSU is a  
12 coalition representing over 55 mission driven  
13 homeless services providers. And right now, New York  
14 City confronts an unprecedented homelessness crisis.  
15 But this year, the city budget can change all of that  
16 by making sizable investments in solution oriented  
17 programs.

18 First, we must fund the fully City FHEPS  
19 expansion. This program has been critical in  
20 preventing evictions and moving New Yorkers from  
21 shelter to permanent housing. We know that vouchers  
break the cycle of homelessness. They reduce the  
likelihood that somebody is going to return to  
shelter and we urge the Administration to make the  
investments needed to move forward with the full

1 expansion. Then we must increase investments in  
2 prevention programs and make accessing benefits  
3 easier. We know that homebase is over subscribed and  
4 this has caused increased wait times for these very  
5 critical services but our homebased providers at HSU  
6 report that they're exceeding their contract  
7 deliverables by 113 percent with months still left in  
8 the contract year. So, to ease this burden on  
9 homebased providers, we need to rightsize their  
10 contracts so that they can meet the needs of our  
11 neighbors. And as highlighted today, our social  
12 service agencies are riddled with staff vacancies,  
13 which cause benefit processing to slow down.

14 At a time when the federal government is  
15 attacking our neighbors and threatening their  
16 benefits, our social service agencies must be staffed  
17 and trained accordingly to meet the need. Then we  
18 must increase investments in street outreach and low  
19 barriers in housing to successfully move -  
20 successfully move more clients from the streets to  
21 housing. We need to expand the housing options  
available, invest in more single and private rooms as  
is often requested by clients.

1  
2 And our outreach teams also need modernized  
3 software that aids their data coordination. We have  
4 to restore headcount that DHS, DSS and MOCS to  
5 eliminate pervasive payment delays. Nonprofits still  
6 experience delays in getting paid for their work.

7 In a recent survey of our members, we found that  
8 just 22 orgs were still owed \$152 million of contract  
9 payments dating all the way back to Fiscal Year '18  
10 and we know that staffing has contributed to that.

11 And then finally, we must create parity in shelter  
12 contracts. This year does make a more accurate  
13 projection of spending on shelters, but what remains  
14 true is that there's a lack of parity across those  
15 budgets and this imbalance creates significant  
16 differences in the level and quality of programming  
17 and/or can provide to their clients. And we feel  
18 that New Yorkers experiencing homelessness should  
19 experience the same standard of care regardless of  
20 which organization runs their shelter and  
21 establishing parity will do that. So, more details  
and data and facts can be found in our written  
testimony that we've submitted and we look forward to  
working with the City Council to making sure that  
this year's budget delivers for all of our New

1  
2 Yorkers, including our homeless neighbors. Thank  
3 you.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Lauren.

5 LAUREN SCHUSTER: Oh thank you Catherine. I had  
6 good morning in my testimony but good afternoon.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Long past the morning.

8 LAUREN SCHUSTER: Chair Hudson, it's a long day  
9 for you all and thank you to you and your team uh for  
10 the opportunity to testify today. I'm Lauren  
11 Schuster, the Chief External Affairs Officer at Urban  
12 Resource Institute. We're the largest provider of DV  
13 shelter in the country. On any given night, we house  
14 more than nearly 4,000 people across 27 locations.  
15 Thank you for your leadership. Uhm, my detailed  
16 testimony will cover a variety of topics. Uhm, but I  
17 want to hit the top notes, procurement reform. You  
18 or I, like so many of our partners, we are still owed  
19 even with advances, tens of millions of dollars for  
20 services already delivered. We have to get to the  
21 underlying causes of the payment delays and increase  
headcount at DSS to help us do that.

Workforce investment, our frontline workers  
supporting survivors and unhoused families, they are  
overwhelmingly women of color and they are doing

1  
2 lifesaving work. They are still paid significantly  
3 less than their counterparts in the government. We  
4 need pay equity for that workforce. Increase DOVE  
5 funding, domestic violence rates, they continue to  
6 remain stubbornly high, Black and Brown women  
7 particularly in the Bronx and part of Brooklyn are  
8 disproportionately impacted. DOVE funding needs to  
9 be increased and equalized across all districts.

10 Uhm, we also urge an investment in violence  
11 prevention and survivor empowerment. Uhm, prevention  
12 is the best way uhm, to stop somebody from engaging  
13 in violence. Youth and community based violence  
14 prevention, work with people who have caused harm.  
15 Economic justice works with survivors and their  
16 families.

17 And I want to thank you for your advocacy on  
18 behalf of the pals program at Magnolia Gardens. Pet  
19 inclusive shelter isn't just nice to have, it is  
20 lifesaving. More than 50 percent of survivors have  
21 said that they will not, they cannot seek shelter if  
they have to leave their pets behind. Funding from  
the City of New York to make Pet inclusive shelter or  
reality at every shelter is critical to getting

1  
2 people out of danger uhm, and into safety and  
3 shelter.

4 I also want to underscore what my colleagues have  
5 said about fully funding City FHEPS. URI is moving  
6 into supportive and affordable housing because we  
7 recognize that we need to build more supportive and  
8 affordable housing. City FHEPS is the pipeline to  
9 help people move out of shelter and into housing.

10 Uhm and we just want to partner with the Council  
11 on all of this. We know that this is a tough budget  
12 year for everyone and the needs of the marginalized  
13 populations that we serve are greater than ever and  
14 we look forward to working with you. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Can I just ask  
16 one quick question?

17 LAUREN SCHUSTER: Please.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Uhm, you mentioned an  
19 increase in headcount. Would - I don't want to put  
20 words in your mouth. I don't know if there's a  
21 direct correlation or - for on time payments.

LAUREN SCHUSTER: I think the uhm, delayed  
payments - the late payments, the procurement issues  
are directly related and correlated to -

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Directly related?

1  
2 LAUREN SCHUSTER: Yeah I would say absolutely and  
3 I'm sure my colleagues would agree. I don't think  
4 that's the only reason but I think that is a main  
5 driver of it.

6 VICTORIA LEAHY: Yeah, and if I just add, this is  
7 something that HSU has worked uh, a lot on and we  
8 find that for DHS specifically, for budget mod or new  
9 needs, it goes through several layers of staffing.  
10 You have your programs. You have your budget. It  
11 goes to OMB and whenever there's staffing vacancies  
12 in those departments, it forces one worker or a few  
13 workers to see all of that, right? And it  
14 bottlenecks, which causes long standing delays.  
15 We've had some of our - uhm, we've had some of our  
16 members go months without a single payment from the  
17 city. And while the City Council has done wonderful  
18 work, right, we've passed several bills in the last  
19 few months on future payment schedules, we need to  
20 really address the backlog and doing that means  
21 staffing up.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Thank you both.

19 PANEL: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Jade.  
21

1  
2 JADE VAZQUEZ: Good afternoon Chair Hudson and  
3 members of the General Welfare Committee. Thank you  
4 for the opportunity to testify. My name is Jade  
5 Vasquez, Director of Policy and Research at Win, the  
6 largest provider of shelter and supportive housing to  
7 families with children. We operate 16 shelters and  
8 nearly 500 supportive housing units across the five  
9 boroughs. Each night, nearly 7,000 people call Win  
10 home, including 3,600 children.

11 Today, as our city faces its worst affordability  
12 crisis, over 100,000 New Yorkers, including 33,000  
13 children, are living in New York City shelters. As  
14 federal cuts threaten vital social safety nets, New  
15 York City must lead the nation by expanding, not  
16 diminishing local programs and initiatives that  
17 struggling New Yorkers experiencing housing  
18 insecurity and homelessness.

19 To address this crisis, last fall, when published  
20 our action plan to end family homelessness, which  
21 urges the city to prioritize funding in the following  
22 areas: One, implement City FHEPS reform. Council  
23 must allocate sufficient funds to begin implementing  
24 the 2023 reform package, which would extend rental  
25 assistance to low income household in the community,

1  
2 expand to households earning 50 percent of the city's  
3 area median income and remove burdensome work  
4 requirements.

5 These laws could help up to 92,000 New Yorkers  
6 access vouchers and could save the city \$630 million  
7 on shelter costs alone over the next five years.

8 Two, fund Local Law 35 by investing \$40 million  
9 to replace clinical mental health professionals in  
10 every family shelter. This is a critical investment  
11 in the long term health and stability of homeless  
12 families.

13 Three, support immigrant families by allocating  
14 an additional \$85 million for immigration legal  
15 services. You must also invest in the Share program,  
16 which provides a pathway to permanent housing for  
17 longtime stayers in shelter who are ineligible for  
18 other subsidies.

19 Four, expand workforce development by increasing  
20 funding for shelter base programs, like Win's Income  
21 Building program. Shelters need dedicated job  
22 developers and youth income building specialists to  
23 help residents secure stable employment and  
24 educational opportunities.

1  
2 Five, uphold the city's COLA commitment by  
3 maintaining the three percent cost of living  
4 adjustment for human services workers to ensure a  
5 dedicated workforce can afford to live in the city  
6 they serve.

7 With federal funding uncertain, the city must  
8 step up. We urge you to pass a progressive budget  
9 that centers the needs of working people in  
10 marginalized communities and provides every New  
11 Yorker with a fair shot at financial stability and  
12 permanent home. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.  
14 Catherine.

15 CATHERINE TRAPPANI: Thank you so much. Uhm, I  
16 just want to say that we're submitting written  
17 testimony with more detail but the goal of the social  
18 safety net should be to prevent homelessness whenever  
19 possible when someone comes into a shelter, it should  
20 be a dignified space that's very high quality and  
21 there should always be robust and meaningful access  
to housing. How we get there with this budget is  
one, I always thank you for the questions from you  
and your colleagues about our Street to Home program.  
Like, getting unhoused people directly into the

1 housing that they want is critically important and  
2 we're really committed to expanding that.

3 Two, ensure that the shelter options that we're  
4 offering folks that can't access the street to home  
5 unit is dignified. We need to revisit the model  
6 budget and we need to preserve shelter stock that's  
7 frankly crumbling. Uhm, there's a lot of  
8 infrastructure needs that the shelter system has and  
9 those model budgets that were created in 2018, really  
10 need to be rightsized so that we can ensure that  
11 people can live with dignity. The city should also  
12 continue to invest in purpose built shelters,  
13 leveraging the DHS contract for a nonprofit owned  
14 model so that we can be better stewards of our real  
15 estate and shelter stock and as we do that, we can  
16 close the shelters that we're frankly not that proud  
17 of and we also have to rightsize the wages for the  
18 human services workers in those shelter facility so  
19 that the quality of care, the stability of the  
20 staffing is there to meet the needs of the residents.

21 Uhm, but perhaps most importantly we need to  
expand City FHEPS and follow the law. I really was  
gratified to be joined by so many neighbors and  
friends and you Chair Hudson, talking about the

1 importance of the expansion. There was somebody  
2 testifying earlier on a previous panel that said that  
3 it was too expensive and that we should be funding  
4 core services. City FHEPS is a core service, uhm,  
5 housing our neighbors is a core service. We have to  
6 make sure that nobody is forced into homelessness and  
7 needlessly displaced and so, that's really critical.  
8 I also want to underline my colleagues' comments  
9 about preserving agency headcount, so that the HRA,  
10 DHS, MOCS has the necessary staff to one, register  
11 and pay our contracts. We were owed \$40 million at  
12 the close of last fiscal year because of delayed  
13 payments but also -

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And are you still owed that  
15 \$40 million?

16 CATHERINE TRAPPANI: The net is a little less  
17 with advances but they're starting to recoup them so,  
18 TBD, so almost. Uhm, but also the headcount  
19 necessary and there was a panel of HRA workers that  
20 talked about this when the demand for benefits goes  
21 up and the federal requirements get more onerous, we  
really need people in those seats at HRA, at APS, at  
all of these agencies that are really the gate  
keepers for our clients that need these critical

1  
2 services and so, I'm wary of proposals I've heard to  
3 eliminate headcount. We have to make sure we're not  
4 sacrificing core services more you know,  
5 understandably looking to save money. So, just thank  
6 you for your work uhm and for this Committee and the  
7 staff for everything you've done today.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Brendon.

8  
9 BRENDAN CHENEY: Good afternoon, my name is  
10 Brendan Cheney. I'm Director of Policy and  
11 Operations at the New York Housing Conference.  
12 We're uh an affordable housing policy, nonprofit  
13 affordable housing and policy advocacy organization.  
14 Uhm, you have my written testimony, so I'm just going  
15 to summarize it in the interest of time. Uh, we are  
16 concerned about understaffing and bureaucracy at HRA  
17 and DHS and how it's affecting housing programs.  
18 Uhm, the understaffing has meant that the agencies do  
19 not have the resources they need to effectively run  
20 the programs they're running. Uhm, the way we have  
21 been analyzing uh staffing at HRA and DHS, and HPD  
and our other work is looking at how staffing has  
changed since before the pandemic to now and looking  
at actual headcount.

1  
2 So, HRA for example, in December of 2019, HRA had  
3 a headcount, actual headcount of 12,528 and then in  
4 January now their headcount is 10,866. For DHS, it  
5 was 2,257 actual headcount in December of 2019. Now  
6 it's 1,621. So, big decreases in actual headcount  
7 from before the pandemic until now. We saw this at  
8 HPD but HPD recovered their headcount over time in a  
9 way that DHS and HRA have not.

10 Uhm and this affects their ability to process one  
11 shots, City FHEPS and homeless referrals and this is  
12 at time these programs are growing. Uhm, uh, City  
13 FHEPS grew, has grown from 3,800 vouchers to 15,000  
14 last year. One shot program, 52,000 last year and  
15 then uhm, uh moving households into affordable  
16 housing in 2009. DHS moved 409 households from  
17 shelter into affordable housing under the set aside  
18 program and last year, they moved 3,700 households.

19 So, our recommendations: HRA must sufficiently  
20 staff the agency to meet the needs of these various  
21 programs and ensure timeliness of their processing,  
ensure homeless referrals are supported and already  
approved. We're also concerned about nonpayment and  
evictions in affordable housing and so, we call on  
HRA to work with HPD to proactively avoid evictions

1  
2 and we have a recent report that looks at this in  
3 more detail and that includes appointing a  
4 coordinator for one shots for proactive strategy.  
5 And then finally ending City FHEPS inspections.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: What was the last bit you  
7 said about improving for one shots? Second to last.

8 BRENDAN CHENEY: Appoint a coordinator for one  
9 shots. So, what we found is that, in order to - and  
10 this is in our report that we put out but uhm, in  
11 order to get a one shot, tenants often have to go to  
12 housing court before HRA will approve a one shot.  
13 And so, if there's coordination with HPD, with HRA  
14 and they're getting one shots earlier in the process,  
15 it saves the city money, it means people aren't going  
16 to be evicted and aren't going to housing court.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Thank you all  
18 for your testimony, appreciate you being here. Okay  
19 the next panel is Shanaya Ramsey, Maria Dias, Reham  
20 Bader, Meg Epsey, Katie Chun Kei Mui, and Richard  
21 Flores. Richard Flores. We can start with Shanaya.  
Just press the button on there, yup.

SHANAYA RAMSEY: Good afternoon, Chair Hudson and  
the other members of the Committee on General

1 Welfare. Thank you for the opportunity to testify  
2 today on the Preliminary Budget.

3 My name is Shanaya Ramsey, I have been a New  
4 Yorker for over 40 years and am a mom of three  
5 children, and a special needs mom. I am also a  
6 member of the Anthos|Home Speakers Bureau, a program  
7 helping community members with lived experience of  
8 housing insecurity and homelessness to share their  
9 stories and advocate for change.

10 I am here today to speak about my housing  
11 journey, and advocate for housing navigation services  
12 for families and changes to the City FHEPS process.  
13 I have lived in my apartment for over 14 years. It  
14 wasn't the best neighborhood, and there were a lot of  
15 uncertainties due to the management, but that was my  
16 home.

17 During COVID, the bathroom ceiling began  
18 breaking. I called the super for help, but no one  
19 came. When the bathroom ceiling fell in, our  
20 apartment was deemed unsafe and that's when we  
21 entered the shelter system. I found myself with \$17,  
two garbage bags, and three children in front of New  
York City's Department of Homeless Services.

1  
2 In nine months, I lived in three different  
3 shelters. The whole time, I have had a housing  
4 voucher and couldn't find an apartment on my own. My  
5 genuine tears of frustration were met without  
6 sympathy. A case worker at the shelter told me about  
7 Anthos Home. One of the workers explained to me  
8 about the program and didn't believe - I didn't  
9 believe it.

10 After so many months of being told no, I finally  
11 was told yes. Uhm, I looked for a few apartments  
12 with Anthos Home, I fell in love with the second  
13 apartment I saw. I didn't believe it. It was real.  
14 I signed my lease. I didn't tell my daughters until  
15 we moved into the apartment because there had been so  
16 many times that we didn't work out.

17 The support didn't end on move-in day.  
18 Anthos|Home set my family up with essential  
19 furniture, like beds. We had a safe and comfortable  
20 place to sleep from day one. From the first year, a  
21 housing support specialist checked-in with me every  
month to make sure that I knew my rights as a tenant,  
and that I could renew my voucher and lease on my  
own. Anthos|Home has been the glue filling the gaps

1  
2 between valuable resources from the city, like  
3 housing vouchers, and homes.

4 Without a program like Anthos|Home, I believe I'd  
5 still be in a shelter somewhere, really wouldn't have  
6 you know, probably somewhere - I really wouldn't even  
7 thought CityFHEPS is an invaluable resource, many  
8 families like mine can't use it due to discrimination  
9 and bureaucracy. Families need additional support to  
10 navigate the housing process, as Anthos|Home's  
11 program model has demonstrated. Their extra support  
12 and advocacy makes all the difference. Thank you  
13 very much for the opportunity to speak. I'm sorry  
14 for my nervousness.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: No, no, we you know take the  
16 time and the deep breaths that you need to. We  
17 always appreciate hearing from folks who have had  
18 direct lived experience. So, thank you very much for  
19 being here and for testifying.

20 SHANAYA RAMSEY: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Maria.

MARIA DIAS: Good afternoon, Chair Hudson and the  
Members of the Committee of the General Welfare.  
Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the  
Preliminary Budget.

1  
2 My name is Maria Ruiz Diaz, and I am an Aftercare  
3 Specialist at Anthos|Home. A nonprofit that helps  
4 New Yorkers with housing vouchers move out of shelter  
5 and into permanent housing as quickly as possible.  
6 We are also a member of the Family Homelessness  
7 Coalition, Homeless Services United, and the Homes  
8 Can't Wait Coalition.

9 Today, I'd like to speak about how we can move  
10 people out of shelter and into homes faster and help  
11 them stay housed long-term. In our work, we see both  
12 the severity of New York City's homelessness crisis  
13 and the impact of targeted housing solutions and  
14 process changes. The city has the opportunity—and  
15 the obligation to better serve its most vulnerable  
16 residents, both by reallocating existing funds to  
17 more effectively address the crisis and by  
18 streamlining the voucher process.

19 Win's report, "More than a Moral Choice" shows  
20 that the cost of housing a family in shelter costs  
21 35% then doing so via City FHEPS. At the same time,  
many eligible households cannot use the voucher due  
to discrimination, bureaucracy, and competition for  
units.

1  
2 In 2024, the State Comptroller reported that only  
3 21% of households with shopping letters got their  
4 voucher approved. Families need -

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sorry, you said 21%?

6 MARIA DIAS: 21%. Families need support to  
7 navigate the housing process, as Anthos|Home's model  
8 shows. We provide housing navigation services and at  
9 least one year of post-move in support. Since  
10 September 2023, we've helped over 1,100 people move  
11 into homes. Engaged over 600 property providers, and  
12 maintained 100% housing stability. By providing  
13 targeted funding, the city can move more New Yorkers  
14 into permanent housing, engage more property  
15 providers and reduce shelter returns all while saving  
16 money.

17 There are also opportunities for impactful low  
18 cost voucher process changes including streamlining  
19 the package approval process, simplifying income  
20 reporting requirements and allowing CBO's to perform  
21 inspections for all units.

Together these solutions will help more people  
move out of shelter faster while reducing cost. More  
details are provided in my written testimony. Thank  
you for the opportunity to testify.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Can you just  
3 share the statistic again? 21% was shopping letters  
4 received housing, was that it?

5 MARIA DIAS: That's correct, 21% of households  
6 with shopping letters get their voucher approved.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

8 MARIA DIAS: No problem, thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Reham Bader.

10 REHAM BADER: Good afternoon. Good afternoon,  
11 Chair Hudson and members of the Committee on General  
12 Welfare. My name is Reham Bader, and I am the  
13 Director of Community Health and Wellbeing at the  
14 Arab-American Family Support Center, also known as  
15 AAFSC.

16 At AAFSC we help immigrant and refugee families  
17 enroll in health insurance to address urgent health  
18 and food security needs. Our team includes the only  
19 two Arab-speaking certified health navigators in New  
20 York State, filling a critical linguistic gap in the  
21 health care system. As a result, our services are in  
extremely high demand. In 2025 alone, our team  
supported 3,320 clients in securing health insurance  
coverage. Today, I would like to highlight the  
importance of Managed Care Consumer Assistance

1 program or MCCAP and Access Health NYC initiative.

2 Both programs are critical lifelines for New Yorkers  
3 navigating the complexity of the health care system,  
4 particularly low income residents, immigrants, people  
5 of color, individuals with limited English  
6 proficiency and those living with chronic health  
7 conditions.

8 Through MCCAP, community based organizations help  
9 residents understand their health coverage options,  
10 resolve problems with health plans, appeal insurance  
11 denials, access prescription drugs, and specialty  
12 care and address cost of care challenges. For many  
13 families, this support is the difference between  
14 having meaningful access to care and going without  
15 the services they need.

16 Access Health NYC is a citywide initiative that  
17 funds 37 community based organizations across all  
18 five boroughs to provide education outreach and  
19 direct assistance to New Yorkers seeking health  
20 coverage. This work is especially important in the  
21 current policy environment. Programs like MCCAP and  
Access Health NYC ensure that New Yorkers are not  
left to navigate the system alone. By investing in  
community based organizations with deep cultural and

1  
2 linguistic ties to the communities that they serve,  
3 the city can ensure that all residents are able to  
4 access the health care coverage and services they  
5 need to stay healthy.

6 To continue meeting this growing demand for  
7 services, we respectfully request maintaining \$2  
8 million in funding for the Managed- for MCCAP,  
9 increasing funding for Access Health NYC initiative  
10 to \$4.5 million, \$115,355 in Access Health NYC  
11 initiative funding for AAFSC and \$144,645 in MCCAP  
12 initiative for AAFSC.

13 Thank you for your time and your continued  
14 commitment to ensuring that all New Yorkers can  
15 access health care and the benefits we deserve.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Meg.

17 MEG EPSEY: Thank you for the opportunity to  
18 testify today. I am Meg Epsey, the Policy and  
19 Advocacy Coordinator at Her Justice. A nonprofit  
20 organization that's advocated with and for women of  
21 gender and minorities living in poverty in New York  
City for more than 30 years.

Last year, in 2025, Her Justice served more than  
4,000 women and children across all five boroughs in  
family court and supreme court, including child and

1  
2 spousal support, custody and visitation, orders of  
3 protection, divorce, and immigration matters under  
4 the Violence Against Women Act. Legal Services not  
5 only stabilizes families but enables an active  
6 engagement with critical public benefits. Many, 2%  
7 of our clients are women of color, 85% are survivors  
8 of domestic violence, three-quarters were born  
9 outside the United States representing 103 countries.  
10 Through our pro bono model, Her Justice trains and  
11 mentors thousands of volunteer attorneys each year  
12 and pairs them with women facing urgent legal needs.  
13 This model allows us to leverage the private sector,  
14 legal expertise to expand access to justice for low  
15 income New Yorkers.

16 Her Justice is grateful for the New York City  
17 Council's longstanding partnership in supporting  
18 survivors of gender based violence. Council  
19 investments through the initiative such as SAVE, DOVE  
20 and the Speakers initiative, have enabled Her Justice  
21 to provide critical, legal services to survivors  
across New York City.

The need for legal representation for survivors  
remains significant. Last year, we worked with 866  
family matrimonial matters serving more than 2,000

1 women and children. Through these cases, clients  
2 secured more than \$1 million in financial awards and  
3 settlements, along with ongoing monthly benefits to  
4 help stabilize families.

5 Her Justice serves the urgent needs of immigrant  
6 survivors in family and divorce cases and in  
7 applications for status under the U.S. Immigration  
8 system. Given the heightened enforcement, our  
9 immigration practice provides critical assistance for  
10 survivors whose abusers exploit immigration status as  
11 a tool for control.

12 Last year, our immigration attorneys handled more  
13 than 2,000 matters, securing legal status for 102  
14 survivors and their children. Her Justice was proud  
15 to support the passage of Intro. 1175 last year,  
16 creating a pilot program to provide divorce  
17 representation for survivors of domestic violence.  
18 Divorce proceedings are often one of the most complex  
19 and financially consequential stages for survivors.

20 Her Justice has deep expertise in litigated  
21 divorce representation and provides holistic services  
so survivors can secure financial independence and  
remain free from abuse.

1  
2 We urge the Council to continue its investment in  
3 civil legal services that are essential in ensuring  
4 that survivors can securely access safety, financial  
5 stability, and independence. Thank you for the  
6 opportunity to testify.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Katie.

8 KATIE CHUN KEI MUI: Good afternoon Chair Hudson.  
9 I am Katie Mui, the Policy and Programs Manager at  
10 the Network, a membership organization representing  
11 over 200 nonprofits that develop and operate  
12 supportive housing across the state.

13 As you know, supportive housing is one of the  
14 most effective tools to ending homelessness and  
15 strengthening our communities. However, the model  
16 faces mounting challenges as ongoing federal  
17 uncertainty, rising costs, and workforce challenges  
18 place increasing pressure on our providers.

19 We are here today to discuss the need for  
20 targeted investments to preserve the city's existing  
21 supportive housing stock, advancing the goal of 1,300  
units preserved by 2030 in alignment with the NYC  
15/15 Reallocation Plan, which the Council has been  
in support of.

1  
2 Now it's time to put that plan into action. We  
3 are asking the city to invest \$44 million in capital  
4 funding and \$21.3 million in the expense budget to  
5 preserve 325 supportive housing units in FY27. Our  
6 data show that at least 7,600 units are prime for  
7 preservation. All these units are at least 15 years  
8 old and use a combination of federal rental  
9 assistance and NYSSHP/HRA SRO support services  
10 funding, putting them at significant risk of closure.

11 The federal cuts to the Continuum of Care are  
12 imminent, as you know, meaning nonprofits will lose  
13 their operating subsidy for thousands of units,  
14 destabilizing programs and tenants alike.

15 By investing in preservation now, the city can  
16 mitigate this loss. On the services side, the units  
17 we've identified are currently operating service  
18 contracts through NYSSHP/HRA SRO Support Services.  
19 This is the lowest funded service contract in  
20 existence. While the Network was successful in  
21 securing a \$17.8 million increase in last year's  
State budget, this still falls short. Allowing  
nonprofits to claim NYC 15/15 service contracts will  
increase the significant gap, who will address the

1  
2 significant gap in funding, so the providers can  
3 adequately serve their tenants.

4 The \$44 million in capital funding will preserve  
5 at least 325 units that are 15 years old or older to  
6 complete necessary renovations, meet energy  
7 efficiency standards, and offset rising maintenance  
8 and operating costs.

9 If the city does not address the significant  
10 preservation needs now, we will have to contend with  
11 the reality of programs closing, residences shutting  
12 down, and tenants losing their homes. Proactive  
13 investment in preservation is crucial to the  
14 stability of nonprofits and formerly homeless New  
15 Yorkers.

16 We also fully support the continuation of the 3%  
17 COLA, the passage of Intro 452, sponsored by Council  
18 Member Stevens and raising the baseline funding for  
19 the Peer Behavioral Workforce to \$6 million. Thank  
20 you for your time.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Richard.

RICHARD FLORES: Thanks for giving me the  
opportunity to testify today, along with everyone who  
has testified and thank you for your assistance.

1  
2 At the last meeting at City Hall, there was a  
3 message that was being sent. How or why did 13  
4 people die as a result of being homeless, either not  
5 receiving basic services, emergency shelter, and  
6 medical treatment? Were these deaths a case of  
7 mismanagement, neglect, or something else.

8 Despite current Mayor Zohran Mamdani's reporting  
9 that more than 1,100 people were placed in shelter,  
10 or safe havens during the cold snap, more alarming to  
11 me is the factors regarding why 1,100 people needed  
12 this type of assistance to begin with.

13 Is it economic? Is it social factors?  
14 Everything that everyone has testified today about  
15 what the organizations need, how much money they need  
16 to help people to work effectively as an  
17 organization. Uhm, seems to me that are the defacto  
18 definitions as to why these individuals are in this  
19 position to begin with including myself.

20 Dealing with the Department of Homeless Services,  
21 dealing with HRA, uh and having them actually perform  
the tasks regarding housing, regarding vouchers,  
regarding City FHEPS, regarding Section 8 to all New  
Yorkers who qualified for this assistance. Again,  
I've stated that uh, trying to open a case just for

1  
2 myself in regards to the judicial system in this  
3 country regarding how I became homeless to begin  
4 with, has been mired with corruption, discrimination,  
5 fraud. I dealt with racism, etc...

6 Especially as I noted to you before, as you know  
7 there is now an investigation with a so-called not  
8 for profit company called the Bowery Residents  
9 Committee. Uh, along with them, municipal agencies,  
10 I personally don't feel are running the way that they  
11 say they are. I don't have the time here and also  
12 this is not the place to go into a very long uh  
13 explanation after that but I'm sure everyone here is  
14 aware of what that issue is and that's the reason why  
15 I'm here because I'm a person who has been homeless  
16 for over ten years and in that ten years time, I've  
17 been denied a voucher. I've been denied Section 8  
18 for various reasons. The last company that I worked  
19 for was actually a company that uh gave Mayor Bill de  
20 Blasio money that he used to run his campaign, which  
21 I find a very serious matter and so far it's how  
that's been handled by the city.

So, that's the reason why I came here to testify.  
Uh, and lastly I'd just like to say that I think  
relegislation of constitutional law would hopefully

1  
2 would result in a replacement of old laws with new  
3 and revised laws, which would result in better  
4 progress regarding housing placement, regarding City  
5 FHEPS, how they're issued, regarding Section 8  
6 vouchers, etc.. And uh, I would imagine that's how  
7 New Yorkers would have uh, a better way to have their  
8 needs met, quite simply. Thank you very much.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Thank  
10 you all for your testimony. Thank you.

11 Okay, my apologies. Uhm, the next panel Danna  
12 Denis, Gabina Santamaria, Nicholas Pearson, Aarthi  
13 Bola, Brian Fritsch and Jeremiah Gonzalez.

14 We can start with Danna. Just press the button.

15 DANNA DENIS: Good afternoon everyone. Thank you  
16 Chair Hudson. Uhm, I have testimony prepared and I'm  
17 sending it up to you and I know my two minutes has  
18 started but I will say that I come here year after  
19 year and I know this is your first time Chairing this  
20 COMmittee but I'm always at General Welfare Committee  
21 every year and I do feel thankful today that you  
asked a lot of the heads of the agencies to stay but  
I'm just interested in how we can get that formerly  
implemented outside of like personal preference  
because it's always hard as an advocate and

1 specifically as an organizer, someone who has  
2 organized people with lived experience to stay here  
3 and tell their story and how these systems and  
4 policies almost disrupt their individual lives, uhm  
5 versus like protect them in the way that they're  
6 supposed to and you know I have so many folks here  
7 who are just taking time out unpaid and like the rest  
8 of us here, who may be staff and consider this work  
9 throughout our day. So, I'm thankful to the  
10 volunteers of Riders Alliance that join me today and  
11 thankful for you all for hearing us and to the  
12 gentleman that stayed. I forget his name.

13 With that being said, my name is Danna Denis, I'm  
14 the Senior Organizer of Riders Alliance. We're a  
15 grassroots group that fights for better transit.

16 I've been working on the Fair Fares campaign for  
17 a decade of my life. When I started, I was not an  
18 organizer and it is something that is very near and  
19 dear to me. I'm here today to advocate for the  
20 expansion of Fair Fares. I think there's a host of  
21 New Yorkers across this city that still do not  
receive the subsidy and too many people that don't  
even know about it. I'm here to also advocate for  
automatic enrollment for Fair Fares and as we heard

1  
2 from all these previous agencies that just spoke  
3 about staffing concerns, I think it goes right along  
4 with that, why we need automatic enrollment.

5 With that being said, uhm, I know there's not  
6 many of us left in the room but if you take a good  
7 look at me, you may not be able to see uhm, you know  
8 all the things I identify with but I am also someone  
9 who will label myself as a priced out New Yorker.  
10 I'm born and raised in this city. Uhm, and yet I'm  
11 told often that I make too much, right and I know  
12 that I don't make enough. And so, oh my time is up  
13 but I'm going to go just very quickly.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yup.

15 DANNA DENIS: And so, due to that, I ended up  
16 having to move to New Jersey a few years ago, still  
17 work here. I have no family, no friends there,  
18 right? Only because I could not afford my rent,  
19 could not afford child care, once I had a child and  
20 had to get a two bedroom apartment. Myself and my  
21 husband just could not afford this city.

And so, it's really, you know, painful even to  
sit in this room and hear these things. I'm from  
Bedstuy Brooklyn as many of us know. Bedstuy and  
Crown Heights has experienced so much gentrification.

1  
2 And so, I speak to New Yorkers every day and I'm  
3 going quickly, who are at the intersection of  
4 affordability around housing, food insecurity and in  
5 most of all transit because transit, public transit  
6 is how they access most of these systems.

7 And again, these are the reasons why we need Fair  
8 Fares to be expanded. And I'll just lastly say that  
9 if folks cannot afford to get on public transit, they  
10 can't afford their food and all these various costs  
11 and they're also struggling to afford the fines that  
12 are put upon them when they can't get into the  
13 systems and all of the barriers and stress that it  
14 feels to be under the weight of poverty. I had a lot  
15 more to say but I'm going to pass it to my  
16 colleagues. I can't wait to hear their testimony.  
17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much and we do  
19 have your written testimony, so thank you. Gabina.

20 GABINA SANTAMARIA: Let me know you hear me.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I can hear you.

GABINA SANTAMARIA: Hello, everybody. Thank you  
for this opportunity. Uhm, my name is Gabina  
Santamaria and I'm a member of Riders Alliance.

1  
2 Today, I will speak in support of the Fair Fares  
3 program. I have Fair Fares and it's a lifeline for  
4 me as a rider. A lot of times I have to pay double  
5 because I live in Staten Island, a forgotten borough.  
6 The Fair Fares, because- and not only me but so many  
7 people. Give you a quick example. If I want to get  
8 out of the Island, I got to take two buses plus one  
9 train and sometimes another bus. So, that means it's  
10 \$6 for one ride. There are working people on Staten  
11 Island who spend a lot of commuting every day because  
12 they cannot afford \$7.25 it takes to get on express  
13 bus. It should not be difficult for people to have  
14 access to affordable transit. Public transportation  
15 is a human right and we should not have to make a  
16 choice between our food everyday and our  
17 transportation. We should not have to risk a ticket  
18 or arrest when we cannot afford the ride and if we  
19 spend - let me give you another example.

20 If I - if you spend a lot of money on those  
21 guards on the doors and security to watch you if you  
pay your fare or not, I think we have enough money to  
spend on fair fares.

I fight for public transportation but also for  
immigrants rights. ICE have detained a lot of people

1  
2 in Staten Island on fare because their eligibility  
3 for the program is so low, unfair, unfair. So many  
4 people don't qualify. My Staten Island people, I'm  
5 sorry, struggling. They cannot afford it. They are  
6 planning to move. We want them here. We need them  
7 here, our neighbors. It is time for the city to  
8 invest in making transit more affordable and expand  
9 the Fair Fares programs. I don't want to lose my  
10 neighbors. I don't want them to leave New York.  
11 It's one of the most effective ways and it's time for  
12 Staten Island to raise their voices. Staten Island  
13 excluded no more. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.  
15 Nicholas.

16 NICHOLAS PEARSON: New Yorkers, working New  
17 Yorkers, working people believe in one simple truth,  
18 transit is the way. Transit is New York and New York  
19 is transit. Because the hands that built this city  
20 should never be the feet left stranded in it. When  
21 we talk about subways, when we talk about buses, we  
have to think about working families and their  
commutes. Because too many politicians forget what  
it really means to get around this city. Too many  
forget what it means to protect the Fair Fares

1  
2 program and even extend it. Not many politicians  
3 truly understand what it means to walk one block,  
4 five blocks, six blocks, seven blocks down the  
5 street, just to reach a bus stop or a train station,  
6 especially in the Bronx.

7 Too many people who make the decisions in this  
8 city have never had to live with the consequences of  
9 those decisions on the sidewalk. Every delayed  
10 train, every long wait at a bus stop, every fare that  
11 rises too high is just an inconvenience. It's not  
12 just an inconvenience, it is a weight laid on the  
13 backs of working New Yorkers, the very people who  
14 keep this city standing. We have a goal and today, I  
15 am speaking on behalf of the Riders Alliance because  
16 this movement means something to me. The general  
17 welfare of the Bronx means a lot to me.

18 A better transit system is better for working  
19 families. A better transit system is better for the  
20 average Joes and the average Janes. A better transit  
21 system is better for the mother counting every dollar  
and every dime and yes a better transit system is  
better for even the transit workers themselves, the  
proud members of the transport workers union local  
100 who keep this city moving every single day.

1  
2 Because when fares are reduced, when fares make sense  
3 for the dollars and dimes people have in their  
4 pockets, the city works better for everyone.

5 This matters, transit matters, working people  
6 matter and the future of New York depends on whether  
7 we choose to stand on business for the general  
8 welfare, for the people who keep this city alive.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Aarthi.

10 AARTHI BOLA: Good afternoon. My name is Aarthi  
11 Bola. I live in Washington Heights. I ride the  
12 subway or bus nearly every day and I'm here today to  
13 advocate for the expansion of the Fair Fares program  
14 for affordable transportation for all New Yorkers.

15 I moved to New York City nearly 12 years ago.  
16 I've had jobs in education, workforce development and  
17 social work. I really believe in contributing to my  
18 community and I love New York City.

19 I have lived in upper Manhattan, in Brooklyn, and  
20 in Queens. When I met my husband, he moved to the  
21 city too and began to contribute his own talents but  
the city's wish has always been expensive is becoming  
less and less affordable. The cost of groceries,  
rent, electricity, child care and public  
transportation are all arising. My husband and I got

1  
2 married last year and we want to start a family in  
3 the city but between all these rising expenses, we  
4 don't know if we can afford to.

5       The expansion of the Fair Fares program could  
6 save hundreds of dollars every month for families  
7 like us who are being locked out of their own city by  
8 the \$3 fare that prevents them from paying their  
9 bills, getting to school or to a job, accessing city  
10 services, receiving health care and so much more.

11       We need the Council to treat transportation and  
12 other basic needs, such as housing and food as  
13 rights, not privileges or we risk people moving away  
14 and losing the contributions and skills of so many  
15 people who love this city.

16       We will continue to fight for a New York where  
17 everyone can afford to move, live and thrive. Thank  
18 you for listening to riders like me.

19       CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Brian.

20       BRIAN FRITSCH: Good afternoon Chair Hudson. I'm  
21 Brian Fritsch, Associate Director of the Permanent  
Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA PCAC. For  
nearly 50 years, PCAC has served as the official  
voice of riders on the MTA system. Wonderful to be

1  
2 up here with so many of my Riders Alliance colleagues  
3 today.

4 We've heard a lot today from New Yorkers,  
5 delivering a clear call to city government to do  
6 everything they can to fight our affordability  
7 crisis, a daunting job. But sometimes the right tool  
8 to do that work doesn't need to be bought, it's right  
9 in your toolbox waiting to be used. The Fair Fares  
10 program is that tool but it's been overlooked.

11 Currently an estimated 35% of the over 1 million  
12 eligible New Yorkers are enrolled in the program and  
13 as a result, it's been chronically underused and  
14 underfunded.

15 This means hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers  
16 who could be saving up to \$910 a year in transit  
17 costs are instead getting nothing at all. HRA needs  
18 to step up and develop a plan to reduce the hurdles  
19 for low income New Yorkers that they face in getting  
20 enrolled.

21 After all, how many residents are already in the  
HRA Connect system are known to be eligible based on  
income verification for another program yet are not  
receiving fare fairs? Too many. We believe now is  
the time to pursue automatic enrollment in this

1  
2 program, which could double enrollment and give New  
3 Yorkers a much more affordable way to get to jobs,  
4 education, appointments and more. Use the tools you  
5 already have in your toolbox.

6 We'd also love to see more data released on  
7 existing enrollees, including demographics, location  
8 by Council Districts and more. Just over a month  
9 ago, we organized a letter from a broad range of  
10 unions, transit and disability rights advocates,  
11 social and immigrant service organizations and more  
12 who believe City Hall can make transit affordability  
13 a reality i n this year's budget, by transforming the  
14 Fair Fares program. Our five point plan includes  
15 expanding eligibility to at least 300% of the federal  
16 poverty level to include workers making at or near  
17 minimum wage. Fully free fares to the lowest income  
18 New Yorkers at the current level of 150% and adding  
19 commuter railroads and express buses as options.  
20 Let's get people to work with the tools in your bag.  
21 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.  
Jeremiah.

JEREMIAH GONZALEZ: Esteemed members of the City  
Council, thank you for the opportunity to hear us out

1  
2 today. My name is Jeremiah Gonzalez. Since November  
3 2024, I have been a member of the Fair Fares program,  
4 which has been essential to my ability to access job  
5 workshops, recruitment opportunities and other  
6 activities that this city offers. Whether I have to  
7 go to Manhattan or Brooklyn or just across Bronx.  
8 Fair Fares stretched by transportation costs without  
9 having to wonder if I have to put less onto my card  
10 to pay my Con Ed bill.

11 Unfortunately many do not have the opportunity to  
12 use Fair Fares because they are not eligible. Even  
13 though they would absolutely benefit from this  
14 program just like me.

15 With this program, just this year alone, I saved  
16 \$81 with 54 trips. Mind you, for an unemployed  
17 person, like myself, those savings are significant.

18 I don't have any children but many who would  
19 benefit do have children. With child care costs and  
20 inflation higher than pre-COVID, less monies in  
21 families budgets to afford - they need to get where  
they need to go. This is not to mention the  
increases in rents and Con Ed bills and etc.. Saving  
for those costs will really help the purse strings  
hold firmer a little while longer. The members of

1  
2 the City Council, riders are facing a general welfare  
3 crisis. We do not ask for handouts, we ask for a  
4 hand up that we can contribute to the biggest city  
5 and the largest economy in the world, it's something  
6 we should not be begging for. Transportation, child  
7 care, housing, they are not privileges to be handed  
8 to the few. They are rights. If we treat them as  
9 rights, the big apple and its residents and its  
10 guests will notice it and they will love it.

11 On behalf of the Riders Alliance, we ask for this  
12 because I - listen, I want to have enough money to  
13 pay bills, to contribute to the city. I was born  
14 here. I would rather have this city and its people  
15 prosper. They cannot do that and at every turn,  
16 their finances say no. Expanding services like Fair  
17 Fares, making transit accessible to everyone,  
18 especially those who rely on it every single day, is  
19 something that will help the five boroughs in the  
20 short and the long one. It has helped me immensely.  
21 I want to see those benefits given to many, many  
people. It will help them immensely too.

So, to the members of City Council, thank you for  
your time and for having this today.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Thank  
3 you all for your testimony. I just want to state for  
4 the record, I am in full support of the expansion of  
5 the Fair Fares program and really appreciate you all  
6 being here today. Thank you.

7 Sergeants, can we add one more chair. Thank you.  
8 Calvin Michael, Anita Kwok, Amy Blumsack, Shana  
9 McCormick, Hailey Nolasco, Marcos Reyes, and Mikaela  
10 Perry. Maybe we don't need the extra chair. I don't  
11 know, let's see. Okay, we can start with Calvin.  
12 Okay. Anita.

13 ANITA KWOK: Thank you, Chair Hudson for  
14 convening this Budget hearing. My name is Anita  
15 Kwok, a Policy Analyst United Neighborhood Houses. A  
16 member organization of settlement houses across New  
17 York. Demand for emergency food is harder than ever  
18 with many New Yorkers struggling to meet their basic  
19 needs. Federal funding threats and cuts to programs  
20 like SNAP or leaving settlement houses without the  
21 necessary tools to respond, while placing greater  
22 strain on other emergency food programs. The  
23 Community Food Connection program plays a vital role  
24 in combating food insecurity, one of our members uses  
25 it for their pantries and soup kitchens, another uses

1  
2 it for a new pilot program to provide pantry clients  
3 with grocery gift cards. A total investment of \$100  
4 million is needed to sustain and grow with the  
5 Community Food Connection program at this time of  
6 deep need, which will allow providers to allocate  
7 resources for the growing needs of food insecure new  
8 yorkers.

9 Additionally in Fiscal Year '27, the city should  
10 invest \$13 million in New York City services Civic  
11 Impact Fund, which funds nonprofits to expand their  
12 volunteer infrastructure, which in turn will help  
13 those newly subject to federal SNAP, work or  
14 volunteer requirements. Investing in Civic Impact  
15 Fund program presents an opportunity for SNAP  
16 recipients who are ABODS that continue receiving SNAP  
17 benefits by meeting their work requirements through  
18 volunteering at organizations across the city.

19 A \$13 million investment is needed to expand this  
20 civic impact fund program to include more community  
21 based organizations and larger grant sizes, allowing  
CBO's and settlement houses to expand or fund their  
volunteer programs.

UNH also does a lot of work in a SNAP skimming  
space. Our settlement house members have

1  
2 increasingly raised concerns that this is  
3 persistently occurring in communities, especially for  
4 older adults and those who rely on EBT card benefits  
5 to feed their families. We urge the City Council to  
6 support our state budget advocacy this month to  
7 secure EBT chip cards and a SNAP skimming victims  
8 compensation fund in the final FY26 to FY27 state  
9 budget and to support Council Member Zhuang's Intro.  
10 512 to help track skimming cases. Thank you for your  
11 time.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Amy.

13 AMY BLUMSACK: Thank you Chair Hudson and Members  
14 of Committee and staff, we really appreciate your  
15 time and attention. My name is Amy Blumsack, I am  
16 the Director of Organizing and Policy at Neighbors  
17 Together. We are a small community based org in  
18 central Brooklyn. We have three programs. We have a  
19 soup kitchen. We have direct services and we have  
20 organizing and policy led by our members, 80% of whom  
21 are homeless, have experienced homelessness or have  
22 vouchers.

23 City FHEPS is a critical tool for addressing the  
24 homelessness crisis. Uhm, at Neighbors Together, we  
25 know first hand from our members' experience that

1 vouchers are a lifesaving tool and we need the full  
2 implementation of the City FHEPS expansion laws.

3 Uhm, homelessness uhm, yes, homelessness and the use  
4 of City FHEPS have increased because the need for  
5 affordable rent is increasing. City FHEPS is  
6 working, it's getting people housed. It's keeping  
7 people housed but as rent continues to rise, more and  
8 more people are going to need it. Particularly as  
9 we, only a portion of our units are rent stabilized.

10 Uhm, so I think it's really important to say that  
11 expanding City FHEPS in the community will not only  
12 keep families in their home but it will also preserve  
13 affordable housing, right. If those families become  
14 homeless, enter the shelter system, cycle through the  
15 shelter system and then if they're lucky get a  
16 voucher, they're going to use that voucher to rent an  
17 apartment that costs way more money than the  
18 affordable units that they're in now. In addition to  
19 the full implementation of the City FHEPS expansion  
20 laws, it's really critically important that we  
21 address and fix the Administrative barriers in the  
City FHEPS program.

Uhm, we need to increase the staffing at DHS and  
HRA. We should also expand the number of community

1 based organizations that can submit City FHEPS  
2 applications in order to help alleviate the delays  
3 that our members experience at Homebase. Uhm, thank  
4 you for asking about source of income discrimination.  
5 We also need to have DHS and HRA coordinate with CCHR  
6 around source of income discrimination. It's a  
7 massive barrier to people with vouchers, finding  
8 housing. And last but not least, uhm, we need to  
9 build housing that is targeted to the people who need  
10 it most, which is extremely low income and homeless  
11 New Yorkers. The many, like most recent - most of  
12 the units built in the last few administrations have  
13 been called affordable housing but they haven't been  
14 at the AMI levels for people who are in the shelter  
15 or who are falling into homelessness. So, we need  
16 the city to make a commitment there as well and uhm  
17 yeah, if a damn has multiple holes you can't plug  
18 just one hole. We have to address holistically the  
19 crisis of homelessness in the city and uhm, we give  
20 more details in our written testimony, which we'll be  
21 submitting soon. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Shana.

SHANA MCCORMICK: Hi, good afternoon uh Chair  
Huson and members of the General Welfare Committee.

1  
2 Thank you for convening this. My name is Shana  
3 McCormick, and I am here on behalf of Rethink Food –  
4 a chef-led nonprofit that has spent the past six  
5 years ensuring quality meals make it to those in most  
6 need. We believe that every New Yorker, regardless  
7 of their circumstance, deserves a meal that nourishes  
8 them, not just nutritionally, but culturally.

9 For the 100,000+ of our neighbors living in  
10 public shelters, food is more than sustenance. It is  
11 dignity. It is belonging. It is a signal that this  
12 city sees them. Right now, that signal is too often  
13 missing.

14 At Rethink Food, we've built a model that works.  
15 We partner with small, independent restaurants and  
16 food businesses across this city, many of them women-  
17 and minority-owned, to prepare and deliver meals that  
18 are fresh, chef-crafted, and reflective of the  
19 communities being served.

20 We've delivered over 35 million meals through  
21 this model and we've kept some small businesses alive  
through the hardest seasons this city has faced. And  
as we're discussing budgeting, we've done it at a  
cost that is competitive, sustainable, and proven.  
New York City does not need to invent a new solution.

1  
2 The solution exists. It is operating right now, in  
3 the kitchens and communities of this city. What  
4 we're asking for is simple, to just ensure nonprofits  
5 like ours and others, have opportunities to do what  
6 we do best. And for us, that's creating quality  
7 meals at scale.

8 When public dollars flow through mission-driven  
9 organizations, they don't disappear – they  
10 recirculate. They fuel more meals, more partnerships  
11 and more impact. The diverse, inventive, resilient  
12 fabric of this city is one of our greatest assets.  
13 Let's use it. And separately on a personal note,  
14 uhm, navigators within the uh - on the housing note,  
15 navigators to help successfully place people with  
16 vouchers is needed. We have to give them the  
17 assistance and help that they need to successfully  
18 get placed. Many of them are in critical positions  
19 and need that extra hand. So, thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Hailey.

21 HAILEY NOLASCO: Good afternoon Chair Hudson. My  
name is Hailey Nolasco, Senior Director of Government  
Relations at the Center for Justice Innovation.  
Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify  
today.

1  
2 As New York City confronts fiscal challenges, we  
3 must continue to invest strategically. Prioritizing  
4 prevention alongside crisis response. Too often  
5 systems engage New Yorkers only after challenges have  
6 already escalated. So, when individuals are food  
7 insecure, when they are facing eviction, answering  
8 the justice system or experiencing homelessness.  
9 This highlights the need for earlier community based  
10 interventions. We thank the Council for its support  
11 and humbly request sustained investment and community  
12 based solutions that stabilize our most vulnerable  
13 New Yorkers before crisis really deepen.

14 Just some of our programs, our community justice  
15 centers, just as those in Harlem, Midtown and  
16 Redhook, provide holistic support connecting New  
17 Yorkers to social services, and housing assistance,  
18 mental health care, workforce development and legal  
19 services. In Harlem the Housing Help Center works  
20 directly with tenants to prevent eviction and  
21 maintain stable housing, having 3,000 visits in just  
2025. Helping navigate housing court, access rent  
assistance and address unsafe living conditions.

In Midtown, our Community First Program reaches  
people experiencing street homelessness through

1 street outreach and mobile case management, building  
2 trust and connecting individuals to care early. Our  
3 Community Justice Connect program, which is in Crown  
4 Heights, South Jamaica, and uhm sorry, Crown Heights,  
5 Jamaica, and South Bronx connects - trains volunteers  
6 to help neighbors navigate housing and public  
7 benefits issues preventing legal problems from  
8 escalating. And finally, our Strong Starts Court  
9 Initiative supports young children and families in  
10 family court by integrating early childhood  
11 experience to early childhood expertise to improve  
12 long term outcomes.

13 Across these efforts, the goal is clear:  
14 continued investments in community based services  
15 help navigate tough systems, offer timely  
16 intervention early, and stabilize families. Thank  
17 you so much for your time and your partnership.  
18 Additional data has been submitted in my written  
19 testimony. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Marcos.

21 MARCOS REYES: Hello everyone. Thank you Chair  
Hudson for having me today. Uhm, for having me  
testify today. My name is Marcos Reyes and I am a  
CBC Youth Advocate and it's a great honor to be given

1  
2 this opportunity to give this speech. On September  
3 13, 2023, I lost my home in a brutal apartment fire  
4 that almost cost me and my family our lives. And  
5 without - we escaped but we couldn't escape hardship  
6 and without house vouchers and EBT to help ease our  
7 tragedy, I would not be here today. With the looming  
8 anxiety and uncertainty of SNAP benefits, and the  
9 ongoing fertile budget cuts with SNAP, it has thrown  
10 my family into panic. No parent should have to be  
11 forced to choose cheaper alternatives and nutrient  
12 deficient foods. No child should have to eat foods  
13 that would not nurture them or empower them.

14  
15 As the brother of two little girls, I feel a  
16 clear duty to speak because their wellbeing and  
17 future are at risk with these cuts. I have to look  
18 into their eyes and watch their growth and potential  
19 be jeopardized by circumstances beyond their control  
20 and I explained to them why the fresh foods they have  
21 come to enjoy are replaced with what we can afford,  
not what they need.

I can skip meals so my sisters can eat well. I  
can handle hunger but it shouldn't be that way. No  
one should have to choose to starve themselves and as  
a youth advocate, having to worry about the next

1 meal, the next sacrifice, dwindles my ability to  
2 advocate. We all know that healthy food supports  
3 strong minds. I ask that the elected officials here  
4 in New York City support the programs that help  
5 families like mine. In particular, we urge you to  
6 invest in community food connection program. Invest  
7 in programs to address hunger in older adults and in  
8 City Council initiatives, we help people access food  
9 benefits. We urge you to invest in expanding City  
10 FHEPS and housing voucher programs and we urge you to  
11 invest in Fair Fares so all New Yorkers can access  
12 public transit. These programs are all life saving  
13 and help New York families survive. You can see more  
14 in our written testimony. When SNAP and other public  
15 benefits are cut, it cuts a lifeline for hundreds,  
16 thousands and families that keep food on the table.  
17 I implore legislatures to invest in children's  
18 health, to invest in their future. A child's  
19 potential should never be limited by their parents  
20 income. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I couldn't agree more.  
19 Thank you. So much for being here and for your  
20 testimony. Mikaela.

1  
2 MIKAELA PERRY: Good afternoon. My name is  
3 Mikaela Perry, Advocacy Manager at Equity Advocates  
4 and we convened the New York City Food Policy  
5 Alliance, a network of 60 food and farm groups  
6 fighting for a healthy and equitable food system.  
7 Some of our partners are sitting at this table right  
8 now.

9 Last year's passage of the federal HR1 bill  
10 unleashed the largest cuts to food assistance in our  
11 nation's history. Under HR1, roughly 180,000 New  
12 York City households are projected to lose their SNAP  
13 benefits, half of whose members are children and  
14 senior citizens. Estimates suggest that 70,000  
15 residents in our city will be pushed below the  
16 poverty line every single year starting in 2028. As  
17 the federal government retreats, the city must step  
18 forward. First, we ask the Council to increase  
19 baseline funding for the Community Food Connection  
20 program to \$100 million. With an 83 percent rise in  
21 emergency food visits since 2019, our pantries need  
support. This investment would better address rising  
food prices and provide critical support for  
vulnerable communities.

1  
2 Second, we request the Council increase health  
3 bucks funding to \$700,000 to provide an increased  
4 allocation to community and faith based  
5 organizations. Community health bucks are  
6 independent from SNAP, making them a vital resource  
7 for individuals ineligible for public benefits,  
8 including non-citizen households and folks newly  
9 required to meet federal work requirements.

10 Finally, we ask the Council to scale the  
11 Groceries to Go program above the previously  
12 allocated \$10 million. Groceries to go is a proven  
13 lifeline for New York City care members with an  
14 incredible redemption rate. For every \$100 in  
15 credits, the city puts into the accounts of New  
16 Yorkers, \$99 is actually being spent on groceries,  
17 which bolsters our city's economy.

18 In a city this well resourced, hunger is a policy  
19 choice. We ask the Council to pass a budget that  
20 chooses dignity for every New Yorker and thank you  
21 for your leadership.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Thank  
you all for your testimony.

The next panel is Elizabeth Mackey and Judith  
Douglas. Thank you Elizabeth.

1  
2 ELIZABETH MACKEY: They save the best for last.  
3 So, we're the last two. So, uhm thank you for  
4 allowing us to be here today on March 17, 2026 and  
5 I'm glad to be alive because three weeks ago, I was  
6 hospitalized uhm, due to uhm them finding blood clots  
7 severely in my chest and my lungs. So, here I am  
8 with fighting for justice for others and wind up in a  
9 hospital fighting for my own life. But praise the  
10 Lord that I am here to testify and just came back  
11 from Albany and continue fighting the good fight.

12 So, as uhm, and congratulations for being uhm,  
13 the Chair speaker.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

15 ELIZABETH MACKEY: Uhm, I wish everyone else  
16 stayed but thank you for the Deputy Commissioner  
17 Hooks for uhm, being here today.

18 So, I'm going to read a little quote and it says,  
19 even though things look hopeless now, Jesus is not  
20 done. There will be life on a ship and promise again  
21 in this land. I'm very spiritual and I believe that  
things happen for a reason. Uhm, 29 years ago, I  
used to work for the city. Uhm, under Administration  
and Children Services uhm and foster care and I also

1  
2 taught for seven years in a private sector as a  
3 teacher.

4 2023, I found myself being homeless. Never could  
5 imagine uhm, being in that predicament but I think  
6 that's when God showed me what I need to do. 2019, I  
7 died on a train and that's what brought me to become  
8 homeless. Uhm, and may I have 95% brain damage, came  
9 back, couldn't see, couldn't talk, couldn't even move  
10 my left side but here I am fighting for what is  
11 right. I have uhm a City FHEPS voucher, which I  
12 thank God for. Uhm, but there's some issues that I  
13 listen to the staff of DHS, HRA, that was here to  
14 testify. The city is back in arrears. We talk about  
15 landlords, deadbeats, slumlords, but HRA has their  
16 own issues. HRA owes landlords millions of dollars  
17 of back rent and here I am. They owe my landlord  
18 close to \$9,000.

19 Uhm, next month, I have to go to court but I know  
20 that the God I serve, justice will be served. Uh,  
21 HRA, who funds City FHEPS, needs to pay their fair  
share. It's supposed to be 70 percent. How every  
other month, they paid a landlord but for five  
months, they got backed up. Five months, I get a  
rent ledger. So, not knowing that I'm become sick

1  
2 back and forth to HRA because now I have to stop  
3 doing my advocacy because I have to advocate for  
4 myself.

5 They have to do better. So many people are in  
6 that City FHEPS office, demanding - even the  
7 landlords demanding where is the money at? So, we  
8 look at homelessness, look at a voucher that they say  
9 which it does, help people like myself but why are  
10 they not paying the landlord? So, the landlord  
11 looking for to evict us to become right back in a  
12 shelter system where it's a revolving door.

13 Now, they said it costs about close to \$4,600 for  
14 one person, an individual, to be in a shelter, but  
15 that's not true. It went up close to \$6,000 right?  
16 The shelter that I was in. \$11.2 million that they  
17 was providing 200 women to be in the city shelter.  
18 Is it right? No. We become collateral for all these  
19 systems. The systematic systems that keep us  
20 bounded, keep us chained, Homebase. I've been trying  
21 to get an emergency transfer. They treat me like I'm  
still in a shelter. The IL report, I have to do  
that. Why? I'm not in a shelter no more. It takes  
so long to get help, to get assistance but then a  
panel was here and they make it seem like everything

1 is good as what they want you all to see. But we're  
2 here and they need to be here to hear all the things  
3 that we go through with their systems. So, I do hope  
4 and pray that Commissioner Hooks will go back and  
5 tell their people what we go through. I really hope  
6 and pray that HRA pays my landlord his back rent  
7 because I forbid to go back to the shelter system  
8 because you all don't know what I went through. I'm  
9 out here fighting for expansions, for this, for that.  
10 While the city - the most expensive city of rent  
11 going up but also the most city that I was born and  
12 raised in.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: We'll make sure that we get  
14 your contact information so we can follow up with you  
15 directly to see about your particular case and also,  
16 I'll say that this is exactly why we encourage  
17 people, particularly those with lived experiences in  
18 all of these systems to come and testify. Because it  
19 is important to hear directly from folks with direct  
20 experience and also many times, it is you know the  
21 testimony that we hear from you is in direct  
contradiction to what the Administration is sharing,  
so again though I do want to thank Deputy  
Commissioner Hooks for being here and listening

1  
2 intently. And so, thank you. Thank you for your  
3 testimony.

4 ELIZABETH MACKEY: Thank you for having me.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Judith. Just press the  
6 button please at the bottom.

7 JUDITH DOUGLAS: Hi, good afternoon. My name is  
8 Judith Douglas. I am a tenant. I'm also a member of  
9 the HOPE, Housing Organizing for People Empowerment  
10 and part of East New York Community Land Trust, which  
11 is helping the community to maintain their property  
12 without anyone coming in to steal it from them. So,  
13 I got to be a part of those. Uhm, I know my rights  
14 as a HOPE organizer.

15 So, I'm here because I have seen so many uhm  
16 programs that are here to help the community. It's  
17 kind of failing them and I say that because when I  
18 hear some of the speakers talk about the  
19 organization, the agencies and I'm like, wait a  
20 second maybe that's a new - maybe I'm not aware of  
21 it. But particularly HRA, there's so many issues  
with the HRA system, they need to revamp it. The  
recertification process - so many people are losing  
their vouchers because they don't have no one to  
help. We- we basically uhm, when you call HRA, the

1  
2 number that they give you, you will be on that phone  
3 for 7 hours until the phone drop, shift finished.

4 I've tried like so many times. I've helped so many  
5 people go through the process. It's a tedious  
6 process. It doesn't work. If somebody works in that  
7 agency, nobody picks up. Even the number they give  
8 you for disability is worse.

9 I've been through all of them, it doesn't work.  
10 So, I can speak from my own experience. So, when I  
11 hear people talking about their experience, I know  
12 exactly what they're going through because I've been  
13 down that road before. Help people knowing these  
14 troubles that they have. Imagine those seniors who  
15 can't - who are not tech savvy. Can't be on the  
16 phone. Don't have the patience to hold on. They are  
17 the ones who are suffering. Uhm, so another thing,  
18 when you submit - HRA, when you do the  
19 recertification through them on the computer, they  
20 give you a time in which they will call you back.  
21 You will wait till that time, nobody calls. When  
that time passes, you will try to call them before  
the time passes. Nobody will pick up. You will  
leave a message to call, nobody will respond. But  
they will discontinue until you have to start all

1  
2 over again because you missed the appointment. You  
3 didn't call me. I put in my application, you were  
4 supposed to call me back and tell me you know, go  
5 through my paperwork. You never did that. All of a  
6 sudden, I have to go through the whole process again.  
7 The entire process. It takes about an hour. It's  
8 about 8 or 9 pages you got to go through  
9 individually, you know. It's really painful when you  
10 have to do that. Imagine the senior, how they feel  
11 to do that because they can't do it. I went to go  
12 down to the office to give them time to sit at the  
13 computer and they stay all day. Nothing gets done.  
14 They are not helpful.

15 So, that system has to be - it has to be more  
16 friendly, client friendly. Like right now it's not.  
17 Uhm, when tenants get a voucher and they are ready to  
18 move out and they put in their money, they put in the  
19 application to get the one shot deal, one month's  
20 rent, all those things, the landlords are tired of  
21 waiting. They are so tired of waiting, some will say  
I don't want the client anymore. No, I don't want to  
be bothered with it anymore. Give me somebody else.  
They will go and take the cash.

1  
2 The process is too lengthy. They have to work on  
3 it. I was speaking to the guy from HRA. I was  
4 telling him the same thing. We are failing the  
5 client. It makes sense we have a system in place and  
6 we're failing them because it's not working.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank-

8 JUDITH DOUGLAS: How are you going to take 3  
9 months to uh, uh, to cut a check for somebody?

10 You're saying you give a voucher, then speed up  
11 your process. It cannot be 2 and 3 months. The  
12 landlord don't have time. They have bills.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

14 JUDITH DOUGLAS: And they don't want to work with  
15 the city. A lot of the feedback, I don't want to  
16 work with the city. They prefer to go and take the  
17 cash uh because they have back rent, they're not  
18 paying.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

20 JUDITH DOUGLAS: DHS shelter. We have too many  
21 clients in DHS shelter that need to get out, too many  
clients that need to get out, point blank. People  
have a voucher. Why do you dare the voucher expire?  
The worker is not renewing it. They don't even give  
you paperwork to say, oh, go and get yourself uhm,

1  
2 here's a list of apartments, go and start looking for  
3 it. There's a case manager. There's a housing -  
4 there's a housing specialist. What are they doing?  
5 What are they doing?

6 I rewrite- a executive director \$6,000 a month  
7 to keep a mother and child there and you have a case  
8 manager there working that can't even move those  
9 clients out. Clients are there for 5 years. The  
10 last time I was working there, there was like a  
11 client there for over a year and all she wanted was  
12 to do the city closed in on her apartment because the  
13 landlord wasn't fixing it to make it livable, so she  
14 ended up in a shelter. Guess what she was working  
15 on? A transfer voucher from NYCHA and she had been  
16 there for a whole year. That's ridiculous. We have  
17 to hold these agencies more accountable because  
18 they're not. All they're doing is taking whoever is  
19 paying them, DSS or uhm, HRA every month. We don't  
20 need to keep the clients there that long in a shelter  
21 system to do what?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I, I, I agree and that's why  
we appreciate your testimony.

JUDITH DOUGLAS: I used to work in a shelter.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. We appreciate  
3 your testimony because it helps color what we've been  
4 saying and it gives us a clear understanding of the  
5 lived experiences of people who are going through  
6 these systems. So, thank you.

7 JUDITH DOUGLAS: Yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And you can submit written  
9 testimony.

10 JUDITH DOUGLAS: Yeah, the shelter is not a home.  
11 So, you don't need the clients to be there that long.  
12 It's just a temporary something.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yes, thank you both. We  
14 appreciate your time. Thank you for being here.

15 We will now move to virtual testimony. Please  
16 wait for your name to be called to testify and please  
17 select unmute when prompted. Jason Cianciotto.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I think Jason needs to be  
20 unmuted. There he is, okay.

21 JASON CIANCIOTTO: Uh, there we go. Hello Chair  
Hudson, it's nice to see you again.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Likewise.

JASON CIANCIOTTO: Thanks to your members of the  
General Welfare Committee for the opportunity to

1  
2 testify. I'm Jason Cianciotto, my pronouns are he,  
3 her, his and I am the Vice President of Public Policy  
4 in External Affairs at GMHC. Founded in 1982 as the  
5 world's first HIV and AIDS services organization.

6 In 2025 GMHC served over 7,600 clients who lived  
7 throughout all five boroughs of NYC and who  
8 represented NYC's poorest and most vulnerable  
9 residents.

10 In 2025, GMHC provided supportive housing  
11 services to 424 unique clients with histories of  
12 chronic homelessness through our connections with HUD  
13 and the housing opportunities with the AIDS program.  
14 Uhm, I'm here to update you on 2 issues of import to  
15 this Committee and the communities we serve. Uhm,  
16 first an issue for which the Council doesn't have  
17 direct control but is important for you and HASA to  
18 be aware of.

19 Over the past few years, we have been supporting  
20 clients in distress after receiving a letter from  
21 HASA indicating that they will lose their HASA  
housing subsidy in 30 days because of an increase in  
their income from a Social Security Cost of Living  
Adjustment or COLA. For example, a client, a 72 year  
old Hispanic man was \$1 over the HASA ceiling of

1  
2 \$376. Another received uh an SSI COLA that causes  
3 income to be \$16.26 above the ceiling. GMHC supports  
4 the submission of an appeal for these clients, which  
5 is almost always denied. And while the appeals  
6 process is happening, these clients face having to  
7 pay back the subsidy they receive if the ruling is  
8 not in their favor.

9 As a member of the statewide Ending the Epidemic  
10 Coalition, GMHC supports a solution to this issue  
11 that is incorporated into the HIV Housing for New  
12 York plan. Which would extend a 30 percent rent cap  
13 that has supported New York City residents to people  
14 living with HIV statewide.

15 This plan includes an increase in the income  
16 ceiling to 200 percent of the federal poverty level.  
17 This is a solution preferred by OHTADA. HIV housing  
18 for New Yorkers included in the State Assembly's One  
19 House bill -

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you for your testimony.  
21 Time is expired.

JASON CIANCIOFFO: Support inclusion in the final  
FY27 State Budget. I'm sorry, did I - was my time  
up?

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: It's up but you can wrap up  
3 if you're towards the end.

4 JASON CIANCOTTO: Alright, last is that uhm, you  
5 know we support the Committee's concerns that the  
6 impact of HR1 will have to play on SNAP benefits. In  
7 2025, we served 1,340 clients over 26,170 congregate  
8 and 24,840 pantry bag meals. And when SNAP benefits  
9 were uhm, uh halted briefly in December, we saw an  
10 increase in demand of 10%. So, I just want to thank  
11 you all for your support for helping to feed and  
12 house our clients of people living with HIV and AIDS.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much and sorry  
14 for butchering your name there.

15 JASON CIANCOTTO: Don't worry about it.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Annie Miguez.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

18 ANGEL DONAGHUE TESTIFYING FOR ANNIE MINGUEZ:

19 Good afternoon everyone I am Angel Donaghue (SP?).  
20 Uhm, I am actually testifying on behalf of Annie  
21 Miguez with Good Shepherd Services. I want to thank  
22 you Chair Hudson and the Committee on General Welfare  
23 for the opportunity to testify today. Uhm, I am a  
24 runaway homeless youth coordinator at Good Shepherd  
25 Services at Chelsea Foyer program. We're a

1  
2 transitional living program for youth experiencing  
3 homelessness.

4 Uhm Good Shepherd Services continues to advocate  
5 to expand City FHEPS eligibility for runaway and  
6 homeless youth transitioning out of foster care or  
7 youth transitioning out of foster care. By counting  
8 their time spent in the Department of Youth and  
9 Community Development, also known as DYCD and the  
10 Administration of Children Services, also known as  
11 ACS towards the 90 day shelter requirement.

12 In 2021, we joined in celebrating that the  
13 Council passed 2 pieces of legislation to expand the  
14 eligibility criteria for the City FHEPS Rental  
15 Assistance program to include runaway and homeless  
16 youth and young people aging out of foster care.  
17 Every day youth are aging out of the DYCD RHY system  
18 and into the adult shelter system.

19 Today, as you know, I was accompanied by Lajoie  
20 Clark to City Hall. Lajoie is a resident of the  
21 foyer and spoke in support of the expansion of City  
FHEPS uhm vouchers for youth. Lajoie has been living  
in a DYCD RHY program, ours for 2 years with no  
access to a voucher. Uhm, she did not qualify for  
these Section 8 voucher due to an administrative

1 error uhm at the Section 8 level. Uhm, Lajoie stated  
2 today that it is unfair and I am quoting her, "it is  
3 unfair that young people don't receive City FHEPS  
4 vouchers as much as adults." She expressed that this  
5 is mentally draining. Lajoie is turning 21 on April  
6 1st- no, she is turning 21 soon but she is going to  
7 age out of this program unfortunately on April 1st  
8 and she is not moving to an adult center-

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you for your testimony.  
10 Time has expired.

11 ANGEL DONAGHUE TESTIFYING FOR ANNIE MINGUEZ: Uhm  
12 winding it up right now Chair.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: No problem.

14 ANGEL DONAGHUE TESTIFYING FOR ANNIE MINGUEZ: We  
15 urge the Council to ensure youth in need of these  
16 vouchers can access them without any further delay,  
17 as we are lighting the population of DHS shelters,  
18 adult shelters just by being in existence as DYCD  
19 provider agency. Thank you so much for this  
20 opportunity to testify.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much. Thank  
you for being here and for your testimony. Okay  
thank you to everyone who has testified. If there is  
anyone present in the room or on Zoom that has not

1  
2 had the opportunity to testify, please raise your  
3 hand.

4       Seeing no one else, I would like to note that  
5 written testimony, which will be reviewed in full by  
6 Committee Staff, may be submitted to the record up to  
7 72 hours after the close of this hearing by emailing  
8 it to [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). We very much  
9 appreciate everyone's time and patience today. The  
10 testimony provided is incredibly important to the  
11 work that we do advocating to ensure we have all of  
12 the full funding and resources needed to address all  
13 of these issues pertaining to Department of Social  
14 Services. So, thank you again to everybody including  
15 the staff. This hearing is now adjourned. [GAVEL]  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date June 1, 2026