

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND LABOR

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CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND LABOR

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Tuesday, December 19, 2023

Start: 1:11 P.M.

Recess: 2:54 P.M.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Hon. Carmen De La Rosa, Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Erik D. Bottcher  
Tiffany Cabán  
Eric Dinowitz,  
Oswald Feliz  
Kamillah Hanks  
Rita C. Joseph  
Julie Menin  
Francisco P. Moya  
Sandy Nurse

OVERSIGHT - DCAS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAININGS

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND LABOR  
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

ADMINISTRATION:

Katrina Porter  
Deputy Commissioner and Chief Human Capital  
Officer at NYC Department of Citywide  
Administrative Services

Rajendra Persaud  
Executive Director of Training and Business  
Services at NYC Department of Citywide  
Administrative Services

Mark Cox  
Learning & Development and Human Capital at DCAS  
NYC Department of Citywide Administrative  
Services

PUBLIC:

Matthew Morris,  
Representing: Self

Daniel Morris,  
Representing: Self

Stella Mitchell Porto  
Representing: Self

Garrett Ramirez  
Representing: Self

Vito Faccilonga  
Representing: Self

Rachel Maniscalco  
Representing: Self

Raquel Ibarrola  
Representing: Self

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND LABOR  
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

George Garvey  
Representing: Self

Daniel Hulkower  
Representing: Self

Jack W. Lin  
Representing: Self

Victoria Russo  
Representing: Self

Trinidad Smith  
Representing: Self

Micheal Kane  
Representing: Self

Chaka Phaire  
Representing: Self

Tim Heaton  
Representing: Self

Gabriel Dalmar  
Representing: Self

Orline Borno  
Representing: Self

Roxanne Valdez  
Representing: Self

Aura Moody  
Representing: Self

Sophia Harrington  
Representing: Self

Audrey Dennis  
Representing: Self

## COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND LABOR

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

Lauren Riolo  
Representing: Self

Dianne Baker-Pacius  
Representing: Self

Kathleen Commack  
Representing: Self

Ms. Gene  
Representing: Self

2 SERGEANT WONG: Sound check for the Committee on  
3 Civil Service and Labor. Today's date is December  
4 19, 2023 - being recorded by Danny Huang in the  
5 Chambers.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good evening, and welcome to  
7 the New York City Council hearing on the Committee on  
8 Civil Service and Labor. Please do not approach the  
9 dais at any time. Kindly, please place all  
10 electronic devices to vibrate or silent mode. If you  
11 have any questions, please raise your hand and one  
12 us, the Sergeant At Arms, will kindly assist you.  
13 Thank you so much for your kind cooperation, Chair,  
14 we are ready to begin.

15 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: [gavel sound] [gaveling  
16 in]

17 Good afternoon, I am Council Member Carmen De La  
18 Rosa, Chair of the Committee on Civil Service and  
19 Labor. Thank you for joining today's hearing on  
20 DCAS's Professional Development Training Programs.  
21 DCAS citywide learning and development is a central  
22 resource for citywide training and development for  
23 New York City employees. DCAS offers a wide range of  
24 courses taught by a mix of government, university,  
25 and private sector experts, and spans six portfolio

1 areas: : 1) Executive Development; 2) Management and  
2 Supervision; 3) No-Cost Learning; 4) New York City-  
3 Specific (which includes Cultural Awareness &  
4 Inclusivity, Professional Practices, and Non-DCAS  
5 Opportunities); 5) Personal Development; and 6)  
6 Technology.  
7

8 Training and educational opportunities are  
9 essential to advancing in the workplace. In response  
10 to Local Law 18 of 2019, which seeks to find and  
11 eliminate instances of pay disparity within the City  
12 workforce, The City Council found deep occupational  
13 segregation across City ranks. This means that there  
14 are titles and job categories that are predominantly  
15 held by women, such as assistant principal or  
16 secretary, and titles largely held by people of  
17 color, such as emergency services aide or central  
18 services technician. These jobs tend to be paid less  
19 than those titles predominantly held by men and white  
20 employees such as battalion chiefs of city laborer.  
21 This is why it is vital that women and people of  
22 color have access to training tools to help them gain  
23 new skills, overcome career roadblocks, and ascend to  
24 leadership roles. Training and educational  
25 opportunities encourage employees to continue growing

1  
2 and learning in order to become more efficient civil  
3 servants.

4 Research shows that employees who are given  
5 opportunities to engage in personal development tend  
6 to have greater job satisfaction, higher productivity  
7 levels, and will stay in their position longer than  
8 those who do not.

9 Job satisfaction and retention of existing  
10 municipal workforce is vital given the state of the  
11 shrinking City workforce.

12 On October 1st of this year, the City implemented  
13 a government hiring freeze that only allows agencies  
14 to hire for positions related to public health,  
15 public safety, or revenue generation. Following the  
16 hiring freeze, the City eliminated 2,100 vacant City  
17 positions in an effort to cut spending across  
18 agencies. The Committee will question how the  
19 current hiring freeze and the budget cuts will impact  
20 agencies' outlook and ability to pay for trainings.  
21 The decreasing City workforce underscores the  
22 importance of using professional development as a  
23 tool to encourage growth and satisfaction among  
24 existing staff.

1           New York City municipal employees are charged  
2  
3 with delivering essential services to New Yorkers.  
4 Proper training and education are critical for  
5 effective implementation and public service delivery.

6           The Committee looks forward to learning how the  
7 City Council can work with the Administration to  
8 expand training programs, to sharpen employee skills,  
9 and to strengthen the agencies retention across the  
10 City's workforce.

11          I would like to thank the committee staff for  
12 their preparation of this hearing, Elizabeth Arzt and  
13 Senior Policy Analyst Rie Ogasawara, Legislative  
14 Counsel. I would also like to thank my staff James  
15 Burke, Kiana Diaz, and Fraynette Familia.

16          With that, I now invite representatives from the  
17 Administration, Katrina Porter and Rajendra Persaud  
18 to come forward and begin their testimony as soon as  
19 the committee staff has administered the oath.

20          I would like to note that written testimony,  
21 which will be reviewed in full by committee staff,  
22 may be submitted to the record for up to 72 hours  
23 after the close of this hearing by emailing it to  
24 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).



1           Public testimony must be relevant to the topic of  
2 this hearing, and adhere to a two-minute clock,  
3 thank you.

4           I also want to recognize that we have been joined  
5 by my colleagues, Council Member Joseph, Council  
6 Member Bottcher, Council Member Nurse, and Council  
7 Member Moya, who is joining us on Zoom, thank you.

8           COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hi, we will now hear testimony  
9 from the Administration. Before we begin, I will  
10 administer the affirmation. Panelists, please raise  
11 your hand. I will read the affirmation once and then  
12 call on each of you individually to respond.

13           Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth,  
14 and nothing but the truth, before this committee, and  
15 to respond honestly to council member questions?

16           ADMINISTRATION: I do.

17           COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much, you may  
18 begin.

19           DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Good afternoon, Chair  
20 De La Rosa and members of the Committee on Civil  
21 Service and Labor. My name is Katrina Porter, and I  
22 am the Chief Human Capital Officer and Deputy  
23 Commissioner at the NYC Department of Citywide  
24 Administrative Services. I am joined today by  
25

1  
2 colleague, Rajendra Persaud, Executive Director of  
3 Training and Business Services.

4 DCAS's mission is to make city government work  
5 for all New Yorkers. Our commitment to equity,  
6 effectiveness and sustainability guides our work  
7 providing City employees with the resources and  
8 support they need to succeed, including recruitment,  
9 hiring, and training.

10 At DCAS we think about training and development  
11 as part of what makes New York City government an  
12 attractive employer. The skills building we provide  
13 contribute to employee retention and helps attract  
14 top quality talent to join city government.

15 I am happy to discuss these training and  
16 development offerings, and thank you for the  
17 opportunity to expound on them.

18 The DCAS Bureau of Citywide Learning and  
19 Development is the primary educational bureau of the  
20 city of New York, and offers relevant professional  
21 development, mandated and nonmandated training to all  
22 employees.

23 The bureau housed within the Human Capital  
24 Division also manages citywide organizational,  
25 execution development, and internship programs.

Chapter 35, section 814 of the City Charter requires DCAS to administer citywide training and development programs. Simultaneously, the City Charter, section 815, grants agency heads the power to conduct training and development programs to improve the skills, performance, and career opportunities of their agencies' employees while learning in development the Citywide Training Center meets our training and development Charter mandate and addresses the need of agencies and their staff. The Training Center supports in-person and virtual trainings for City employees.

During Fiscal Year 2023, DCAS trainings were administered to more than 490,000 City employees. A significant portion of this number was due to employees taking multiple mandated compliance trainings. The DCAS Citywide Training Center course catalog helps City employees of all skill levels find professional development and training opportunities. This catalog is published three times a year, once in January, June, and September. The catalog contains descriptions of courses and schedules of workshops in educational programs that are offered. To help employees select courses and programs that best meet

1 their personal and professional development needs,  
2 training course catalog is organized into six  
3 portfolios, these include Executive Development,  
4 Management and Supervision, Professional Development,  
5 Technology, New York City Specific Trainings, which  
6 cover topics relevant to working in city government,  
7 and our no cost learning portfolio, which provides  
8 agencies with ways to train their workforce for free.

9 DCAS offers open enrollment courses, which  
10 include participants from multitude city agencies.  
11 In addition, to help agencies meet their unique  
12 training needs, the Citywide Training Center  
13 schedules catalog courses as agency specific  
14 offerings upon request. For topics of interest to an  
15 agency, whether in the catalog or not, courses and  
16 customized workshops may be developed and conducted  
17 exclusively for a group of an agencies' employees.  
18 These classes can be offered at the Citywide Training  
19 Center or at an agencies' facility.

20 At DCAS, training courses are led by highly  
21 qualified consultants from government, academia, and  
22 private sectors. DCAS's inhouse subject matter  
23 experts also provide select learning content. All  
24 trainers bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise to  
25

1 classes and are well-equipped to address City  
2 specific issues and challenges. We consistently  
3 received positive feedback about our classes. The  
4 average rating for professional development training,  
5 based on post-session surveys, have consistently  
6 averaged over 90% out of 100%. We are proud to say  
7 that the Citywide Training Center has received  
8 accreditation from major outstanding organizations in  
9 the workplace education field. The agency is an  
10 authorized provider of continuing education units,  
11 professional development credits, and continuing  
12 legal education credits from various accreditation  
13 associations. This includes recognition from the  
14 Society for Human Resource Management, as a  
15 recertification provider, and as provider of  
16 professional development credits for Human Resources  
17 professionals. In February of 2001, the Citywide  
18 Training Center was reaccredited by the International  
19 Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training as  
20 an approved provider of training services. This  
21 reaccreditation was the result of a thorough,  
22 comprehensive and rigorous evaluation of our core  
23 learning and development offerings. City employees  
24 use the Continuing Education units to signify  
25

1                   successful completion of non-credit programs and  
2                   courses intended to improve their knowledge and  
3                   skills, and to maintain licensure and certifications.

4                   DCAS charges agencies for most training classes  
5                   in which their employees are enrolled using a fee for  
6                   services payment model. Participating agencies  
7                   receive invoices once a month if staff participated  
8                   in training classes.

9                   Mayoral agencies pay for training through  
10                  interagency budget modifications and non-Mayoral  
11                  agencies pay agency check. Each agency is  
12                  responsible for ensuring the payment is to DCAS for  
13                  training.

14                  The DCAS Bureau of Citywide Learning and  
15                  Development operates a learning management system,  
16                  which supports training and serves as a centralized  
17                  database for current and historical citywide training  
18                  records. The learning and management system also  
19                  hosts and tracks progress and completions for  
20                  citywide learning, where training may be taken by a  
21                  participant on their own schedule via computer.

22                  City specific courses, including all mandated  
23                  trainings offered at the Citywide Training Center,  
24                  are also hosted on the learning management system.  
25

1 DCAS is excited to announce that a new learning  
2 and management system is in the final stages of  
3 development. This new system will provide an  
4 integrated platform for training operations hosting  
5 data management and reporting. The rollout of the  
6 new learning and management system includes agency  
7 onboarding, education and implementation, and will  
8 take place in 2024.

9  
10 The new learning and management system will also  
11 offer direct training services to agencies and  
12 employees, provide employees to access to online an  
13 catalog of open enrollment trainings and e-learning,  
14 enable employees to register for classes and download  
15 transcripts, and allow agencies to manage training  
16 and run training reports for their agencies'  
17 workforce.

18 These are many benefits of the learning and  
19 management system, including the capability to reach  
20 a high volume of participants with training  
21 opportunities. It will automate and streamline  
22 several of our current paper intensive processes.  
23 Employees will be able to access the online system  
24 anywhere at any time. We are also excited about the  
25 possibility of adding data analytics and

1           visualization, artificial intelligence, process  
2           reengineering and improvement, and more cultural  
3           awareness and sensitivity courses as we regularly  
4           access our offerings and make sure they align with  
5           training needs of City employees and emerging trends.

6           As you have heard, the depth and breadth of the  
7           training provided by DCAS to City employees is wide  
8           and comprehensive. Whether physical at the training  
9           center, through webinars, or via sessions giving  
10          lives in their own agencies, City employees can  
11          become constant learners. The skills and knowledge  
12          we offer are important to the City's workforce and  
13          agency leaders, because employees know that wherever  
14          they go within city government - or outside of it -  
15          our training will help bolster their work performance  
16          and career.

17          We are very proud of the work that we do at DCAS,  
18          and I hope this overview has provided you with an  
19          understanding of the City's training and development  
20          framework, including where we are today, and our  
21          vision for making city employees the best that they  
22          can be.

23          Thank you again to the Committee and the Council  
24          for this opportunity to speak today and for your  
25



2 partnership and valuing training and development for  
3 City employees. I would be happy to answer any  
4 questions the Committee may have.

5 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so much for  
6 your detailed testimony. You have answered some of  
7 my questions already, but I want to start first with  
8 just basics. So, who is an eligible to enroll in a  
9 DCAS training course, and does an employee need a  
10 supervisor's permission to enroll in a course?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Thank you for that.  
12 So, all City employees are eligible to take our  
13 training courses. That includes elected officials, of  
14 city council members - so anyone is eligible to take  
15 our trainings. Employees are required to obtain their  
16 supervisors' approval especially since there is a  
17 fiscal impact to them taking the classes - ,you know,  
18 supervisors also may take into consideration the  
19 operational impact of them attending training  
20 classes. So, it is important to have that buy in.

21 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Great, understanding the  
22 fiscal constraints, but if an employee does want to  
23 enroll in a course, and their supervisor does not  
24 agree, is there any recourse that is available to  
25 that employee?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, currently there  
3 is no official process or appeal process for  
4 employees to follow. However, we do work very closely  
5 with each agencies' training liaison to address any  
6 issues that may... that our brought to our attention  
7 by employees.

8 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay, thank you. How are  
9 instructors selected? Like what credentials or  
10 certifications are required to become an instructor?  
11 I was happy to that DCAS is considered an accredited  
12 institution for training. But, how do you select  
13 your instructors?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Thank you for that.  
15 So, our consultant partners are selected through a  
16 competitive process. DCAS issues a request for  
17 proposal, and then we review those proposals with  
18 subject matter experts within DCAS and across the  
19 city to identify the best candidates to provide  
20 trainings. We take into consideration the cost  
21 scaling of the trainings and ,you know, any  
22 specialized skillset that they may have for the RFP  
23 that we are releasing.

24 I do want to hand it over to my colleague, Raj,  
25 who can give more information about the process.

1  
2  
3 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Great.

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PERSAUD: Thanks. Yes, so the  
5 instructors, as Katrina said, are selected through a  
6 competitive RFP process. And, so, we look at  
7 different service areas, whether it is technology,  
8 executive development, supervision, and, so, we  
9 target specific needs of the City as we select the  
10 consultants who will deliver for us. It is very  
11 competitive. They have to pass certain requirements.  
12 Of course, this entire process is managed by The  
13 Office of Citywide Procurement. We work closely with  
14 them to make sure there are no red flags. And we  
15 check their credentials to make sure that they can  
16 deliver effectively in the service options that they  
17 are awarded contracts for.

18 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Great. And, similarly,  
19 how is the curriculum for each course developed?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, the curriculum is  
21 developed in partnership with DCAS, and also, based  
22 on the needs of our city agencies, so use feedback  
23 received from our city agencies to determine the  
24 courses that should be included in our catalog. And  
25

2 we also work closely with them in developing the  
3 curricula to be offered.

4 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: I know you mentioned  
5 emerging topics like artificial intelligence, and we  
6 have a lot of topics like that that are emerging in  
7 the new workforce - as I call it. How often does  
8 DCAS generate new ideas for course curricula? And  
9 how often do course instructors update their material  
10 to adapt to new issues that arise?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, thank you for  
12 that. We consistently review what we call "post  
13 survey feedback" from our training participants. So,  
14 we use that information in addition to feedback that  
15 we receive from our agency partners to determinate  
16 the agency needs. Like, what training needs are  
17 required of their agency for their employees. And,  
18 then ,you know, we update our course circular three  
19 times a year when we release those training catalogs.  
20 So, we are... You know, we remove trainings and add  
21 them ,you know, every time we release a new catalog.

22 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Great. Okay, trainings  
23 offer valuable opportunity and encourage employees to  
24 learn new skills or change roles, how does DCAS  
25 promote their trainings to City employees?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, upon release of  
3 the training catalog, we send out a memo to our  
4 agency partners. So, one memo would come from the  
5 DCAS Commissioner to agency heads. We also have  
6 training liaisons at each of the city agencies, so  
7 they would get an email to let them know that the new  
8 catalog is being released. And, then, the  
9 information is also posted on DCAS's website. And it  
10 is available for City employees to go and view, and  
11 they can actually download an application to request  
12 training. So, it is all on our website.

13 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: And, at this time, are  
14 courses taught in other languages other than English?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Not at this time.

16 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: And what about employees  
17 who may be hearing impaired? Are there courses  
18 available to accommodate?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Absolutely. We  
20 consider reasonable accommodations on an as requested  
21 basis. We make the best efforts to accommodate  
22 employees.

23 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. What about for...  
24 I know there are in person courses, are there remote  
25

1 options or less restrictive accommodations available  
2 for learning enrollees with disabilities?

3  
4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Yes, we will  
5 definitely entertain and be as flexible as possible  
6 to accommodate reasonable accommodations for disabled  
7 employees. So ,you know, it is... I believe we can,  
8 but... Raj, if you can just elaborate on...

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PERSAUD: It is an ongoing  
10 process, and it is need specific, so we continue to  
11 assess and work on that.

12 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: So, you basically you  
13 liaison with the agency liaison, and if a request for  
14 accommodations comes in, it is through that person  
15 that normally those requests come from?

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PERSAUD: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. All right, I want  
18 to ask few questions about costs before I pass it on  
19 to my colleagues.

20 Besides the free training, the price of  
21 enrollment typically ranges from \$75.00 to \$500.00  
22 with the most expensive being \$2,465.00. How does  
23 DCAS determine the price for each training?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, the way it works  
25 is that the training cost is determined by the

1 duration and the complexity of the training that is  
2 being offered. So, on average, a one day course is  
3 about \$250.00. Our more specialized training courses  
4 do average between \$1,000.00 and \$2,500.00. So, an  
5 example of a specialized training would be Microsoft  
6 Power BI, which is a three-day course, or ,you know,  
7 maybe our Project Management Certification course is  
8 another good example of a specialized training that  
9 we offer that ranges - the cost of the training is on  
10 the higher end.

12 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Are all the costs  
13 associated with conducting a training covered by the  
14 fee, or does DCAS need to allocate funding to  
15 maintain the course catalog in addition?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, DCAS covers the  
17 cost to manage the training center. But, the  
18 training fees, they go directly to cover the cost of  
19 the training through our consultants.

20 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. In the November  
21 budget plan, the Mayor mandated a 5% cut across all  
22 agencies, how do you think this will impact agencies'  
23 ability to pay for DCAS trainings and overall  
24 training enrollment?

25

1           DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, I think it is,  
2           uhm, a little early to understand the impacts the  
3           fiscal condition might have on training for City  
4           employees. However, we do have a catalog that offers  
5           free trainings. And, then, we are also planning to  
6           reinstitute a training expo where City employees will  
7           have the opportunity to attend free trainings for  
8           popular courses over the course of a full week. This  
9           training expo is a part of our contract with our  
10          consultants. And they kind of give back to City  
11          employees. So, that would absolutely be an  
12          opportunity for City employees to take advantage of  
13          the trainings we offer at no fee [INAUDIBLE]...

14          [CROSS-TALK]

15          CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Even... So, even the  
16          trainings that would otherwise cost money will be  
17          free of cost at this expo?  
18

19          DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Correct.

20          CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Oh, great. Okay, and,  
21          then, has DCAS noticed any correlation between the  
22          price of a training course and the enrollment rate?  
23          So, if the price is high do less people sign up?

24          DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, what we do see is  
25          that the more expensive trainings, the demand for



2 them is less than for some of our other trainings.  
3 But, I do not believe that there is a correlation  
4 between that. It is just that, uhm, it is based on  
5 the specialized nature of the training, that it  
6 attracts specific individuals.

7 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Are fee waivers or  
8 vouchers available? If, so, how does an agency  
9 determine who is eligible?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Unfortunately, there  
11 are no fee waivers for training.

12 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. All right, I am  
13 going to pass it on to Council Member Joseph. I also  
14 want to recognize that Council Member Cabán is here.  
15 We will hear from colleagues, and then I have some  
16 more questions, thank you. Council Member Joseph?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: My question is, how does  
18 DCAS identify training needs among its workforce, and  
19 develop curriculum to address skill knowledge gaps?  
20 Do you solicit from employees or managers?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, we review  
22 feedback received from employees who take our  
23 trainings. There is a post survey evaluation. And  
24 we also work very closely with our agency partners  
25 and agency training liaisons to address the specific

1 training needs of agencies. And we also have agency  
2 specific trainings where we will develop a curriculum  
3 specifically for that agency, and it would be  
4 employees just from that particular agency. We can go  
5 to a location that is convenient for the agency, or  
6 they can come to our Citywide Training Centers. So,  
7 we do work very closely with agencies to develop  
8 programs and curriculums to support their individual  
9 training needs.  
10

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: So, how many  
12 participants... employees have participated in the  
13 last year of any of your trainings?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: I will turn it over  
15 to Raj, do you have that number?

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PERSAUD: Yes, so, last year we  
17 had, not counting the folks that went to compliance  
18 courses, approximately 10,800 - Fiscal Year 23 -  
19 10,800 participants in our training classes.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And how do you track rate  
21 of effectiveness? How do you measure that? Because,  
22 I am sure you have a metric? How do you measure  
23 that? And what metrics do you use? And what do  
24 these metrics show about the impact of the training?  
25

1  
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, we do track our  
3 success rate through the Mayor's Management Report.  
4 And, so, for FYI 23, our success rate is at about  
5 93%. The effectiveness of the training is a little  
6 bit harder to gauge; however, we do review the post  
7 course surveys of the participants who attended the  
8 training. We take that information very seriously.  
9 There is actually a formal process for us to review  
10 the feedback received from training participants.  
11 And, you know, if we do receive any negative  
12 feedback, we do go back to the consultant and make  
13 adjustments accordingly.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Earlier, Chair De La Rosa  
15 talked about new initiatives, are there any new  
16 initiatives in the next year or two related to  
17 improving, expanding, assessing effectiveness of DCAS  
18 employee training programs? And what kind of  
19 resources are you looking to implement?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, uhm, I cannot  
21 think of anything right now. But, it is something  
22 that we can take back and, you know, come up with a  
23 plan of action to address your question... [CROSS-  
24 TALK]

2 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Well, technology is moving  
3 us fast, are you keeping up with all the AI  
4 generative AI programs... [CROSS-TALK]

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Oh, yes...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: that are coming out?  
7 Because, I noticed that you do have Technology in one  
8 of your trainings. How are you supplementing it?  
9 Because not only Microsoft Office, but you are going  
10 to have to extend it...

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Yes, we are looking  
12 to add a few new training courses to our catalog  
13 around data and visualization, artificial  
14 intelligence, and things of that nature. So, we are  
15 looking to expand our technology portfolio in an  
16 upcoming catalog.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Oh, thank you very much.  
18 Thank you, Chair.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: You're welcome.

20 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you, Council  
21 Member Joseph. Council Member Nurse?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you, Chair. This is  
23 just kind of a question that came to mind when I was  
24 listening, it was more about... For people who are  
25 going through these... who are taking these

2 trainings, are these people who continue to take more  
3 of the DCAS trainings? Or, are you seeing more of  
4 the same people taking them? Or, is this definitely  
5 like a constantly growing pool of participants?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, it varies, but we  
7 do see repeat learners. So, we do see employees who  
8 take multiple training classes ,you know, within a  
9 certain time period. Our new learning and management  
10 system will help us to better understand that data.  
11 You know, so we will be able to provide more  
12 information on those types of metrics in the near  
13 future.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, my last question, I'm  
15 sorry if it was already asked, but are there... Is  
16 there one particular ,you know, top agencies where  
17 you are seeing staff participate more in these  
18 classes?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Yes, and I am going  
20 to turn it over to Raj for him to share that  
21 information with you.

22 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PERSAUD: Yes, so, our top  
23 utilizers from a training perspective, you have  
24 DOHMH, DOT, ACS, CUNY uses a lot of our services as

2 well. So, those are among the top agencies that  
3 utilize our services.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: So, not a lot for the  
5 Council?

6 [LAUGHTER]

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PERSAUD: Well, it's 10,800  
8 [LAUGHTER]... And we do, because they are... If you  
9 look at the number, they come from 80 agencies - the  
10 10,800 come from 80 agencies. So, if you think about  
11 the higher ones, which is... Those are the top ones  
12 that use it. But, we do have over 80 agencies that,  
13 uh, are part of that aggregate number of 10,800.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you so much. Thanks,  
15 Chair.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: May I speak?

17 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Sure.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, this is for  
19 Council Member Joseph. I just wanted to clarify that  
20 we do have two new initiatives that we are moving  
21 forward. And that would be the new learning and  
22 management system, which will be a tremendous benefit  
23 to the City's workforce as well as the training expo  
24 that is coming up in 2024.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you

1           CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you, colleagues. I  
2  
3 have a few follow up questions on some of the  
4 questions that my colleagues asked. One of them is  
5 about the learning and management system. Is the  
6 learning and management system designed to be kind of  
7 your remote academy? Is that sort of the thing that  
8 is going to be able to expand remote learning for the  
9 agency?

10          DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Absolutely. So, the  
11 new learning and management system will allow us to  
12 expand our e-learning courses, which employees will  
13 able to take anywhere. So, if they want to learn  
14 from home or at their desk, we are planning to expand  
15 our e-learning portfolio to offer more professional  
16 development trainings.

17          CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Great. Do you foresee a  
18 cost saving or a cost reduction from going to an e-  
19 learning model?

20          DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Potentially, but I  
21 think it is a little bit early, since we are still  
22 the process of implementing the new system.

23          CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Great. And, then, a  
24 followup on Council Member Joseph's question about  
25 the rates of enrollment, among the six portfolio

1 categories that you shared, which titles, which civil  
2 service titles have the highest numbers of enrollees?

3  
4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, that is part of  
5 the issue with our current system.

6 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: It's a disparate  
8 system, so it is very hard to connect the training  
9 data to workforce data. But, with the new system, we  
10 will be able to connect the dots and ,you know, be  
11 able to speak more clearly about the data and the  
12 employees that we serve around training.

13 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Great. What does DCAS  
14 do if a course is over enrolled? And does the agency  
15 extend the cap or what will people who were unable to  
16 enroll be forced to wait until the course is offered  
17 again?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, that is a great  
19 question and it does happen sometimes. So, what we  
20 do is, we try to be as flexible as possible. We do  
21 work to keep the glasses to manageable size, which is  
22 about 25 participants in each training class. But,  
23 in the event that we do see interest above what we  
24 usually accommodate. If there are enough folks to  
25 host another training class, then we will just add



2 another training class to the schedule, or work with  
3 the consultant to allow the additional participants  
4 to attend the scheduled training. So, we try to be  
5 as flexible as possible.

6 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Mm-hmm. What patterns or  
7 trends has DCAS observed in the course feedback you  
8 have received thus far?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So ,you know, the  
10 MMR, our success rate is very high - 93% for FY23.  
11 But, I will hand it over to Raj to see if you have  
12 experienced any trends that you would like to share.

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PERSAUD: It is pretty across  
14 the board, the satisfaction for training and training  
15 services is what we measure. And it is a high  
16 percentage. The classes are very highly rated, and  
17 the comments that we have, as Katrina pointed out, we  
18 work towards improving the course constantly. It is  
19 an ongoing continuous improvement sort of process for  
20 us with all of them.

21 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Great. It might be  
22 early for this question, but just something to bear  
23 in mind, and the Council would love to have that data  
24 when it is available, but do you have a breakdown

2 racial and gender of participants for the Management  
3 Academy and the Learning Institute?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: May I introduce Mark  
5 Cox (phonetic)... [CROSS-TALK]

6 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Sure, do you have to  
7 swear him in? Sure, we have to swear you in, but just  
8 come in, you can come in and she will administer the  
9 oath.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hi, do you affirm to tell the  
11 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,  
12 before this committee, and to respond honestly to  
13 council member questions?

14 MARK COX: I do.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Go ahead, thank you.

16 MARK COX: Hello, my name is Mark, yes, we do  
17 collect racial and ethnic data for the Leadership  
18 Institute and the Management Academy.

19 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Do you happen to have  
20 some of those numbers with you today?

21 MARK COX: Not all of them. I'm sorry, I thought  
22 I did, but I will have to get back to on that, I  
23 apologize... [CROSS-TALK]

24 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay, that's fine you can  
25 send it over to... [CROSS-TALK]

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: We'll get back to  
3 you, thank you...

4 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: to us, and we will share  
5 it with the rest of the members.

6 Does completing management and training increase  
7 an employee's chance of being promoted within their  
8 agency? [BACKGROUND NOISE] Is that something you all  
9 have found?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, what I can say is  
11 that the trainings that the City offers, it is to  
12 support City employees in their... to do well in  
13 their current capacity, but also to prepare them for  
14 future opportunities. However, there is no direct  
15 correlation between training and promotion.

16 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: You know, promoting  
18 is done at the agency level, but I can say that it  
19 could potentially increase their marketability and  
20 readiness for the next step.

21 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Because, there are some  
22 skills that are transferable...

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Yes...

24 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: So, you can take them  
25 with you.

1           DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Yes, most of the  
2           trainings we offer do provide transferable skills  
3           that can be used across the city. So, what we want  
4           to focus on is training all City employees to serve  
5           well no matter what agency they may be assigned to.  
6

7           CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Great. Has the agency  
8           explored rewarding participants of the Executive  
9           Development and Management and Supervision trainings  
10          by giving them additional points on civil service  
11          promotional exams?

12          DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: That is an  
13          interesting concept. Unfortunately, we do not give  
14          additional points on exams for management and  
15          training - DCAS issued management and training.  
16          However, we do give additional points for  
17          certifications. But that is determined when we are  
18          developing the examination.

19          CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: And, the points would go  
20          towards your civil service exam?

21          DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, their score on  
22          the exam, yes.

23          CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay, what would it take  
24          to expand where participants can gain points on civil  
25          service? Is that like an agency policy decision or

1 are you preempted by law or [INAUDIBLE]... [CROSS-  
2 TALK]  
3

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Well, no, it's a  
5 process to develop an examination. And it starts  
6 with what we call an job analysis. So, it would  
7 really start there. I think it is a very interesting  
8 concept. I would like to take it back to the team if  
9 there is a way that we can operationalize that.

10 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Great. Okay, in response  
11 to Local Law 18 of 2019, in May 2021 DCAS issued  
12 recommendations for the development and  
13 implementation of pay, employment, and retention  
14 equity plans. DCAS pledged that within the next  
15 year, they would continue to work with the Office of  
16 Data and Analytics to produce a thorough progression  
17 analysis that would allow a city to understand and  
18 address the roadblocks to career progression. What  
19 is the status of that analysis, and can DCAS share  
20 any findings with us at this time?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Sure, so Pay Equity  
22 Cabinet was developed, and so back in June, we  
23 released an RFQ to identify a vendor to do this work.  
24 I am excited to announce that we have selected a  
25 vendor, and we are in the process of finalizing the

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contract. Upon the contract being finalized, we will be prepared to provide the Council with a detailed project plan, including milestones and deliverables for the consultant. So, things are moving and ,you know, we should have more information for you soon.

CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Great, that's good news. My last question is, is DCAS currently experiencing any challenges to administering training course, if so, what supports would enhance DCAS's ability to provide relevant, helpful courses for the City's employees?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Yes, so I think we are on the right track with the launch of our new learning and management system. It will definitely help us to expand our course offerings and also help with building flexibility for City employees to take training at their convenience. So, I think that will help us to address some of our more paper intensive processes and reporting requirements. Some of our processes are very paper intensive, especially around mandated training. So, the... Which can be, uhm, a pain point for our process. So, we are hopeful that the new system will help us with those issues.

2 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: [NO MIC] [INAUDIBLE]  
3 what documentation does DCAS require of participant  
4 request and accommodation. So, we were asking about  
5 hearing impaired or any person has as disability.  
6 What documentation is usually required in order to  
7 accommodate?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, no official  
9 documentation is required, it's just a request, and  
10 then we will do our best to accommodate that request.

11 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay, all right, it seems  
12 like you have answered all our questions. We thank  
13 you for being here today. We look forward to  
14 continuing this discussion in the new year. Happy  
15 Holidays, and we look forward to working with DCAS to  
16 streamline these processes and make sure that  
17 employees have access. So, thank you for your  
18 testimony today... [CROSS-TALK]

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Thank you so much.

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PERSAUD: Thank you. Thank  
21 you... [CROSS-TALK]

22 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: All right.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair. We will now  
24 turn to public testimony. We will be limiting to  
25 public testimony today to two minutes each. For in

2 person panelists, please come up to the table once  
3 your name has been called.

4 For virtual panelists, once your name is called a  
5 member of our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant  
6 At Arms will set the timer and give you the go ahead  
7 to begin. Please wait for the sergeant to announce  
8 that you may begin before delivering your testimony.

9 For first panel please let please wait for your  
10 name to be called and then come up, uh, Matthew  
11 Morris, Daniel Morris, Garrett Ramirez, Rachel  
12 Maniscalco, Vito Faccilonga, and Stella Porto. Sorry  
13 if I mispronounced any of your names.

14 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: We will begin with  
15 Matthew Morris. And, as we go down the line, could  
16 you just identify yourself for the record? Matthew,  
17 you may begin.

18 MATTHEW MORRIS: Hi, good afternoon, I'm just  
19 gonna keep it short and brief. So, about two years  
20 ago I was put on leave without pay, and then  
21 subsequently terminated. So, I've been waiting to get  
22 my job back and receive all these fine things that  
23 have been spoken about here today. So, I'm seeking  
24 reinstatement, that's it, I'll just let everybody  
25 else continue, thank you.



1           CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you.

2           DANIEL MORRIS: Good afternoon, I am Daniel  
3 Morris. I was an EMT at Station 15 for New York City  
4 Fire Department. I was fired June of last year for  
5 noncompliance with the Covid vaccine mandate. Now  
6 that that mandates is no longer in effect, I am  
7 seeking reinstatement. That is all I have to say  
8 today, thank you.

9           CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you.

10          STELLA MITCHELL PORTO: Good afternoon, my name is  
11 Stella Mitchell Porto. I was in New York City  
12 assistant principal at District 75 P25 R, a special  
13 education school, consisting of over 22 school sites  
14 on Staten Island New York. This would've been my 30th  
15 year with the New York City Department of Education.  
16 I was fired, forced to resign, for refusing to take  
17 the COVID-19 vaccine. Even though the vaccine mandate  
18 has been lifted, I have still not been able to return  
19 to work, because I was told that since I did not  
20 receive exemption to the vaccination, that I was not  
21 in compliance with the City Health Commissioner's  
22 order. I told my union principal, superintendent,  
23 and chancellor that I did not receive due process. I  
24 got no response. I wrote numerous emails about my  
25

1 religious and medical research that I needed to do  
2 about the vaccine, but was never responded to. I used  
3 all my savings of my TDA to fight this battle. About  
4 two weeks ago, I had to file to retire, because I  
5 needed to save my house that I am in jeopardy of  
6 losing. I am getting the runaround about retirement  
7 dates and my OP 44 retirement paperwork is now on  
8 hold. Under Executive Order Number 75, August 2,  
9 2021, a memo came out to the Administration stating  
10 that there was a mandatory vaccine requirement for  
11 new hires. Section I of this Executive Order, stated  
12 persons newly hired for employment by any agency must  
13 provide proof having received at least one dose of an  
14 approved COVID-19 vaccine prior to beginning their  
15 employment, except for those who obtained an  
16 exception due to medical or religious reasons through  
17 the Responsible Accommodation Process. I was hired  
18 over 30 years ago, and how was I responsible to take  
19 the COVID-19 vaccine under this order? What My  
20 principal asked of me didn't make sense. If I had the  
21 choice, I would go back to my position to P25R. I  
22 love my job and working with my special needs  
23 students. Thank you.  
24  
25

CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so much.

GARRETT RAMIREZ: My name is Garrett Ramirez, I was an NYC educational assistant with special-needs students, and I work with Public Schools for over 15 years. I was fired for declining the COVID shot. The mandate has been lifted, but I have not received an offer to return, nor the backpay to which I am entitled. I was suspended for six months without pay, and also restricted by the Department of Labor from getting unemployment. I would like to say that the hiring mandate has been lifted, but not the firing mandate. Everyone terminated stays terminated. Everyone put on the chopping block by this City, is still bleeding - presumably as a warning to anyone else who might think about standing up for their rights and their health. I have submitted a folder to you with five peer reviewed journal articles and five university hospital studies. This is a small sample of the accredited science that undermines the big pharma claim that the so-called vaccines are safe and effective. I don't want to hear about the Nobel Prize Nobel winning mRNA shot. In 1949, the Nobel Committee awarded the Prize of Medicine to the inventor of the frontal lobotomy. The BBC reports

1 that the lobotomists were "often progressive  
2 reformers". It was promoted as a cure from everything  
3 from serious mental illness to postnatal depression.  
4 Meanwhile, psychiatrist in the Soviet Union rejected  
5 it as too dehumanizing. It was soon "discovered to  
6 have a fatality rate of 15%." Years later, victims  
7 and their families campaigned to have it rescinded,  
8 but the Nobel Foundation refused to recognize them.  
9 Frankly, I am not expecting much better from you. My  
10 satisfaction will most likely come through the  
11 courts. But, there is going to be pain and suffering  
12 charges. And the pain and suffering accumulates each  
13 day that the injustice goes unaddressed. The sooner  
14 you acknowledge and reverse it, the less damage there  
15 will ultimately be to the City of New York. I hope  
16 that everyone their Pfizer checks, because God knows  
17 they have earned them - Vicki Paladino excepted. The  
18 ever growing influence of big pharma has not  
19 increased the public health, but reduced it, actually  
20 lowering American life expectancy [TIMER CHIMES] over  
21 the past 20 years... [CROSS-TALK]

22  
23 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you, your time is  
24 up... [CROSS-TALK]

2 GARRETT RAMIREZ: This cannibalistic... [CROSS-  
3 TALK]

4 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you... [CROSS-  
5 TALK]

6 GARRETT RAMIREZ: cannibalistic industry is who  
7 you entrusted... [CROSS-TALK]

8 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Sir...

9 GARRETT RAMIREZ: our health to... [CROSS-TALK]

10 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Your time is up, thank  
11 you.

12 GARRETT RAMIREZ: The social contract of this  
13 city... [CROSS-TALK]

14 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Sir... [CROSS-TALK]

15 GARRETT RAMIREZ: [INAUDIBLE] lives shattered...  
16 [CROSS-TALK]

17 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: your time is up, sir...  
18 [CROSS-TALK]

19 GARRETT RAMIREZ: it is a grim warning to the  
20 entire country... [CROSS-TALK]

21 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: your time is up, sir, two  
22 minutes [INAUDIBLE]... [CROSS-TALK]

23 GARRETT RAMIREZ: A society this corrupt is doomed  
24 to collapse, and the collapse will...

2 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you, sir...

3 [CROSS-TALK]

4 GARRETT RAMIREZ: will not spare you... [CROSS-  
5 TALK]

6 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you, thank you for  
7 coming... [CROSS-TALK]

8 GARRETT RAMIREZ: [INAUDIBLE] We the people have  
9 been vindicated... [CROSS-TALK]

10 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Sir...[CROSS-TALK]

11 GARRETT RAMIREZ: in history, and in science...

12 [CROSS-TALK]

13 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Your time is up...

14 [CROSS-TALK]

15 GARRETT RAMIREZ: and in the eyes of God...

16 [CROSS-TALK]

17 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you... [CROSS-  
18 TALK]

19 GARRETT RAMIREZ: and this chamber... [CROSS-  
20 TALK]

21 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you... [CROSS-  
22 TALK]

23 GARRETT RAMIREZ: is condemned.

24 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you, your time is  
25 up.

[APPLAUSE]

CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Next, please introduce yourself. And, please adhere to two minutes. Thank you so much.

VITO FACCILONGA: Thanks for giving me the opportunity to speak today. Hello, My name is Vito Faccilonga, I come from a long line of New York City civil servants. My father was a sanitation worker, my mother and one of my brothers were teachers, brother two worked for the NYPD, and the third was a captain for the Fire Department just two blocks away from here. I began my career in 1989 as a paraprofessional working in District 75. District 75 is Special Education Program for the most challenged children in New York City schools. Through the years, I moved on from a paraprofessional to being a teacher, and finally an assistant principal. I had 31 years invested in this system, working a job I believed in and enjoyed. This came to an end after being fired for not taking the "experimental" medical procedure otherwise known as a vaccine. As an assistant principal, I took great pride in my leadership role, I saw myself as a role model and someone who stood for what was right. I had staff

1  
2 come to my office crying, because they were being  
3 forced to take the vaccine against their will. I  
4 understand because I felt the same way. When the time  
5 came, a difficult choice had to be made. We were  
6 professionals being forced to take a vaccine against  
7 our will, and if we chose not to do so, our  
8 livelihood was taken resulting in an inability to  
9 provide for my family, [INAUDIBLE] provide shelter,  
10 or food. That was not right. This sealed my decision  
11 to stand up for what I believed was right for me and  
12 others like me, especially my colleagues who decided  
13 to get the vaccine against their will. The New York  
14 State Supreme Court confirmed my decision on January  
15 16, 2023 when they ruled the vaccine mandate was  
16 unconstitutional. New York City professionals who  
17 choose not to be vaccinated deserve to be treated  
18 with fairness and respect. We need to be given an  
19 opportunity to return to work, just as the athletes  
20 and actors [TIMER CHIMES] were back in 2022.

21 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you, sir.

22 VITO FACCILONGA: Can I conclude by reciting a  
23 quote on the ceiling? "Equal and exact justice to all  
24 men, of whatever state or persuasion".

25 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you.



2 VITO FACCILONGA: Thomas Jefferson.

3 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you for coming...

4 [CROSS-TALK]

5 VITO FACCILONGA: Thank you.

6 [APPLAUSE]

7 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: I think we have one more  
8 on the panel. Yes?

9 [APPLAUSE]

10 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Please identify yourself,  
11 and... [CROSS-TALK]

12 RACHEL MANISCALCO: Thank you, before I begin, I  
13 would like to say that there are registered people  
14 who wanted to speak via Zoom, and they have not  
15 received a link - many, many people.

16 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: We will make sure...  
17 whoever registered with us, thank you.

18 RACHEL MANISCALCO: Thank you, wonderful.

19 My name is Rachel Maniscalco, I was in New York  
20 City English and Special Education teacher for 10  
21 years, and I was fired for declining the COVID shot.  
22 Even though the vaccine has been lifted, I have still  
23 not been able to return to work, because the City has  
24 determined that fired workers will not be reinstated,  
25 but may reapply for their previous positions, at

1           which time they will sign away their rights to  
2           challenge their employment status and potentially be  
3           denied their jobs, again, this time with no recourse.  
4           Should they be rehired, they would start from the  
5           bottom at the lowest salary step and without tenure.  
6           That is not happening, not after I gave my life to  
7           that job for a decade.

9           I was an exemplary teacher, colleague, and  
10          employee. I received highly effective observations,  
11          led Professional Development conferences set the bar  
12          for parents' outreach and student engagement, and  
13          barely ever took a day off.

14          At the end of my career, worked pregnant through  
15          the pandemic, because I knew my students, especially  
16          my special education population, needed in person  
17          learning. My students were always as much a priority  
18          to me as my own family, often to the detriment of my  
19          family, since the job required ample personal time  
20          and attention outside of school hours. This might  
21          sound like an overabundance of self-praise, but I  
22          will not be silent about the dedication I put into a  
23          career that was so quick to throw me aside. I was the  
24          kind of teacher whom you would want your son or  
25          daughter to have, and I was fired without a formal

1 charge, without the due process that is my lawful  
2 right, because I declined an injection that we have  
3 since has wreaked havoc on the lives of so many. I  
4 will forever stand by decision to maintain my dignity  
5 my health, my bodily autonomy, and my freedom from  
6 unnecessary medical interventions, especially since  
7 the data that the Pfizer and other manufacturers  
8 wanted to hide for 75 years has not been kind to them  
9 - blood clots and strokes, reproductive issues, heart  
10 attacks, in both the old and the young,  
11 unprecedented miscarriages, and aggressive cancers,  
12 excessive all-cause mortality in the youngest age  
13 bracket to date. People are suffering from these  
14 shots, and while that is an entirely different  
15 conversation, and one that will come to light sooner  
16 than later, but take away from today's is this,  
17 [TIMER CHIMES] no one should be made to choose  
18 between his or her livelihood and a potentially  
19 deadly DNA altering and experimental injection. All  
20 City employees were fired or forced to resign due to  
21 the vaccine mandate...

23 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you... [CROSS-  
24 TALK]

2 RACHEL MANISCALCO: deserve an apology. We deserve  
3 our jobs back - if we want them. And we will never  
4 stop demanding to be made whole... [CROSS-TALK]

5 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so much, thank  
6 you for coming.

7 [APPLAUSE]

8 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so much for  
9 coming.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to this panel. This  
11 next panel that we are calling up will be Raquel  
12 Ibarrola, Victoria Russo, George Garvey, Daniel  
13 Hulkower, and Jack W. Lin.

14 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: I want to remind folks  
15 that the hearing topic for today is DCAS trainings.  
16 We will adhere to the two minute clock. And if you  
17 go over two minutes, you will be ejected from the  
18 Chamber, given that today's topic is DCAS trainings.  
19 So, please be respectful. There are a lot of people  
20 signed up to speak. If you all speak for two  
21 minutes, we will have the time to hear from everyone.

22 Thank you, and you may begin with Raquel.  
23 Raquel, you may begin, identify yourself for the  
24 record, thank you.

1            RAQUEL IBARROLA: Hello? I was a New York City  
2 Teacher. I was unlawfully fired for declining the  
3 COVID injection. Even though the vaccine mandate has  
4 been lifted, I have still not been able to return to  
5 work because, the City's mayor has refused to  
6 reinstate the unvaccinated employees despite Court  
7 orders mandating otherwise.  
8

9            I applied for religious exception that was denied  
10 all the time. We read in the Bible that God said:  
11 "Let us make mankind in our image." Based on my  
12 biblical beliefs and the fact that men have been on  
13 earth for many generations, I do not need a recent  
14 man-made upgrade to my immune system or vaccine to  
15 live on this earth.

16           For months I was not allowed to work. My finances  
17 were decimated. I lost my pension. My son has been  
18 also fired from his job and could not go to college.  
19 He had to quit for not taking the COVID injection. We  
20 could not enter cafes or restaurants. I was given a  
21 Problem Code that made me unemployable and my  
22 fingerprints were sent to the FBI. At the State  
23 level, infectious disease quarantine camps laws were  
24 approved for people suspected of having been in  
25 contact with contagious disease. We lived the

1  
2 beginnings of the Nazi's Germany Holocaust under the  
3 guise of a health crisis. To this day, I have never  
4 had COVID. My husband works in health; he worked for  
5 two years with people with COVID, he never got COVID.  
6 As soon as he got the injection, because he got one,  
7 he got COVID, and he developed a heart condition.  
8 And he saw a lot of people die around him through his  
9 practice. I am going to say that I am working right  
10 now in Yonkers. I want to go back to the City and  
11 recover my job. I am a Bilingual teacher. I was  
12 also a Special Education teacher. I worked with Pre-  
13 K. My kids just turned... Some of my students came  
14 to my class this year as three years old [TIMER  
15 CHIMES]...

16 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you.

17 RAQUEL IBARROLA: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so much. You  
19 can go down the line and just identify yourselves.

20 GEORGE GARVEY: My name is George Garvey, I was a  
21 sanitation worker for over nine years, fired for not  
22 taking the vaccine. You know, myself and 15 other  
23 sanitation workers took our lawsuit to the New York  
24 State Supreme Court, and we won. The court ruled that  
25 the mandate was arbitrary and capricious; therefore,

1  
2 unlawful and constitutional. Court's order first was  
3 to be reinstated with the full backpay, full  
4 reinstatement the following day. The City filed  
5 their intent to appeal, and now we're coming on over  
6 a year now since then, and sitting it is sitting in  
7 the appellate court waiting to be heard .

8 I'm not here to beg for my job back. Basically,  
9 my goal is to get justice, not just for us, but for  
10 everyone - you guys included - everyone in this  
11 country. Because the point being is there's a...  
12 This mandate was ordered and enforced months once  
13 after the CDC stated that it doesn't stop contraction  
14 and transmission. So, I'm here to implore all of you  
15 to use your influence and end this mandate once and  
16 for all. Tyranny, you know, tyrants eventually, you  
17 know, when they do achieve their goal of amassing too  
18 much power, they eventually do turn on those who  
19 aided and abetted them on their rise. So, this is  
20 much bigger than vaccines and how you feel about  
21 vaccines. This is about we the people, by the people,  
22 for the people. And what happened was just wrong,  
23 immoral and unlawful. I will not rest until I get  
24 back everything that was stolen for me.

2 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so much for  
3 being here today.

4 [APPLAUSE]

5 DANIEL HULKOWER: My name is Daniel Hulkower. I  
6 worked for the New York State Department of  
7 Sanitation for 5 1/2 years before I was unlawfully  
8 terminated for refusing to comply with the COVID-19  
9 vaccine mandate.

10 I just want to remind everybody that every  
11 generation has the excuse as to why that group of  
12 people needed to be marginalized, whether it was for  
13 one reason or another, we live in a time where we're  
14 supposed to be even more mindful than ever as to how  
15 we treat other people and the future in the past in  
16 this country and learning from our mistakes and not  
17 repeating them. This was a mistake that's been  
18 repeated multiple times in history, and every time we  
19 say we've learned from it, but we don't. The next  
20 generation has the excuse as to why we have to  
21 marginalize another group of people. Why? Well,  
22 this time they refused to vaccinate. They refused to  
23 comply. When we reach a point in our country where  
24 regular, every day middle-class people are forging  
25 documents in order to maintain their jobs, in order



1 to go to a restaurant, in order to not be segregated  
2 against, it is time for national self-reflection. It  
3 is time to ask ourselves, wait a second, are we about  
4 to make the same mistake we did a thousand other  
5 times and claimed we learned from? Hochul wants to  
6 quarantine camos in this state. Quarantine camps in  
7 the state of New York - even though the Nuremberg  
8 laws are actually encoded in New York State law. How  
9 is that going to go over? Tax money being used to  
10 fight and put people into camps. What is the  
11 difference? The reason the City is fighting our case  
12 is because our case is going to be a roadblock to  
13 that. And I am glad to be part of that roadblock.  
14 But, at the end of the day, if you guys just stop  
15 fighting, me all I want is what is owed, my due  
16 compensation. And I just want to go back to throwing  
17 garbage in the rain. I just want to go back to  
18 pushing snow. I just want to go back to being stinky  
19 and doing my job like I did for 5 1/2 years. [TIMER  
20 CHIMES]

22 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so much. So...

23 [APPLAUSE]

24 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: We don't clap in the  
25 Chamber, but we can do this [motioning with hands]

2 Okay? So, you want to agree with someone, you do  
3 this. You want to disagree, you do that. Okay?  
4 Next?

5 JACK WEI LIN: My name is Jack Wei Lin, I'm 39  
6 years old. I was an EMT with FDNY for over 14 years  
7 since 2008. Last year I got fired for my refusal of  
8 the COVID vaccine mandate, and even though the  
9 mandate was lifted I have not returned my position  
10 because of the unfair DCAS citywide waiver that I'm  
11 required to sign to give up my civil service rights  
12 and in order to be reconsidered for reinstatement.

13 My religious exemption was denied by the FDNY EO  
14 Office, and I also lost my citywide vax appeal.  
15 Despite having been a Christian since I was a child,  
16 despite being baptized at age 12, despite going to a  
17 Christian liberal arts college, despite my bachelor's  
18 degree in Religion, despite serving a missionary  
19 abroad. So, please believe me when I tell you that  
20 my faith is genuine, and it would have been a  
21 violation of my personal conscience and beliefs to  
22 take the Covid shots. After I came back to the US  
23 from the mission field, I applied to work as an EMT  
24 with the FDNY. I wanted to be there to help for the  
25 next 911. And I firmly believe that COVID was EMS's

1  
2 911. EMTs and paramedics were the tip of the spere  
3 going into people's homes and taking them to the  
4 hospital. I worked in person 12 to 16 hour days in  
5 operations throughout the pandemic. My commute from  
6 Queens was close to five hours round-trip by public  
7 transportation to Staten Island. A COVID hero to a  
8 COVID zero.

9 My employment insurance benefits were denied  
10 three times. I couldn't even work until after the  
11 private sector mandate was lifted. I never imagined  
12 that the violation of religious freedoms could happen  
13 here in this great country and in this great city.  
14 The City and the FDNY has forgotten my service. They  
15 forgot all of the people I helped. They forgot the  
16 forgotten hospital cop in cardiac arrest that I  
17 performed CPR on while off duty with a broken wrist.  
18 But, my God sees everything, and I implore you do the  
19 right thing and to reinstate us. Thank you for  
20 listening to my testimony.

21 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so much. We  
22 have one more?

23 VICTORIA RUSSO: My name is Victoria Russo, and I  
24 am a Special Education teacher. I worked for the  
25 Department of Education for 23 years. I had the

1 privilege to work with children on the autism  
2 spectrum.

3  
4 I was first put on leave without pay, and  
5 eventually I was fired, terminated, for declining to  
6 take the COVID vaccine. I still have not returned to  
7 work because, I believe that the vaccine mandates are  
8 unjust and violated my personal freedom and medical  
9 privacy.

10 I love teaching, and I care deeply about my  
11 students. I have dedicated my career to helping them  
12 overcome their challenges, and reach their full  
13 potential.

14 I have not been granted the opportunity to return  
15 to my existing position as a Special Education  
16 Teacher. I feel that all the teachers who were  
17 wrongfully fired, should be reinstated to our  
18 previous position, under the stipulation that we  
19 will be compensated for our lost wages and  
20 compensated with lost time.

21 I have chosen not to get vaccinated for  
22 religious, personal, and medical reasons. I respected  
23 and respect the right of others to make their own  
24 decisions about their health, and I expect the same  
25 respect in return.

1           The vaccine mandates are discriminatory and  
2 coercive. They forced me to choose between my  
3 livelihood and my health. They violated my  
4 constitutional rights and my human dignity. They  
5 ignored the fact that I have natural immunity from a  
6 previous COVID-19 infection and COVID pneumonia. They  
7 disregarded the opinions of medical experts who have  
8 raised questions about the necessity and legality of  
9 the vaccine mandates.  
10

11          We need the courts and this council to recognize  
12 that we were wrongfully treated by our city, our  
13 state, and the union that was supposed to represent  
14 us. I pray that this council has the courage to act.  
15 We are not the enemy. We are colleagues, your  
16 friends, your neighbors. We were essential workers  
17 who have served our community with dedication and  
18 compassion throughout this pandemic. We deserve to  
19 be with fairness and dignity. Thank you for  
20 listening to my testimony.

21          CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you all so much for  
22 coming.

23          COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Our next panel will be  
24 Trinidad Smith, Tim Heaton, Michael Kane, and Gabriel  
25 Dalmau.

2 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: We will start with  
3 Trinidad.

4 UNKNOWN: [NO MIC] [INAUDIBLE]

5 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Hold on, hold on. We  
6 have to do it by order. So, when... [CROSS-TALK]

7 UNKNOWN: [NO MIC] [INAUDIBLE] this is addressing  
8 what you said to us [INAUDIBLE]

9 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay, you are speaking  
10 out of turn. When it is your turn to testify, you  
11 can give your remarks... [CROSS-TALK]

12 UNKNOWN: [NO MIC] [INAUDIBLE]

13 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: We are... Trinidad...  
14 Trinidad Smith, it is your turn to speak.

15 UNKNOWN: [NO MIC] [INAUDIBLE]

16 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Trinidad Smith, are you  
17 here?

18 TRINIDAD SMITH: I am here.

19 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay, please start. Turn  
20 on your microphone and start.

21 UNKNOWN: [NO MIC] [INAUDIBLE]

22 TRINIDAD SMITH: My name is Trinidad Smith, I came  
23 here at age 6 from an orphanage in Bogotá Columbia.  
24 New York City and the DOE have helped me achieve my  
25 American dream of buying my first and only home in

1  
2 2019 at age 49. I am grateful. These mandates and  
3 the lack of ability to gain my job back puts me and  
4 my son at risk of losing our home. This is it for  
5 me. I have exhausted most of my savings. There will  
6 be no more house for my son and I. I dedicated my  
7 last 20 years to New York City and its special needs  
8 population with my concentration being students with  
9 autism spectrum. I have a clean record and service.  
10 I even stayed within the same organization during my  
11 tenure, and indication of loyalty to my colleagues  
12 and my profession. I was terminated and never even  
13 offered a fair hearing after requesting my legal  
14 right to due process following my request for a  
15 religious exemption and was denied. My union failed  
16 me. I was also denied unemployment and repeatedly  
17 was lied to.. sent lies that said I was terminated  
18 or that I quit, that I wasn't terminated, or that I  
19 was also retired. These are things that I have  
20 proof, but yet I am still suffering as a result of  
21 these lies that have been put out.

22 When the City lifted the mandate restrictions for  
23 the private sector, I applied for a SETTS position in  
24 the Bronx, a 4-hour commute on 2 buses and a subway  
25 from New Jersey so that I could maintain this

2 mortgage. Unfortunately, it was not that easy because  
3 the City had put a P-code on our files. The P-code  
4 indication did not have a differentiation between  
5 inappropriate behavior or an objection to a mandate.  
6 This is a character assassination for the  
7 professional that I put in for 20 years to be put and  
8 lumped in the same P-code.

9 Since last February of 23 when the Public [TIMER  
10 CHIMES] uhm...

11 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so much. Thank  
12 you for your testimony.

13 UNKNOWN: [NO MIC] [INAUDIBLE]

14 MICHAEL KANE: Hello everyone, my name is Micheal  
15 Kane. I was a special education teacher for over 14  
16 years in New York City until I was terminated for  
17 declining the COVID vaccination. I've been suing New  
18 York City in state and federal court for the past two  
19 years over this.

20 In September of this year, I was ordered back to  
21 my job by a New York State Supreme Court judge;  
22 however, New York City appealed. I didn't get my job  
23 back.

24 I come here today not to tell of my hardship so  
25 much is the hardships of hundreds of thousands of New



1           York City Department of Education employees. One of  
2           the most egregious punishments that my colleague  
3           right here just referred to, with the branding of a  
4           problem code, a scarlet letter that was placed on all  
5           unvaccinated employees. These problems codes have  
6           prevented many from obtaining employment in New York  
7           City - and outside as well. I actually submitted for  
8           the record of court affidavit from an AP who couldn't  
9           get a job in Westchester, because she got this  
10          problem code. Nine members of Congress from New  
11          York, have written a letter to New York City school  
12          chancellor, David Banks, asking eight reasonable  
13          questions. I also submitted that for the record as  
14          well too.

16           It's almost six months, and there's no response  
17          from Banks or from Eric Adams or any designee. I also  
18          included other documents from my attorney showing  
19          that how many people this has affected. I asked the  
20          chairs of the Committee, please bring this to the  
21          attention of Chancellor Banks, of Mayor Adams, they  
22          need to respond to Congress. These are very  
23          reasonable questions.

24           Recently, Mayor Adams had said, "when you can't  
25          work, you were being exploited. We fought hard to

1           get rid of draconian rules. That's why we've been  
2 saying to the national leaders, let them work!" But,  
3 he wasn't speaking about unvaccinated fired  
4 individuals, he was speaking about undocumented  
5 immigrants. Now I support undocumented workers to  
6 have the right to work. I actually ran a Dreamers  
7 Alliance. Miss Council Member De La Rosa, [TIMER  
8 CHIMES] you actually gave a presentation with one of  
9 my students once at a CUNY Dreamers conference. My  
10 Dreamers Alliance is gone now because of this. Thank  
11 you so much for hearing me out.

12           CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: You may identify  
13 yourself.

14           CHAKA PHAIRE: Good evening, my name is Chaka  
15 Phaire, Evening I'm a clinical social worker. I was  
16 employed by the Department of Education for 20 years  
17 and was terminated.

18           How do I go back to my child, who is at  
19 Moorehouse - and we just purchased a car for him,  
20 because he's doing the right thing - and tell him to  
21 continue to persist and do the right thing when I get  
22 fired for no cause, no recourse or anything.

23           How do I go to my wife and tell her that now  
24 she's going to be the sole breadwinner in our home,  
25

1 when I did everything right - 20 years. Did I get  
2 fired because of time and attendance? Did I get fired  
3 because I disregarded a direct order? Did I get  
4 fired for, God forbid, touching a child  
5 inappropriately? Did I get fired for maybe having an  
6 inappropriate contact with another staff member? No,  
7 I was fired because I practiced my religious freedom  
8 and decided not to take the COVID shot. I was fired.  
9 There was no recourse, no reason or anything. This is  
10 a modern day Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego story,  
11 where we are asked to bow before a false god, and if  
12 that doesn't happen, then we'll been thrown in the  
13 fiery furnace.

14  
15 Now, you may not have thrown us in the fiery  
16 furnace, but you certainly have the opportunity to  
17 decide how long we stay there. Thank you.

18 [BACKGROUND NOISE]

19 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you for coming.

20 You may go ahead, sir.

21 TIM HEATON: My name is Tim Heaton. I was a  
22 lieutenant with the Fire Department; I was placed on  
23 leave without pay two years ago, November 21st of 20  
24 [INAUDIBLE], and subsequently terminated July 6, 2022

25

1  
2 - 33 days shy of what should have been my 23rd year  
3 anniversary with the FDNY.

4 I have applied for reinstatement, and the  
5 Department has denied my application pending a  
6 signing of waiver that states I will not hold anyone  
7 liable for lost pay or time, and will not seek to  
8 reclaim loss wages. It's four pages gobbledygook  
9 lawyer-speak. I've watched enough lawyer shows to  
10 know that I would never sign saw such a broadly  
11 worded statement, especially one that would directly  
12 impact my career in my life. This is sent to me when  
13 I filed reinstatement, and my reply to the geniuses  
14 at FDNY Legal, is that I've been fighting for my  
15 rights for a year and a half, why would I waive them  
16 at this time? That was six months ago. Since then,  
17 despite numerous meetings and promises made to  
18 Councilwoman Areola, despite several members being  
19 allowed back to work without having to sign the  
20 waiver, I still haven't been allowed to return to  
21 work. It has almost been a year since the waiver  
22 mandate was waived, and we were supposed to be able  
23 to return to work. The general public believes that  
24 we all have been back to work - as I just had reunion  
25 with my old firehouse, and more than a few former

1 coworkers thought I had been allowed to return to  
2 work. That's what the mayor the media said,  
3 unfortunately isn't true. At the current rate with  
4 obstructionist, and legal department, and DCAS -  
5 which is hearing oversight of - it doesn't look like  
6 it will happen anytime soon without help from City  
7 Council or the justice system.  
8

9 The City and FDNY continue to claim they did  
10 nothing wrong. If that is the case, then why do they  
11 need me to sign a waiver for reinstatement?

12 [BACKGROUND NOISE] The City agencies continue to be  
13 shorthanded, and my spot, along with other these  
14 other witnesses, are being covered on overtime.  
15 There's tons of overtime, as I continue getting  
16 notifications on almost daily basis. The City  
17 continues to waste money, fighting our applications  
18 to return and appealing court order Return to Work  
19 decisions. They even hired an outside law firm to  
20 fight Article 78 cases, [TIMER CHIMES] they keep  
21 losing in front of judges. They could simply return  
22 us all to work, even give us back pay and time, and  
23 it would be cheaper than what they are currently  
24 doing.  
25

2 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so much. Thank  
3 you for coming.

4 I want to recognize that we have been joined by  
5 Council Member Menin as well.

6 You may go ahead.

7 GABRIEL DALMAU: Good afternoon, my name is  
8 Gabriel Dalmau, I was a Metal Worker for the  
9 Department of Sanitation. I was terminated from my  
10 job for declining the COVID shot. Even though the  
11 mandate has been lifted, I am still not back at work.  
12 I simply do not understand what is going on in this  
13 city.

14 When COVID happened, we were all scared, people  
15 got sick and were dying, my mother being one of those  
16 tragic stories, all alone in the hospital, we  
17 couldn't even hold her hand in her final moments.  
18 But, I still managed to get to work. You probably  
19 have no idea what that feels like, or maybe you don't  
20 care, but I do, and it still hurts to this day.

21 Like many of us, I was banging on pots and pans  
22 for the nurses and first responders out there risking  
23 their necks. I went to work every day not knowing  
24 what I might be bringing home, but I still went and  
25 answered the call. No vaccine, no problem! No

1 solution, no problem! We still all went to work while  
2 most people were at home doing Zoom calls in their  
3 pajamas.  
4

5 Then the mandates happened, and I applied for a  
6 religious exemption, same as my work partner, but I  
7 was denied, and he was approved. He's been working  
8 the whole time. I'm happy for him, that is the right  
9 thing. But what about the rest of us? How is this not  
10 discrimination?

11 In the middle of a pandemic, the City went ahead  
12 and fire the same people who helped you get through  
13 the worst of it, taking away not only our ability to  
14 work and feed our families, but also taking away our  
15 health insurance, which really made no sense at all.

16 How is it possible that City officials and our  
17 unions could turn their backs on us the very same  
18 people who were praised and being called essential  
19 and heroes and all that good stuff? What happened to  
20 due process? Where are the rallies by city officials  
21 to get US back to work? Shame on you.

22 Mandates have been lifted, court cases have been  
23 won but appealed by the city, and here we are still.  
24 What the heck is going on? Take a moment to put  
25 yourselves in our shoes and see how you would feel,

1  
2 how would you respond? A lot of folks were forced out  
3 of their jobs and even had to move, that's the thanks  
4 we get.

5 It is very curious to me that with all the talk of  
6 mental health, we don't seem to matter. With all the  
7 talk of discrimination and it not being tolerated, we  
8 don't seem to make the cut. I wonder why that is? I  
9 guess I'll just have to ask my therapist during our  
10 next session and keep praying to God for true  
11 justice, thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you all for coming,  
13 thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Our next panel will be Online  
15 Borno, Roxanne Valdez, Aura Moody, Sophia Harrington,  
16 and Audrey Dennis.

17 If you have not yet filled out a witness slip to  
18 speak today, you can do so at the back with the  
19 Sergeant At Arms.

20 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: All right we'll start  
21 with Online. I hope I am pronouncing that correctly.  
22 Okay, we'll start with you, and we will go down the  
23 line, thank you.

24 ORLINE BORNO: Good afternoon, elected body of the  
25 city council, my name is Oline Borno, a 26 years



1           bilingual teacher, a high school teacher who was  
2 consistently rated highly affective. Unfortunately, I  
3 was fired involuntarily declining to take the COVID  
4 vaccine.

5           Even though the vaccine mandate has been lifted,  
6 I'm still not able to return to work with the New  
7 York City Department of Education, because no direct  
8 pathway to return to my previous school and title has  
9 been created by the New York City Department of  
10 Education.

11           Although I have repeatedly sent out countless  
12 emails, certified mail, phone calls to the Board Of  
13 Education personnel, such as Katherine Rodi,  
14 Executive Director of Office and Employee Relation  
15 and Liz Vladeck, General Counsel, New York City  
16 Department of Education with no avail. Once again, no  
17 clear pathway has been set up for my reinstatement or  
18 any other teachers my situation as well that I have  
19 known.

20           I contacted the UFT general counsel, Beth Norton,  
21 she wrote back to me and countless teachers in my  
22 position, tenured teachers like myself, and her quote  
23 says, "The UFT agrees with you. You are entitled to a  
24 3020 Process. Together with the MLC, we file a  
25

1 lawsuit to protect the rights... But, the judge  
2 dismissed the case. The judge agreed with the DOE,  
3 that they had unilateral right to terminate in these  
4 circumstances. We have filed an appeal. In the  
5 interim, should you wish to return to work, you will  
6 need to reapply and be rehired. You are not entitled  
7 to reinstatement, backpay, or accumulated benefits.”

9 I reached out to my former principal in Queens -  
10 great school in Queens, great kids - letting her know  
11 my situation and I how I reached out to my union rep.  
12 And she said that unfortunately, the Department of  
13 Education did not provide any pathway or protocols  
14 for her to start the reinstatement process. [TIMER  
15 CHIMES] So, unfortunately, this is a reoccurring  
16 issue. My only takeaway measure... Thanks again...  
17 [CROSS-TALK]

18 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you.

19 ORLINE BORNO: I need you all to look into the  
20 pathways. We need pathways to go back to work. Our  
21 unions let us down, city officials let us down. So,  
22 we need a clear pathway to return to work.

23 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so much. Thank  
24 you for coming.

1                   SOPHIA HARRINGTON: Hello, my name is Sophia  
2  
3                   Harrington. I was a New York Public school teacher in  
4                   the Bronx for six years before I put on leave without  
5                   pay and then terminated for noncompliance with the  
6                   COVID vaccine due to my religious beliefs.

7                   I was at the same school for all six of my years  
8                   and Service, working in person through the pandemic -  
9                   without proper PPE. Though the vaccine mandate has  
10                  been lifted, I am still unable to return to work  
11                  without the humiliation of reapplying to a job I  
12                  already held with tenure or without the conditions  
13                  limit my right to free speech.

14                  For an entire calendar year, I was rendered  
15                  unnecessarily jobless by the Department of Education  
16                  in the City of New York. According to the deal that  
17                  the UFT in the City made, if I were to keep my health  
18                  insurance I could not apply or actively work at any  
19                  other jobs without losing my position. In my  
20                  particular case, my health insurance was paramount,  
21                  because I have a chronic health condition.

22                  For 365 days, I struggled to maintain rent and  
23                  feed myself, as inflation steadily climbed, just to  
24                  be told in September of 2022 that I was to be let go.

1           When I was finally released to applied to other  
2 jobs, I discover that my record have been flagged  
3 simply because I had exercised my constitutional  
4 rights. To this day, I am still clawing my way back  
5 to financial stability - and I was lucky ones. Many  
6 of my colleagues had large families, health crisis,  
7 and mortgages. Many were forced out of the city and  
8 state, again simply because they chose to exercise  
9 are protected of liberties.

10           On top of affecting me personally, my forced  
11 resignation has deeply impacted my former students  
12 and the students of the thousands of colleagues who  
13 were also fired or otherwise forced resign.

14           For a year after I was removed from my position,  
15 my school did not replace me, and there was no ENL  
16 teacher in the building. This is a school where about  
17 a third of the students are English language  
18 learners, and many more than that requiring formal  
19 language assistance. There was no one to help  
20 newcomers access curriculum or help translate for  
21 parents. Six years' worth of support networks I had  
22 worked hard to build with students and their families  
23 were gone. To this day, I do not know if my position  
24 has been filled.

1           Exploitation is not new concept to teachers in  
2 this public school system. Our kindness, the way we  
3 care about our students, and our unwavering  
4 dedication to their growth is often exploited in the  
5 form of long hours. [TIMER CHIMES]... I want just to  
6 finish with this.  
7

8           CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you.

9           SOPHIA HARRINGTON: I'm here to remind you that we  
10 are here. We are real humans who lives the City has  
11 devastated. We will not conveniently disappear, and  
12 we will continue to hold you responsible for  
13 [INAUDIBLE]... [CROSS-TALK]

14          CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you. Thank you so  
15 much. Thank you for coming.

16          AURA MOODY: [NO MIC] Good afternoon, City Council  
17 members...

18          CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Can you press the  
19 button? Press the button, the red... There you go,  
20 yes.

21          AURA MOODY: Good afternoon, Council Members. My  
22 name is Aura Moody. [BACKGROUND NOISE] I have been  
23 worked as school social worker for over 20 years. I  
24 consider myself an active employee, because I was  
25 unlawfully placed on leave without pay while waiting

1 on the decision of my application for religious  
2 exemption and the [BACKGROUND NOISE] [INAUDIBLE] of  
3 natural immunity. And I was allegedly terminated  
4 without being served with a final notice, or leave,  
5 without pay, and without being charged and served  
6 with termination notice, because the DOE blocked my  
7 email account in October of 2021 when I was still  
8 unlawfully placed on leave without pay. I am very  
9 disappointed with this city of New York, because  
10 Mayor de Blasio had announced a vast [INAUDIBLE]  
11 policy on [INAUDIBLE] policy on July 26, 2021. And  
12 while MLC and [INAUDIBLE] unions were negotiating the  
13 best [INAUDIBLE] policy, Mayor de Blasio already  
14 stepped and imposed a COVID vaccine mandate for DOE  
15 employees, [INAUDIBLE] unconstitutional health  
16 order issued by the Health Commissioner on August  
17 24, 2021. That health order is unconstitutional,  
18 because it made no provisions for exemptions or  
19 accommodations for people who have religious beliefs  
20 of medical concerns. And also I had no due process  
21 rights measures.

22  
23 So, the [INAUDIBLE] was issued by [INAUDIBLE] who  
24 used to [INAUDIBLE] Mayor de Blasio, and he imposed a  
25 COVID [TIMER CHIMES] vaccine mandate... [CROSS-TALK]

1           CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you... [CROSS-  
2  
3 TALK]

4           AURA MOODY: I submitted an affidavit in support  
5 of my claims... [CROSS-TALK]

6           CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Please wrap up... please  
7 wrap up, thank you. Thank you for coming. Can you  
8 pass her the microphone? Thank you.

9           ROXANNE VALDEZ: [BACKGROUND NOISE] Hi, my name is  
10 Roxanne Valdez; I was New York City DOE teacher fired  
11 on February 2022 for declining the COVID-19 shot.  
12 Even though the vaccine mandate has been lifted, I  
13 have still not been able to return to work.

14           I have been an employee at the New York City  
15 Department of Education for 15 years. I'm so proud to  
16 be the first in my family to graduate college. It is  
17 with the best gratitude and love that I dedicate my  
18 diploma to my husband and my kids. My husband has  
19 been my rock, my confidant, and my biggest support.  
20 And that's why I decided to come over here in fight  
21 for my rights.

22           My career started in District 75 as  
23 paraprofessional 2007, then as a classroom teacher  
24 for grade one through six in September 2018. I was a  
25 full-time student to become a teacher - sleepless

1  
2 nights of school work, and took multiple college  
3 loans, so I could devote myself to helping kids in  
4 need. But, everything went downhill, because I  
5 wouldn't let the government tell me what to do with  
6 my body and my health.

7 On September 24, 2021 my Religious Exemption  
8 Application to the DOE vaccine mandate was denied. I  
9 reapplied, and I was denied again on September 28,  
10 2021. The reason I applied twice, was because I did  
11 not receive an appeal action.

12 I don't have a job yet, because I don't feel the  
13 need to look for a new one since I didn't do anything  
14 wrong to lose my job in the first place.

15 I came to this country in 1993 from Ecuador, and  
16 I can't believe in the United States of America that  
17 I have to choose between my faith and my job. Thank  
18 you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so much.

20 AUDREY DENNIS: Good afternoon, my name is Audrey  
21 Dennis, and I was a New York City Department of  
22 Education School Secretary prior to October 4, 2021  
23 under former mayor, Bill de Blasio; and continuing  
24 under the same leadership style of mayoral control  
25 governance, without any direct communication.



1           On February 11, 2022, Eric Adams, who is now the  
2           current mayor of the city, unconstitutionally and  
3           wrongfully, terminated me from my job of almost 30  
4           years for refusing to be coerced into taking the  
5           COVID vaccine, which the mayor had lifted on  
6           February 6, 2023.

8           Since being terminated, I have not been called  
9           back to work, nor have I found a job with steady  
10          income. Why is this so? It was disclosed to me that a  
11          problem code is normally assigned to a DOE employee's  
12          record for alleged concerns with conduct that may  
13          pose a threat to children or affecting job  
14          performance.

15          The union working with the DOE would still have  
16          the staff member on payroll until the case is  
17          decided, but in my case, I had done nothing wrong;  
18          yet, I was not given any due process for refusing  
19          this vaccine. So instead, when I had asked for an  
20          exception through my religious belief, this request  
21          was quickly denied by folks who were not religious at  
22          all. This code, which was placed in my record with  
23          the FBI, prevented anyone from hiring me.

24          Also, all this time, attorneys arguing cases for  
25          terminated city workers, faced an appeal thereafter,

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by the legal team from the City, using our tax dollars to fight a case that should not have been before the courts in the first place.

What has happened to me in all these years, these wasted years? According to LIJ Hospital, I have lost my mother, due to COVID, not getting to be at the hospital with my mother during her time of need; the death of my sister, who worked with the New York City Police Department. She was in the hospital, the same hospital, and no prior health issues with COVID. But taking the Pfizer vaccine, she suffered damages to her vital organs, and died this July; My husband was forced to retire from his job [TIMER CHIMES]... And I just want to finish with my husband and my son, too, who worked as teachers - all my family worked with the City. And I now a secretary for all these years in an educational institution where we are teaching children to be critical thinkers... [CROSS-TALK]

CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you, ma'am.

AUDREY DENNIS: Okay, just I want to say we...

[CROSS-TALK]

CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Ma'am... [CROSS-TALK]

2 AUDREY DENNIS: we must use our common sense!

3 Think for ourselves... [CROSS-TALK]

4 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you... [CROSS-TALK]

5 AUDREY DENNIS: otherwise we're going to end up

6 like people who went to Guyana [BACKGROUND NOISE]

7 with this preacher... [CROSS-TALK]

8 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you...

9 AUDREY DENNIS: and gave them Kool-Aid with  
10 poison.

11 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: [BACKGROUND NOISE] All  
12 right, thank you.

13 AUDREY DENNIS: So, we must use our brains...

14 [CROSS-TALK]

15 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so much for  
16 coming. Thank you, all of you, for coming.

17 AUDREY DENNIS: [BACKGROUND NOISE] and I would  
18 like to mention, that we have been illegally  
19 terminated without due process. [INAUDIBLE]

20 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: You already testified,  
21 thank you so much, thank you.

22 AUDREY DENNIS: I also have my documentation  
23 submitted [INAUDIBLE].. [CROSS-TALK]

24 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you, you can give  
25 it to the... [CROSS-TALK]

2 AUDREY DENNIS: [INAUDIBLE]

3 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you... [CROSS-  
4 TALK]

5 AUDREY DENNIS: [INAUDIBLE]... [CROSS-TALK]

6 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you, Ma'am...  
7 [CROSS-TALK]

8 AUDREY DENNIS: [INAUDIBLE] today [INAUDIBLE]...  
9 [CROSS-TALK]... [CROSS-TALK]

10 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Ma'am, it's two minutes,  
11 Ma'am, and you are done, thank you.

12 AUDREY DENNIS: [INAUDIBLE]

13 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Have a good day.

14 AUDREY DENNIS: [INAUDIBLE]

15 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: All right. So, if you do  
16 not adhere, we will end the hearing for those who are  
17 off topic, you decide.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now be turning to Zoom  
19 panelists. We will have Lauren Riolo (phonetic),  
20 followed by Dianne Baker-Pacius.

21 If anyone else is present on Zoom who wishes to  
22 speak, please use the Zoom Raise Hand Function.

23 Lauren, please proceed when the sergeant  
24 announces that you may begin.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

2 LAUREN RIOLO: [NO RESPONSE]

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lauren Riolo, you may begin.

4 LAUREN RIOLO: [NO RESPONSE]

5 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: We see you, try speaking.

6 LAUREN RIOLO: [INAUDIBLE]

7 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: We hear you, go ahead.

8 LAUREN RIOLO: [INAUDIBLE]

9 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Lauren, can you hear us?

10 Lauren, can you hear us? We see you.. [CROSS-TALK]

11 LAUREN RIOLO: Hello, I can hear you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay, we hear you.

13 LAUREN RIOLO: Can you hear me?

14 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Yes... [CROSS-TALK]

15 LAUREN RIOLO: Oh, amazing.

16 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay.

17 LAUREN RIOLO: Hi, everyone, good afternoon.

18 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: All right.

19 LAUREN RIOLO: My name is Lauren... Can you hear  
20 me?

21 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: We hear you. We hear  
22 you.

23 LAUREN RIOLO: Okay.

24 My name is Lauren Riolo, I work as A Special  
25 Education Teacher for the New York City Department of

1 Education for 12 years. I sub-taught for three  
2 years, earned two degrees, passed four exams, went to  
3 college, then graduate school for seven years. I  
4 worked hard not only in school, while working two  
5 jobs, but for my school, all to be left with a  
6 \$30,000.00 school loan that is good for nothing. It  
7 is a loan I can no longer afford to pay. At the  
8 time... Excuse me... [CROSS-TALK]

10 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: We want you to be safe,  
11 Lauren. Are you able to testify while you're  
12 driving?

13 LAUREN RIOLO: Yes! Yes... No, I'm parked.

14 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay, all right.

15 LAUREN RIOLO: At the time of being fired,  
16 February of 2022, I was not going to take an  
17 experimental vaccine and be the test dummy all to  
18 find out the potential loss of a pregnancy, which I  
19 was pregnant at the time. My own doctor was against  
20 me taking the vaccine. My religious beliefs and my  
21 personal beliefs are part of my faith. It is my body  
22 and my choice not to take a drug where we were all  
23 considered guinea pigs. What type of a mother would I  
24 then be if I did not stand up for what I believed in?  
25 What type of role model would I be if I did not show

1  
2 my daughters what I believed in? I will not teach my  
3 children to adhere to tyranny. I will stand up and  
4 stand for all religious and medical freedoms for all  
5 people - especially all of those who were put on the  
6 frontlines - like myself and the rest of the  
7 teachers, the police, the firefighters, EMT,  
8 sanitation workers, who once heroes teaching your  
9 children, helping those in need, all to be treated as  
10 the outcasts of society, where all of our livelihoods  
11 have been ripped from us.

12 Today I am seeking restitution. I want my career  
13 back, my paycheck, my years of service. All of it.  
14 I deserve it. It is my life and my choice. I have  
15 exhausted my pension funds to continue to live. And  
16 I have had enough. Please give us our jobs back and  
17 let us work. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so much for  
19 being here.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now turn to Dianne  
21 Baker-Pacius.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

23 DIANNE BAKER-PACIUS: Hello, can I be heard?

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes.

25 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Yes, we hear you.

1           DIANNE BAKER-PACIUS: Okay, great, thank you. My  
2 name is Dianne Baker-Pacius. I am a New York City  
3 Department of Education Teacher who was terminated  
4 last year. I was fired for declining the COVID shot.  
5 Even though the vaccine mandate has been lifted, I  
6 still have not been able to work because the  
7 Department of Education, the United Federation of  
8 Teachers, and New York City officials have chosen not  
9 to right the wrong of terminating NYC employees by  
10 reinstating us to our positions, at the tier from  
11 which we were terminated, and providing backpay,  
12 despite the COVID mandate being lifted since February  
13 2023.  
14

15           In the Summer 2021, Michael Mulgrew, who is the  
16 [BACKGROUND NOISE] [INAUDIBLE]held a town hall  
17 meeting stating that teachers would not be required  
18 to take the COVID shot, because, paraphrasing what he  
19 said, people should not have to choose between their  
20 livelihoods and taking a shot. We were; however,  
21 required to take weekly tests, to which I complied.

22           September 2021, I excitedly entered my school,  
23 PS/IS 180, as the new Movement and Mindfulness  
24 Instructor, a position that was created for me due to  
25 my 15+ years of experience as an educator and having



1 incorporated mindfulness and movement in my school  
2 over the years, the trust I established and nurtured  
3 with students, staff, and administration, and to  
4 provide the social-emotional support that our  
5 students needed since being remote for one year and  
6 the trauma of the pandemic as a whole.

7  
8 In September of 2021, NYC DOE employees were  
9 informed that we were required to take the shot and  
10 were sent an arbitration agreement. We were able to  
11 submit religious and medical exemption requests. I  
12 submitted a religious exemption, which was denied in  
13 less than 24 hours with a generic explanation. I was  
14 subsequently put on leave without pay.

15 Based on the arbitration agreement, while on  
16 LWOP, I was not allowed to seek any other form of  
17 employment. Due to this, me and my husband's debt  
18 significantly increased-using credit cards as we  
19 turned into a one-income household. We then had to  
20 move out of our apartment and started living with my  
21 mother October of 2022.

22 These events caused emotional distress, such as  
23 bursts of anger, crying spells, sleepless nights, and  
24 difficulty engaging with family and friends. I have  
25 attempted to get a full-time position, but have only

2 been able to get contract/gig positions. The  
3 financial burden continues to be on my husband and  
4 the stress of the situation continues to be on both  
5 of us and has now transferred to my elderly mother as  
6 she has been our primary form of refuge. Thank you  
7 [TIMER CHIMES]

8 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so much.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Is there anyone else on Zoom  
10 who wishes to speak, who had their hand raised  
11 earlier? If so, please unmute yourself and identify  
12 yourself before speaking.

13 KATHLEEN COMMACK: May I speak?

14 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Yes, we hear you, go  
15 ahead.

16 KATHLEEN COMMACK: Yes, my name is Kathleen  
17 Commack. I was a New York City mathematics junior  
18 high teacher from 1987 to 2021. I dedicated myself  
19 to 34 years, in the same school, and gave my all to  
20 my students. I worked summer school, July and August  
21 of 2021. I worked September, and in the beginning of  
22 October, I have a heart condition, I am under  
23 doctor's care at St. Francis Hospital, one of the top  
24 heart hospitals in the country. And my doctor  
25 strongly felt that I should not get the vaccine. I

2 have a loop recorder in my chest as we speak. I had  
3 not one, but two hearings. I was optimistic, but I  
4 was denied. I was placed on leave without pay. And  
5 I was forced to retire as a single mother of four,  
6 with a disabled child, living on the North Shore of  
7 Long Island.

8 It has been devastating emotionally, physically,  
9 financially. I feel like a leper. I never in a  
10 million years ever imagined that I would be fired and  
11 kicked to the curb like a piece of garbage. I loved  
12 my job. Out of 110 teachers, I was the second most  
13 senior in the school. I was the number most senior  
14 teacher in the Math Department. I was considered  
15 highly effective. I never had any problems. And I  
16 miss my job terribly. I never received a fair  
17 hearing, due process, and I was wrongfully  
18 terminated, and I want my job back. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so much for  
20 being here.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I believe we have one more  
22 person on Zoom who has their hand raised. Please  
23 identify yourself before starting your [BACKGROUND  
24 NOISE] testimony, thank you.

1 MS. GENE: Hi, my name is Ms. Gene, and I was a  
2 school teacher in the New York City of Department of  
3 Education for over 17 years. I held the highest  
4 seniority in my school for Special Education. And I  
5 was fired over the vaccine mandate when I tried to  
6 get a religious exemption. I was denied without  
7 explanation. I appealed it and was denied again  
8 without explanation. I was placed on leave without  
9 pay. I was not given due rights process for a 3028  
10 hearing. I was harassed by my principals, asking when  
11 I was going to return to the school. I was harassed  
12 by my Assistant Principal on phone calls, via email,  
13 if I was coming back. I was forced to resign on  
14 October 18th, when I was at the peak of my earning  
15 career. I was making top salary, I have a master's  
16 degree, plus 30, and I was let go for no reason, with  
17 no explanation, no due rights process. I worked for  
18 17 years in that school, and like all of the  
19 teachers, we worked hard. This was not something  
20 that I expected to happen to me. It has caused  
21 financial hardship to me and my family, emotional  
22 stress, it has caused so many problems that I am  
23 unable to find work. I had a problem code on my  
24 name, and I was denied work twice. I couldn't find a  
25

1                   job, because of the problem code until it was lifted,  
2                   which took over four months of communications back  
3                   and forth with the different agencies to try to get  
4                   the code released. There was no help from the UFT;  
5                   there was no guidance from the UFT; there was no  
6                   information from the UFT on what the fallout could be  
7                   if we decided to not take the vaccine. And I just  
8                   wanted it to be heard, and I wanted to speak to the  
9                   fact that, again, I have 17 years of experience, and  
10                  now I am starting over. I cannot find a job in the  
11                  DOE. Nobody wants to hire me, because I am going to  
12                  be too expensive. I have not heard back from the DOE  
13                  about getting my job back [TIMER CHIMES]. No one has  
14                  answered me. And like all of the other teachers, we  
15                  are still struggling and trying to pick up the pieces  
16                  from the fallout from what has happened... [CROSS-  
17                  TALK]  
18

19               CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you. Thank you for  
20               testifying. Thank you for coming today.

21               COMMITTEE COUNSEL: If anyone else on Zoom is  
22               present, who wishes to speak, please use the Zoom  
23               Raise Hand Function to let our staff know.

24

25

1                   And if there is anyone else in the Chamber who  
2 wishes to speak, who has not had the opportunity do  
3 so yet, please raise your hand.

4                   I am also going to call the five people who have  
5 registered, but who we do not see today: Billy Cozzes  
6 (sp?), Joan Giammarino, Daniel Kronemeyer (sp?),  
7 Christopher J. Gary (sp?) and Sarah [INAUDIBLE]?

8                   UNKNOWN: [INAUDIBLE]

9                   COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, we will try to remedy  
10 that with our folks, thank you.

11                   I would also like to note that written testimony,  
12 which will be reviewed in full by committee staff,  
13 can submitted to the record for up to 72 hours after  
14 the close of this hearing, by emailing it to  
15 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).

16 [PAUSE]

17                   CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Just give us a few  
18 minutes, we are trying to figure out the Zoom link.

19 [PAUSE]

20                   CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Kathleen, your camera is  
21 still on.

22                   COMMITTEE COUNSEL: At this point, if Mr.  
23 Christopher J. Gary (sp?) is available to speak for  
24 the record, then he can do so. If not, then we would  
25

1  
2 like to reiterate that he can submit testimony for  
3 the record by sending it to the testimony inbox at  
4 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov) . If Mr. Gary is unable to  
5 testify at this point, we will be adjourning the  
6 hearing.

7 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Mr. Gary, are you on?

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [INAUDIBLE]

9 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: All right, Mr. Gary, we  
10 will accept your testimony up to 72 hours after the  
11 close of the hearing.

12 We want to thank everyone for coming out. We  
13 wish everyone Happy Holidays. This hearing is  
14 adjourned.

15 [GAVEL SOUND] [GAVELING OUT]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date December 31, 2023