

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Monday, April 27, 2026

Start: 1:13 P.M.

Recess: 2:37 P.M.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - 8th Floor - Hearing
Room 1

B E F O R E: Hon. Dr. Nantasha M. Williams,
Deputy Speaker, Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Crystal Hudson

Farah N. Louis

Virginia Maloney

Chi A. Ossé

Althea V. Stevens

Sandra Ung

Other Council Members Attending: Salaam

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

A P P E A R A N C E S

Brad Hoylman-Sigal,
Manhattan Borough President

Ana Maria Archila,
Commissioner of the Mayor's Office for
International Affairs

Carly Avezzano,
Strategic Relationship Director at the New York
City Mayor's Office for International Affairs

Lucy Sexton,
Cultural Advocacy Coalition New Yorkers for
Culture and Arts

2 SERGEANT LEWIS: Mic check, mic check,
3 this is a mic check for the Committee on Cultural
4 Affairs, Libraries, and International Relations,
5 recorded by Walter Lewis in Hearing Room 1. Today's
6 date is April 27, 2026.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon, and
8 welcome to today's New York City Council Hearing on
9 Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International
10 Relations. At this time, I would like to remind
11 everyone to silence all electronic devices. Also, at
12 this point, and going forward, no one is to approach
13 the dais, no one.

14 Chair, we are ready to begin.

15 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: [GAVEL] Thank you
16 so much to our Sergeant at Arms, Walter.

17 Good afternoon, I am Deputy Speaker
18 Nantasha Williams, Chair of the Committee on
19 Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International
20 Relations. Welcome to our Oversight Hearing: The
21 Status of the NYC Junior Ambassadors Program and
Potential for Expansion.

In addition to our oversight topic today,
we will be hearing the following legislation:

1
2 Resolution Number 371, sponsored by
3 Council Members Yusef Salaam and Amanda Farías,
4 designating August 6 annually as Fatman Scoop
5 Recognition Day in the City of New York, and
6 celebrates the signature style that he brought to
7 every musical collaboration and the amazing energy he
8 brought to every audience.

9 Resolution Number 428, sponsored by
10 Council Member Shanel Thomas-Henry, celebrating the
11 arrival of the 2026 World Cup in the City of New
12 York.

13 We will also hear the following
14 legislation that I have sponsored:

15 Introduction Number 496, a study and
16 report on the installation of potential structures to
17 acknowledge the Draft Riots of 1863.

18 Resolution Number 402, declaring March 6
19 as Carmen de Lavallade Day in the City of New York to
20 celebrate her life and legacy and to honor her
21 groundbreaking contributions to dance and theater, as
well as her role in advancing diversity and artistic
excellence in performing arts.

1
2 Resolution Number 429, recognizing the
3 life and legacy of Alvin Ailey and honoring his
4 contributions to American dance and the founding of
5 the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

6 First, let me invite Council Member
7 Salaam to speak about his resolution.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Okay, can you all
9 hear me?

10 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yep.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Okay, perfect.
12 Thank you, Deputy Speaker and Chair, Dr. Natasha
13 Williams, for placing this resolution on today's
14 Agenda. And thank you to my colleague, Council Member
15 Amanda Fariás, for joining me as a co-sponsor. This
16 one really means a lot to me personally.

17 Isaac Freeman III, known to the world as
18 Fatman Scoop, was my friend, not a passing
19 acquaintance, not someone I knew from the industry,
20 but a real friend. Someone who showed up for me the
21 way that only genuine people do. When I was
inaugurated as the Council Member for Harlem District
9, Fatman Scoop pulled up. He didn't have to be
there. But that was Isaac. He showed up, put on a
show, and made sure that there was something that

1 none of us in that space would ever forget. That was
2 him. That was his gift. He didn't just bring big
3 energy to a performance; he brought it to life.
4 Harlem raised him. Cardinal Hayes shaped him. Hot 97
5 introduced him to the world. And then the world fell
6 in love with that thunderous voice and unmistakable
7 call and response. Whether it was *Be Faithful* or a
8 Grammy-winning collaboration with Missy Elliott and
9 Ciara, or whether it was simply walking into the
10 room, Fatman Scoop made you feel something powerful.
11 We lost him on August 30th, 2024. He was 56 years old
12 and still in the middle of doing what he loved.

13 Declaring August 6th as Fatman Scoop
14 Recognition Day in New York City is the least we can
15 do for a man who gave this city and this world so
16 much of himself. Rest well, Isaac. Fatman Scoop,
17 Harlem sees you, and we miss you. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you so much,
19 Council Member.

20 Now, let me invite Council Member
21 Virginia Maloney to speak about the resolution that
she has with Council Member Thomas-Henry.

COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: Thank you, Chair
Williams.

1
2 I am proud to introduce, on behalf of my
3 colleague, Council Member Thomas-Henry, and
4 co-sponsor Resolution 428, which will celebrate the
5 arrival of the 2026 World Cup. We will have 1.2
6 million visitors descending on the New York, New
7 Jersey area to celebrate the cup, with 48 teams among
8 which all New Yorkers can find their heritage
9 competing in the tournament, and are welcome to join
10 us in celebrating the Cup. And I'm grateful we have
11 this resolution.

12 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you so much,
13 Council Member.

14 And finally, let me say a few words about
15 my legislation, Introduction Number 496, which would
16 require the Commission of the Department of Cultural
17 Affairs to conduct a study and provide a report on
18 the installation of potential structures
19 acknowledging the Draft Riots of 1863. During the
20 Civil War in 1863, two days after the first draft
21 lottery, violent riots broke out in New York City and
lasted five days, with thousands of people, mostly
Irish mobs, terrorizing the city. The rioters
specifically targeted African Americans,
abolitionists, and the wealthy. Many Irish New

1
2 Yorkers who were already going through economic hard
3 times were concerned about the competition they would
4 potentially face if free Blacks and Confederate
5 states migrated to New York. The riots had
6 particularly devastating effects on the African
7 American community and downtown Manhattan. Frightened
8 by what they had experienced, many African American
9 New Yorkers fled Uptown to what is now Harlem. I want
10 to thank my constituent, Nia Clark, a reporter for
11 NY1, for giving me the background that led to this
12 resolution.

13 My two resolutions commemorating the
14 lives and lasting legacies of Carmen de Lavallade and
15 Alvin Ailey are tributes to two of America's greatest
16 dancers. Having met as high school students in Los
17 Angeles, Ms. de Lavallade took Mr. Ailey to her dance
18 classes at the studio of Lester Horton, whose small,
19 integrated company was their first dance home
20 together. After Mr. Horton's untimely death, Ms. de
21 Lavallade and Mr. Ailey came to New York City to
dance on Broadway. Soon, Mr. Ailey created *Blues
Suite* and *Revelations* for his then-tiny new company,
the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater—love
Revelations, by the way. I try to see it every year,

1 which is now a universally acclaimed global
2 ambassador. His admiration for his first partner, Ms.
3 de Lavallade, never waned. Together, they brought
4 African American dancers into the spotlight in a way
5 that revolutionized dance in America. As a former
6 dancer, I could say a lot more, but nothing would
7 match seeing them dance for yourself in the many
8 videos that are still available to watch. Mr.
9 Ailey's brilliant, Horton-inspired choreography is
still performed by his company today.

10 And now for a few words about our
11 oversight topic. All of us on this committee know
12 that New York City is the arts and cultural capital
13 of our country, many would say of the world. We
14 delight in applauding the amazing and innovative work
15 that our arts and cultural organizations do across
16 the city in performance after performance and
17 exhibition after exhibition. We take great pride in
our museums, theaters, concert halls, botanical
gardens, zoos, and so much more.

18 But let me now focus on the final piece
19 of our Committee's name, "International Relations".
20 New York City is also one of the great international
21 relations capitals of the world, and we are proud to

1 host the United Nations and its many foreign
2 dignitaries. Today's oversight topic focuses on an
3 educational program that our Mayor's Office for
4 International Affairs has been operating since 2015,
5 Junior Ambassadors. This program takes classrooms of
6 students in the 7th, 8th, or 9th grade on a tour and
7 a briefing at the UN, and sends UN diplomats into our
8 schools for discussions about the work of the UN. As
9 Junior Ambassadors Staffers Day, we are creating
10 global diplomats locally. I applaud this attempt to
11 involve our young people in a program that can help
12 give them global awareness that all of us will need
13 in order to handle the geopolitical issues that our
14 country will continue to face in the coming years. I
15 want all of our public school students to have the
16 opportunity that Junior Ambassadors offers, an
17 opportunity that is as unique to New York City as
18 Broadway is. We have the UN right here, and I hope
19 that we can figure out how to make its worldwide
20 life-changing work tangible for all of our students.
21 The UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which
underpin the Junior Ambassadors program, take on the
world's poverty, hunger, inequality, health, quality
education, clean energy, climate action, and more.

1 All of our New York City public school students need
2 a deep understanding of the 17 Goals to live
3 productively as citizens of our city and of the
4 world. There is no better place to start than with
5 Junior Ambassadors.

6 Now I want to acknowledge my colleagues
7 on the Committee who are present: Council Member
8 Lewis, Salaam, Maloney, Stevens, and Hudson. I want
9 to thank my staff, Priyanka, Shakee, Alejandro,
10 Regina, and Carolina.

11 I would like to remind everyone from the
12 public who wishes to testify in person today that you
13 must fill out an n appearance card, which is located
14 on the desk of the Sergeant at Arms at the back of
15 the room. Please fill out the slip even if you have
16 already registered to testify in advance.

17 When you are called, please limit your
18 testimony to two minutes, whether you are testifying
19 in person or on Zoom. I'm also going to ask my
20 colleagues to limit their questions and comments to
21 five minutes.

But before we go to the Administration to
talk about the hearings topic today, we've been
joined by Manhattan Borough President Brad

1
2 Hoylman-Sigal, and I will ask him to come up. I know
3 he wants to testify on my draft rights bill. I'm.
4 Excited to have the Borough President's support.

5 BOROUGH PRESIDENT HOYLMAN-SIGAL: Thank
6 you, Madam Chair, Deputy Speaker, and Members of the
7 Committee. It's good to see everyone.

8 I'm Brad Hoylman-Sigal. I have the honor
9 of serving as Manhattan Borough President. Eight
10 score and three years since the New York City Draft
11 Riots nearly tore this borough from its foundations
12 and brought the deadly horrors of racial
13 discrimination to our front doors. I commend you for
14 your efforts today to acknowledge the Draft Riots of
15 1863. Several terrific New York historians have
16 written about the Draft Riots, I might note,
17 including independent scholar Barnet Schecter, and
18 our own Harold Holzer, whom I named a few months ago
19 as the new Manhattan Borough Historian, with explicit
20 instructions to find a way or ways to memorialize
21 these 1863 Draft Riots.

 The riots, as you know, started in a
brutally hot week after the Union's big victory at
the Battle of Gettysburg, when the nation's
first-ever conscription law went into effect. On 2nd

1 Ave. and 46th Street, Army officers were preparing to
2 pull the initial draftees' names out of a large
3 wooden wheel when an angry mob outside began throwing
4 bricks through the windows. Over the next couple of
5 days, the outbreak grew into unspeakable proportions.
6 Commercial establishments as small as corner drug
7 stores and as large as Brooks Brothers were
8 vandalized and looted. People's apartments were
9 broken into, furnishings destroyed, and police were
10 attacked on the street. But worst of all, it was the
11 violence directed at Black people. Men were dragged
12 from their homes in lower Manhattan, beaten, sexually
13 mutilated, lynched, set on fire, or driven off the
14 docks into the river to their deaths. The grotesque
15 killing spree claimed some 119 victims. But we don't
16 really know the total; it could have been much
17 higher.

18 There is ample reason that Harold Holzer
19 and other historians refer to the Draft Riots as the
20 worst civil disturbance in American history, save for
21 the Civil War itself. But the worst was yet to come.
On July 14th, a mob of white people attacked a new
modern orphanage for Black children that stood on the
northwest corner of 5th Avenue and 43rd Street, the

1 site of a super, tall skyscraper now rising next to
2 the city's famous Century Club. The 1863 building,
3 known then as the *Colored Orphans Asylum*, stood just
4 a block from the source of Manhattan's water supply,
5 the reservoir standing where the New York Public
6 Library now stands, and its occupants included the
7 children of Black soldiers who had recently
8 volunteered to fight for their own freedom in the
9 Union Army. But the sight of that orphanage itself,
10 shrouded in construction scaffolding these days, like
11 too much of Manhattan, bears no marker to convey its
12 history. It never has. In fact, when the excavation
13 pit was dug over a decade ago, a veteran New York
14 Times reporter, now its official historian, David
15 Dunlap, pleaded for the chance to do just a little
16 archaeological exploration on the site. He hoped to
17 unearth just a few artifacts that could testify to
18 the lives of the forgotten children who once found
19 peace on the site, and that ended their time there in
20 terror. David Dunlap was denied access.

18 Well, it's not too late to make amends
19 for the invisibility of the Draft Riot victims. I
20 would certainly support your study with legislation,
21

1 and I hope we can have any experts at my disposal to
2 assist you.

3 My longer testimony, which I'll give you,
4 has some thoughts about the locations of markers that
5 you might envision:

6 • Fifth Avenue and 43rd Street, where the
7 atrocity against the Orphan Asylum took place. And
8 maybe at the headquarters, the orphanage later built
9 in Harlem, up at 143rd Street between Broadway and
10 Amsterdam;

11 • The site of the first outbreak of
12 anti-draft violence: Third Avenue, between 46th and
13 47th Streets;

14 • The site of the federal armory on
15 Second Avenue and 23rd Street, burned down by the
16 rioters, and the nearby Union Steam factory, where
17 workers were clubbed to death or pushed to their
18 deaths from the upper windows;

19 • The site of the old New York Tribune
20 building south of City Hall, not far from here, where
21 freedom of the press almost came to extinction;

• And perhaps even the basilica of the
Old St. Patrick's Cathedral around Prince and
Mulberry Streets, where Archbishop John Hughes made a

1
2 hugely important speech, imploring Irish Americans to
3 put down their weapons and end the violence that was
4 staining the streets and reputation of New York City.

5 We should not be afraid to mark these spots.
6 We proudly celebrate our great accomplishments here,
7 but we seem to have far more reservations about
8 admitting our failures. We should identify all such
9 sites, either in celebration or in solemn
10 acknowledgement.

11 History is complicated, but unless we
12 fully confront and understand the past, we can't, and
13 we won't find what Lincoln once called a "vast
14 future". The idea is to learn from our mistakes, not
15 ignore them, by making sure, as you have put forward,
16 we don't erase what happened in Manhattan as well as
17 other cities.

18 By the way, in July 1863, we will make
19 sure nothing as ugly and devastating ever happens
20 again. It's part of our history. We have closed our
21 eyes too far for too long, but it's not too late to
open them and shine a light on the truth. Thank you
very much, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you so much,
Borough President. I really appreciate your support

1 and coming and testifying. I agree with you, and a
2 few years ago, Council Member Hudson, Council Member
3 Lewis, and I put together a Juneteenth package. One
4 of the pieces of the package was around truth and
5 reconciliation. And while there are many harms that
6 have happened in the city, directly by government,
7 indirectly by government, I believe, and I think many
8 people in the Council believe, that we need to tell
9 the truth and we need to be able to tell these
10 stories.

11 I did not even know about this, and I was
12 horrified to learn about this particular issue and
13 how vast it was and how much it terrorized Black New
14 Yorkers at that time.

15 So I really do appreciate your support
16 and partnership, and I hope that we can get this bill
17 passed swiftly and truly do something to honor the
18 many lives that were lost during the Draft Riots.

19 BOROUGH PRESIDENT HOYLMAN-SIGAL: Thank
20 you very much. I'll leave my testimony for it.

21 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yes, we want your
testimony. It was a great testimony.

Alright, I will now turn to the Committee
Counsel to swear in the Administration, who will make

1 their way. As I mentioned to them, I'm really excited
2 to have the Mayor's Office of International Affairs
3 here. Like, I don't know, Regina, I don't know when
4 the last time we've had anything on International.
5 Never? Wow. So we're really excited. And more
6 importantly, really excited for some of the proactive
7 work we can do together in partnership with the
8 Council.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Good
9 afternoon. Could you please raise your right hands?

10 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
11 whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your
12 testimony before this committee and to respond
13 honestly to Council Member questions? I'll call on
14 each of you individually.

14 Commissioner Archila?

15 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Yes, I do.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Carly Avezzano?

17 CARLY AVEZZANO: Yes, I do.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. As a
19 reminder to all of our witnesses, please state your
20 name prior to your testimony for the record. Thank
21 you so much, and you may begin.

1
2 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Thank you so much.

3 My name is Ana Maria Archila. I'm the Commissioner of
4 International Affairs for the city of New York. Good
5 afternoon, Deputy Speaker Williams and Members of the
6 Committee. It is wonderful to see you. It's wonderful
7 to know that we are invited into this conversation
8 and let this be the first of many.

9 My name is Ana Maria Archila, and I serve
10 as Commissioner of the Mayor's Office for
11 International Affairs. I am joined today by Carly
12 Avezzano, Director of Strategic Relationships and NYC
13 Junior Ambassadors in our office. Thank you for the
14 opportunity to testify and to share more about the
15 NYC Junior Ambassadors program.

16 NYC Junior Ambassadors is a citywide
17 initiative based in our office that connects New York
18 City youth in 7th, 8th, and 9th grades with the
19 United Nations, the diplomatic community, and global
20 learning opportunities. The program reflects New York
21 City's unique role as a global capital and home to
the United Nations, and brings that access directly
into our classrooms.

The truth is that the Deputy Speaker
Williams already described very clearly both the

1 spirit, the intention, and the work of the program.
2 So I'll try to move fast through that description.

3 Since its launch, the Junior Ambassadors
4 program has grown steadily both in reach and impact.
5 The program has been active for 11 years and has
6 served approximately 600 students each year across 20
7 classrooms. The majority of participating schools are
8 Title I schools, which ensures that students from
9 historically underserved communities have access to
10 learning experiences that might otherwise be out of
11 reach. The program aims to expose New York City kids
12 to the world of global diplomacy and invite them to
13 see themselves as agents in the world. In total, the
14 program has partnered with 114 different schools, 250
15 educators, and reached more than 6,000 youth and
16 educators since its inception.

17 Demand for this program continues to
18 grow, with more schools applying each year than we
19 are currently able to accommodate. This year, we
20 received 55 applications for just 20 classroom slots.
21 Alumni applied at a rate of 59%. This shows the
program's success, the hunger for this kind of
educational experience, and the need to expand
access.

1
2 A defining feature of the New York City
3 Junior Ambassadors program is its direct engagement
4 with the diplomatic community and the United Nations.
5 All classrooms participate in a guided tour of the
6 United Nations Headquarters, giving students the
7 opportunity to engage with a site of global
8 importance in their own city. In addition, each
9 classroom receives a visit from a diplomat. Through
10 these experiences, students gain firsthand exposure
11 to diplomacy, international perspectives, the global
12 challenges we're all confronting together, and the
13 potential career paths for themselves.

14 This year, we have classes from City
15 Council districts 2 and 9 in Manhattan; districts 11,
16 13, 15, 16 in the Bronx; districts 19, 21, 22, 24 in
17 Queens; districts 37, 42, 43, 45, 48 in Brooklyn; and
18 districts 49 and 51 in Staten Island.

19 This year, we're partnering with over 20
20 permanent missions representing countries from every
21 region, including Asia, Africa, the Middle East,
Europe, Latin America, and Australia. These
interactions make global issues tangible and relevant
in a way that enhances classroom instruction that
classroom instruction wouldn't be able to do alone.

1
2 In addition to these engagements, the
3 visit to the United Nations and the visit from the
4 diplomats, each classroom receives a small stipend to
5 support student-led action projects aligned with the
6 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, as the
7 Deputy Speaker was describing. These Sustainable
8 Development Goals are a global framework of 17 goals
9 adopted by all UN member states to address urgent
10 challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate
11 change, and peace by 2030. These projects focus on
12 themes such as climate action, human rights, and
13 sustainable development, and encourage students to
14 think critically about how global challenges manifest
15 at the city and community level.

13 For example, last year, students at
14 P.S./I.S 78 in Queens did their learning project on
15 Sustainable Development Goal number six, Clean Water
16 and Sanitation. They related the Sustainable
17 Development Goal to the conditions in the Newtown
18 Creek and developed a project that focused on water
19 quality and environmental awareness, including
20 cleaning up local waterways and removing trash. At
21 Icahn Charter School #4, students created sustainable
fashion pieces from recycled materials to raise

1 awareness about marine conservation and Sustainable
2 Development Goal 14, which is related to life below
3 water within their school community. These
4 experiences help students see themselves as change
5 makers and connect to global learning to a tangible
6 local impact.

7 The educators who participate in this
8 program consistently report that students who
9 participate demonstrate increased confidence,
10 stronger communication skills, and a deeper sense of
11 civic responsibility. We consistently hear from
12 students and educators that this program is
13 transformative. Students begin to see themselves as
14 global citizens. They make connections between their
15 lives and the broader world, and they gain the
16 confidence to participate in conversations about the
17 issues shaping the future.

18 Looking ahead, we see continued demand
19 for this program and a strong interest from schools,
20 educators, and international partners. We are focused
21 on expanding access, strengthening partnerships with
the diplomatic community and the United Nations, and
building on the program's success.

1
2 We believe that Junior Ambassador
3 programs reflect the best of New York City, its
4 diversity, its global leadership, and its commitment
5 to preparing young people for an interconnected
6 world. It ensures that our students are not only
7 learning about global issues, but are prepared to
8 engage with them and take action.

9 The program embodies the City's
10 commitment not only to host the United Nations but
11 also to plant the seeds of a future that allows us
12 all to recognize the way that our worlds are
13 connected and lean into the idea of interdependence
14 to recommit ourselves to peace and sustainable
15 development for people and the planet.

16 We want to take a moment to thank the New
17 York City Public Schools for their partnership. This
18 idea comes to life every year thanks to their
19 efforts. The miracle that is the New York City Public
20 Schools cannot be understated. We are so proud to be
21 able to partner with the incredible educators in our
city who walk into our schools every day. And we are
eager to continue this partnership and grow it even
more.

1
2 And with that, I'm going to stop and
3 thank you all for giving us the opportunity to share
4 the story of the New York City Junior Ambassadors
5 program, and I welcome any questions.

6 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you. I was
7 looking at your testimony because I'm like the
8 district you met, where those school districts are
9 council districts? But it was council districts...

10 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Those were council
11 districts.

12 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: First question I
13 have is, how do schools partner with the Junior
14 Ambassadors Program and the Mayor's Office for
15 International Affairs, because my district is not
16 listed. And so that's like the number, uno question/
17 problem. So yeah, off the top of my head, based on
18 your testimony.

19 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Of course, of
20 course. Well, allow me to actually invite my
21 colleague Carly Avezzano to speak to this question.

DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: Thank you,
Commissioner.

We invite all schools and afterschool
programs to apply to the program. We make sure that

1 we have diversity in terms of borough. We want to
2 make sure that every borough is represented and that
3 there are several different schools and programs from
4 every borough each year. But besides that, we look at
5 the applications based on what the educator is
6 interested in exposing their students to, how they
7 plan to interact with the Sustainable Development
8 Goals, and what their ideas are for learning
9 strategies. So, beyond boroughs, we are interested in
10 what the educators are planning to do with the
11 different elements of the program as well.

12 But all schools and programs in New York
13 City are invited to apply.

14 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I'm just wondering,
15 and again, maybe this is an opportunity for us to
16 partner and work with our school communities on best
17 practices for applying, because if you have a set of
18 criteria that you're using to select schools, I could
19 see, you know, certain applications might be stronger
20 and then potentially disproportionately impact where
21 you're going. And so, for instance, I know I saw in
the previous year you did have representation in
District 28, which is adjacent to my council
district. So I'm like, okay, South East Queens was

1 represented. But this year there were no districts
2 from South East Queens at all, which South East
3 Queens and North Queens are like two different
4 communities, also demographically two different
5 communities. So it's something like that, that of
6 course, I just would want to be helpful in figuring
7 out ways to truly ensure that there's representation,
8 even in the borough itself.

8 Okay, so now, actually, to the questions
9 that were prepared, how many students have
10 participated in the Junior Ambassador Program since
11 its inception?

11 DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: Thank you, Deputy
12 Speaker Williams, for your question.

13 Since it was launched 11 years ago, we've
14 reached over 6,000 students across 114 schools.

15 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Awesome, and how
16 many students, teachers, and classrooms are
17 participating during this school year?

17 DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: There are 20
18 classrooms this year, and close to 550 students are
19 participating this year.

19 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Now, essentially,
20 this is alluding to what I was saying, were they not
21

1 selected because their applications were not adequate
2 or because there was not sufficient funding?

3 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: I want to address
4 that question. So I think we definitely could, uh,
5 would love to partner with you to make sure that we
6 are reaching all council districts and really making
7 sure that students have the opportunity to
8 participate. So there's a lot that we could do to
9 improve outreach and to ensure that every corner of
10 the city has the opportunity to join in and get
11 Junior Diplomats in their corner.

12 You know, we have built the capacity to
13 welcome 20 classrooms. So that's kind of the current
14 capacity we have. I think we, you know, would love to
15 see more students reach this opportunity. And I think
16 the selection process both thinks about who the-- in
17 some ways, some of the current classrooms or
18 classrooms that have participated in the past, where
19 the educators understood the value of this program,
20 and were first to apply and eager to kind of engage
21 with us. So I think that also plays into ultimately
this election.

So with a partnership with you, I'm sure
we could incentivize more applications. And then

1 obviously our capacity exists as it exists right now
2 for 20 classrooms, but more is more if we can get
3 there.

4
5 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yes, and I actually
6 asked that question incorrectly. Reading is
7 fundamental, as we're talking about children.

8 (LAUGHTER)

9 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: And so the end part
10 of that--So thank you, 20 classrooms participated
11 this year, but how many teachers and classrooms
12 applied to the program but were not able to
13 participate?

14 DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: So this year, there
15 were 55 applications for 20 slots.

16 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: And then you kind
17 of answered it already, and that's based on a mixture
18 of funding and the criteria that you have. Okay.

19 How many total staff members are in your
20 office, and how many staff members work on the Junior
21 Ambassadors Program full-time or part-time?

COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: So the Office of
International Affairs has 13 total staff members. And
sort of the office as a whole is tasked with being

1 the connective tissue to the diplomatic community in
2 New York City, which is the largest diplomatic court
3 we have in the country. And Carly, my colleague,
4 Carly Avezzano, is the coordinator of the Junior
5 Ambassadors. Everybody in the office participates in
6 supporting the Junior Ambassadors Program, both
7 logistically and sort of programmatically, but we
8 have one full-time person dedicated to this program.

9 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you. And how
10 many diplomats are participating during this school
11 year?

12 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: This school year,
13 we have 20 diplomats engaged, so we try to get one
14 diplomat per classroom, and that is usually the norm
15 every year.

16 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: How do you select
17 the diplomats?

18 DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: So we invite all
19 diplomats from all UN missions to sign up to
20 volunteer to participate, and then once they sign up,
21 we're able to match them with a classroom based on
classroom interest. The SDGs that they're focused on,
and also the interests of the classroom in learning
about a specific country, as well.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Do you get a lot of
3 participation from the diplomats or volunteers, or is
4 it difficult to recruit them?

5 DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: I think because we
6 have strong relationships with them throughout the
7 year, we're able to continue to talk about the value
8 of the program, and then we have them sign up. But
9 diplomats are very busy. They have very busy
10 schedules at the UN. So that is the main challenge
11 with getting more diplomats than we currently have.

12 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yes. That said,
13 what is the time commitment for the diplomats? Is it
14 one diplomat per classroom, or is each participating
15 diplomat assigned to multiple classrooms?

16 DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: So we assign each
17 diplomat to one classroom, and the time commitment is
18 an hour at the school, so that's excluding travel
19 time.

20 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Once a month?

21 DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: They do one visit per
school year... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Oh, (INAUDIBLE)
okay.

1
2 DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: So we would match the
3 school, and the school gets one visit, and the
4 diplomat visits one classroom.

5 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay. And what are
6 the transportation and UN ticket costs on average for
7 one classroom?

8 DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: So we're very thankful
9 to the United Nations for their partnership. They're
10 able to give us a discounted rate of half off a
11 normal tour cost, which we pay approximately \$200 per
12 tour. Normally, it would cost closer to \$400.

13 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: For one classroom?
14 So a classroom of students can come, and...

15 DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: for \$200. Okay.
17 What is the current total budget for the
18 program?

19 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: So this year the
20 program is running on about \$25,000. It's not a lot
21 of money for a program that touches 500 young people.

In previous years, we've had a little bit
more. And this program was resourced over the last
three years from a foundation that partnered with the
Mayor's Fund. So it was a slightly better resource,

1
2 but it is essentially a very lean program that
3 touches lots of young people and sort of imprints in
4 them a very foundational understanding of their
5 relationship to the world, with the combination of
6 the visit to the UN, the visit from diplomats, and
7 then the projects that the kids do with the
8 classroom.

9
10 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah. And my next
11 question was, what other sources of funding does this
12 program have? So you mentioned outside funding. Is
13 there any government funding?

14
15 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: So, you know,
16 obviously, the Office as a whole engages in the
17 program. So in some ways the office is-- directly
18 funded by the Mayor's Office or City Hall. It's kind
19 of supporting the program. And we have had funding
20 from the MSC Foundation through the support of the
21 Mayor's fund. This year, we're using funds from last
year's grant. That it was wrapping up, and also from
our sort of core office fund or budget.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay. I have more
20 questions, but I will pause and go to my colleagues.
21 I know Council Member Stevens has a question.

20
21 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Well, hello.

1

COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Hello.

2

3

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I'm really excited to hear about this program, and I guess I'll start with something you had mentioned that not only schools could apply, but Afterschools could apply.

4

5

6

Could you talk a little bit about what that partnership looks like? And are there different criteria from schools and afterschool programs?

7

8

DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: There's currently no different criteria. We evaluate all applications equally, and we're in partnership with DYCD in helping to get the word out and let afterschool programs know.

10

11

12

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And what does that look like? What does that partnership look like to help spread the word, especially to providers?

13

14

15

DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: Yes. So we share about the opportunity, the deadline to apply, and we share that with our partners and staff at DYCD, and then they're able to connect to afterschool programs...

16

17

18

(CROSS-TALK)

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COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So they're basically just sending it to their providers?

20

21

DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: Yes.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Okay. I would
3 love to connect to talk more about some ideas,
4 because sometimes that just gets lost in translation
5 with providers.

6 DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: Yes... (CROSS-TALK)

7 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: especially in
8 certain communities.

9 My next question is just, how do you
10 track it? I mean, obviously, it's not a lot of money,
11 so I guess it's really hard to contract. But how do
12 you track students? Do you help them with trying to
13 connect them to schools that have programs like Model
14 UN to continue this work? And Model UN typically
15 takes place in high school, I'm sure you guys know.
16 Especially because you're working with a younger
17 population, do you guys do any of those that work
18 around the continuation?

19 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: This is where the
20 educators play a crucial role. The educators are the
21 ones who initiate the application for our program.
They are the ones who work with the students to
select the projects that they will do, and they're
the ones who maintain the relationship with the
students.

1
2 We know that from the conversations with
3 educators that they continue to hear from the
4 students about how revealing it is to visit the UN
5 and to hear from diplomats and to kind of understand
6 the role that individual actors play in a global
7 sphere.

8 But we ourselves as an office don't keep
9 a detailed track of where the students are going to
10 rely on the school... (CROSS-TALK)

11 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Do you guys have
12 any...

13 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: to do it...
14 (CROSS-TALK)

15 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: contact with
16 alumni and folks who've been in the program, like
17 what does that look like?

18 DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: Yeah, we keep in touch
19 as they reach out to us often to tell us about how
20 they want to engage with the UN again. Oftentimes, if
21 they're not in the program, they're still interested
in engaging with the UN, and they're able to attend
events and have speaking opportunities. We keep in
touch, and we learn about them as they're engaging
with the UN as well.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I guess my next
3 question, too, would just be around-- prime example,
4 LIU has an advanced certificate program like UN, and
5 do you guys do any partnership with them as far as
6 coming in and talking with the students to have
7 people who are from their community and represent
8 them? I am just always trying to think about ways
9 that we are making it real for young people, because
10 even sometimes with diplomats, like that's so far
11 gone.

12 And, you know, I actually know a couple
13 of friends who went-- I went to LIU, but I know
14 people who went through that UN program as well. And
15 so, how do you make it more localized for young
16 people to make those through lines of connection? And
17 have you thought about that?

18 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: The way that we
19 localize their learning is by trying to really
20 support them in thinking about their classroom
21 projects. I believe that in the handouts we have some
examples. So you might each have received this, which
shows-- it just has a brief description of the
project that particular school did related to the
Sustainable Development Goals.

1
2 So that's kind of one way that we. Sort
3 of concretize their learning, and we would welcome
4 more. I think there's so much opportunity. Obviously,
5 what happens at the UN doesn't just happen with
6 diplomats. It's happened with actors from civil
7 society of many kinds. And obviously, young people
8 themselves are actors in the world. And so, we would
9 welcome more ideas to enrich the program and make it
10 even more relatable and more concrete for young
11 people... (CROSS-TALK)

12 COMMISSIONER SCOTT-MCKENZIE: I was just
13 thinking that, especially-- there are people who are
14 learning this and this process, and so even having
15 some partnership there, and I know I was looking for
16 internship hours and things to do.

17 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: It's a great
18 idea... (CROSS-TALK)

19 COMMISSIONER SCOTT-MCKENZIE: Like, how do
20 we then maximize the things that are already going on
21 to make sure that we're making those connections?

COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: It would help us
amplify the reach and capacity of the program to
actually establish some of these partnerships. Thank
you for that idea.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: No problem. Thank
you. Those are all the questions I have.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Council Member
4 Maloney?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: Thank you, Chair,
6 and thank you for testifying.

7 As the Council Member who represents the
8 United Nations, it's great to hold this hearing on
the New York City Junior Ambassadors Program.

9 I would note that District 4, which is
10 right around the UN, is also not included in the
list.

11 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: We should correct
12 that... (CROSS-TALK)

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: You've got room
14 for expansion... (CROSS-TALK)

15 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: (INAUDIBLE) all the
districts... (CROSS-TALK)

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: In your
17 testimony, you mentioned that you served 20
18 classrooms per year, roughly, and more than double
19 that in applications. So what are the exact plans you
20 have for how to expand the program, and what are the
primary constraints for an expansion, whether it's

1 budget, staff capacity, the participating UN
2 missions, or something else?

3 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Well, as you might
4 know, I'm fairly new in my role, having started about
5 five weeks ago, and trying to sort of define our
6 lines of work. I'll say that the Junior Ambassadors
7 Program holds both the spirit and the promise of our
8 office, uh, our office's responsibility. Obviously,
9 New York City is the host to the UN. The UN is a
10 tremendously important global space and is under
11 tremendous pressure right now. It is a tremendous
12 contribution to the future of the UN to actually
13 plant the seeds of understanding the importance of
14 multilateralism, as young people are thinking about
15 and learning about the world. I say all of this to
16 say that we would love to grow this program. We also
17 have, you know, as an office, the responsibility to
18 relate to the whole diplomatic community and to think
19 about how, not just to relate and serve the
20 diplomatic community, but also to think about how our
21 international relationships work, which helps us
learn from the world and benefit New Yorkers.

So, as I am thinking about the work of
this office, there will be both the lines of work

1 that are about relating to other cities to help us
2 bring innovation, and kind of accelerate the learning
3 that helps us advance the affordability agenda, and
4 many other things that are important to New Yorkers.

5 We are committed to being a city that
6 supports the UN and the efforts to advance peace and
7 to address the challenges that the Sustainable
8 Development Goals name and organize.

9 And we believe that in order for the UN
10 to continue to succeed, New York City has to play the
11 role of bringing it to life for people. And these
12 programs embody that.

13 We will continue to do this work. We want
14 to continue to do this work and want to figure out
15 how to expand its reach. I think the idea of
16 partnership with other places, other educational
17 entities, is sort of aligned on purpose, and would
18 allow us to do that.

19 And of course, the limitation is always
20 just capacity. At the end of the day, we are a fairly
21 tight, lean office with a big responsibility, a
lovely responsibility, but still a complex kind of
multi-layered one.

1
2 So I think it's balancing the different
priorities that we have to drive in this work.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: And with your
4 current annual budget, how much of the program is
5 city-funded versus leaning on some of those
6 partnerships that you already have in place, like the
UN Foundation?

7 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: At the staff level,
8 the support of the program is city-funded. The
9 activities, the stipends, the gatherings that we do
10 for educators, for students have been greatly
11 supported by the philanthropic partnership that we
12 have, which we're wrapping up now with the MSC
Foundation.

13 So we will look for other partners to
14 help us continue that work. But kind of at the staff
15 level, our capacity will remain intact, and we'll
continue to do that when we can.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: Thank you very
17 much.

18 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

19 I just want to acknowledge that Council
20 Member Ung has joined us on Zoom.
21

1
2 And now I'll turn my questions to
3 program content. So what kinds of projects do
4 students complete by the end of the program?

5 DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: So students complete
6 action-oriented projects that are aligned with the UN
7 Sustainable Development Goals, and those are
8 connecting global issues to local realities as well,
9 and we have some examples of those projects in the
10 booklets that we shared with you. But some that I
11 want to highlight, an example of one is, last year at
12 Marsh Avenue Expeditionary Learning School, students
13 examined gender inequality globally, and they created
14 children's books and a website to raise awareness and
15 challenge stereotypes that they were seeing in their
16 own lives, including on social media, and that
17 connects to SDG number five, gender equity or
18 equality. But there are many examples of projects
19 like that.

20 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

21 What specific skills does the program
work to develop in students? For example, research,
critical and analytical thinking, and public
speaking?

1
2 DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: The program builds
3 critical thinking, public speaking, collaboration,
4 leadership, and civic engagement skills through the
5 action projects, the visits to the UN, and the visits
6 with diplomats. They will also present their work at
7 the end of the year at a celebration with their peers
8 and peers from all different schools, so they're able
9 to express the learning that they had and also take
10 leadership in sharing their work.

11 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: And in turn, what
12 specific knowledge does the program bring to
13 students? For example, global affairs, current
14 events, or understanding of international
15 institutions?

16 DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: Students gain
17 knowledge of global affairs, international
18 institutions like the United Nations, current global
19 challenges, ways to take action, and also potential
20 career pathways.

21 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you.

If you could expand, what components of
the program should be refined and or increased?

COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: As I mentioned
before, the work that happens at the UN and the sort

1 of work that is outlined in the Sustainable
2 Development Goals is work that is not only done by
3 diplomats, but is done by many actors, government,
4 civil society actors, activists. So I think a program
5 that helps young people understand all those layers
6 of global action would be even more enriching. So,
7 with some time, capacity, and resources, imagine
8 actually connecting young people not just to the
9 visit of one diplomat once, but maybe that diplomat
10 and people who are trying to solve that challenge in
11 that place, so that young people get a richer
12 understanding of the work that they are learning
13 about.

12 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: What is your vision
13 for the program, especially as a new commissioner? I
14 mean, you've already kind of made some comments on
15 certain things you want to see change. For example,
16 can you imagine serving all of New York City Public
17 Schools' 7th graders every year so that no student
18 would miss this opportunity? What would that take in
19 terms of both staffing and funding?

19 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: That is a wonderful
20 vision and one that we celebrate. I think that many
21 New Yorkers are kind of disconnected from the United

1 Nations, even though we are the host city and the
2 place where the world gathers, but also the place
3 where the world lives. So we would love to eventually
4 see every 7th grader benefit from these experiences
5 and from the presence of the UN here.

6 We are actively in conversations with
7 City Hall. We think obviously expanding to all 7th
8 graders would require just full integration into the
9 curriculum and would, you know, probably need to be
rooted inside the New York City Public Schools.

10 But we love the vision, and I think the
11 program was started as a seed that ideally will
continue to grow.

12 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: And do you have an
13 estimate of how much it would cost, like if we wanted
14 to expand it to all 7th graders as an example?

15 (INAUDIBLE) Like, I get what you're saying, there are
16 definitely some logistical challenges. But from a
fiscal perspective, do you have an estimate?

17 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: We have not tried
18 to do that exercise of thinking about what it would
19 take to expand this experience to all 7th graders,
20 but we can circle back with more (INAUDIBLE)...

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CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I'm like
(INAUDIBLE) Regina. Because I know we have-- do you
know the number of 7th grade students (INAUDIBLE)

UNIDENTIFIED: 55,000 (INAUDIBLE)

CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, I mean, it's
like simple math. Like, if you're only serving 250
students this year, that was the number. (LAUGHS)
(INAUDIBLE) How many students?

DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: No, around 550...

(CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Oh, 500? Okay. So
if there's 55,000...

COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Someone do the
math.

(LAUGHTER)

CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: seventh graders,
and you're spending \$25,000. It would be good to
understand how much it costs because we can't talk
about expansion if we don't know how much it'll
require.

COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Yes. And to
(INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: to actually run
this program... (CROSS-TALK)

1
2 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: expansion, you
3 know, we're running it with the capacity that we
4 have... (CROSS-TALK)

5 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Oh!

6 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Do you have the
7 number?

8 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, it's like
9 \$2.7 million, which is not a lot of money compared to
10 many things that we pay for in the city. So I'm just
11 thinking, you know, how we say drop in the bucket,
12 \$2.7 million is definitely a drop in the bucket for a
13 budget that's over \$100 billion.

14 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Because \$1 billion
16 is like, you know, like a \$100,000 million, like it's
17 crazy, \$1 billion, and this is, you know, \$100
18 billion in New York City.

19 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Yes, yes. I think
20 we love the vision, and I think it's definitely a
21 very worthy sort of aspiration. And you know, again,
I think the New York City Public School system has
been a tremendously important partner in this,
because we do a lot of the kind of logistics and
coordination, the recruitment of diplomats, but the

1 work itself, making meaning of the visits to the UN,
2 making meaning of the learning, is done by New York
3 City teachers who are tremendous heroes.

4 So I think these would need to be a
5 deeply held goal in partnership with New York City
6 Public Schools.

7 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah. And I mean,
8 obviously, going from \$25,000 to \$2.7+ million is a
9 huge expansion, but I can't imagine, like, even if
you went to \$200,000.

10 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Like, how you could
potentially expand the program.

12 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay.

14 What challenges would you see, though,
15 in expanding the program? Again, you mentioned some
16 of them, but I don't know if you wanted to highlight
17 anything else. Obviously, staffing, you only have one
staffer working on this.

18 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Yeah, yeah, I
19 think... (CROSS-TALK)

20 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: And you only have
21 13 staffers in your office.

1
2 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Staffing would be
3 an important challenge to address. I would say, you
4 know, if you sort of run these exercises of thinking
5 through what it would take, it would require a
6 different kind of staffing than what we do right now,
7 which is a collaboration between people whose job is
8 not necessarily to run the Junior Ambassadors
9 Programs we would need-- there would need to be a
10 dedicated team that is doing these and that is making
11 sure that every school has a every school has the
12 opportunity, every classroom has the support, every--
13 So it would be an important undertaking that requires
14 dedicated staff. And obviously, the other really
15 important partner is the UN. They have the capacity,
16 the UN has kind of a system to receive visits and to
17 provide tours, and to provide briefings, but that
18 capacity, we are less clear on how expandable it is.
19 But, you know, it would require some conversations
20 with them as well, and obviously, we rely on the
21 partnership that we have with diplomats and the
relationship that we have with diplomats. There are
193 missions.

CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: A 100...

1
2 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Yeah, 193 missions
3 represented here in New York City, we have deep
4 relationships with many of them, obviously not all of
5 them. So these, the expansion would also require,
6 kind of like an expansion of relationship capacity to
bring folks into the classroom.

7 But all of these things are more
8 logistical than, you know, they're, they're sort of
material things that can be addressed, of course.

9 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: In your answer to
10 one of the questions, you mentioned that you feel
11 like New Yorkers kind of forget that the UN exists.
12 And I'm wondering in the macro portfolio of this
13 office, do you have any scopes of work that are-- I
14 feel like the Junior Ambassadors Program could be in
a folder that is like, you know, engaging with New
15 Yorkers.

16 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Mm-hmm.

17 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: And then it could
18 be Junior Ambassadors, it could be something else.
19 And so do you have, like, a scope of work that is
dedicated to exactly what you've highlighted, this
20 sort of disconnect between New Yorkers and the UN...

21 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Yeah...

1
2 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Or is it-- is the
3 Junior Ambassadors Program like one of the only ways
4 that your office is connecting younger New Yorkers,
5 but New Yorkers nonetheless, to the UN?

6 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Yeah. Yeah. I would
7 say right now, the Junior Ambassadors Program is the
8 most concrete way that we are connecting New Yorkers
9 to the UN and vice versa. I participated in a
10 meeting with or helped set up a meeting between Mayor
11 Mamdani and the Secretary General of the United
12 Nations, Antonio Guterres. And, in that conversation,
13 the Mayor asked the Secretary General if he had ever
14 been invited to visit a school, a hospital, or Rikers
15 Island, and the Secretary General said, "No, never."
16 He has never been invited to see how the municipal
17 government runs. So I think there has been,
18 traditionally, a relationship of mostly kind of
19 logistical support. But this moment, I think, demands
20 a deeper engagement that my office is really
21 committed to making real. We, of course, see heads of
state arrive in our city every year in September, and
most New Yorkers experience that as a very
challenging traffic moment. But, there is really an
opportunity to actually bring to life the fact that

1
2 the world has chosen New York City as its location to
3 talk to each other. And we would love to discuss with
4 you and with others ideas that could bring New
5 Yorkers into the UN and could bring the UN into the
6 lives of New Yorkers. The World Cup will offer an
7 opportunity; other moments in the near future will
8 offer that opportunity as well. And I think the UN
9 leadership is very open and very eager to see some of
10 that happen.

11
12 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, obviously,
13 well, it's not that obvious, so I shouldn't say that.
14 But you know, hearings, obviously, we want-- it keeps
15 using this word-- hearings, we want to put things on
16 the record for the public. We know that real work is
17 not going to come from this hearing, but we are, as a
18 committee and committee staff, passionate about
19 ensuring that our international committee and
20 community are a part of the conversation of what's
21 happening in New York City.

17 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I agree with you
19 and share the sentiments that, based on the little
20 that I know, because I only know a little bit about
21 your office, it does seem like a big disconnect and a

1 missed opportunity for both our city government and
2 the Council, which has perpetual missed
3 opportunities. And I do find that on the other side
4 of City Hall, there are also missed opportunities,
5 which it does seem from hearing you speak now that
6 you all are trying to at least start the conversation
7 of making those connections. I do hope we can
8 continue to talk about this offline to figure out
9 ways to work together. I often find that, and I said
10 this to you before, that in areas where we really
11 could work together, the entire City Hall could work
12 together, and we don't.

11 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: And I find it
13 troubling for many reasons. So I do hope that this
14 committee can work with your office to figure out,
15 you know, things that we can do proactively to make
16 the connection to New Yorkers and the UN.

16 We obviously want to see the Junior
17 Ambassadors program expanded, and understand that
18 City resources are limited. And we have a new unit in
19 the Council that is dedicated to working with the,
20 you know, the external private community to fund
21 certain things that, you know, government either is

1 not prioritizing or doesn't have the resources to
2 prioritize. So it's good to know that, through the
3 fund for the city of New York, this program has been,
4 you know, supported. Also, I look forward to seeing
5 what foundations and private entities would be
6 willing to support this program from our end.

7 And so the last question I have is,
8 what can the City Council do to support your office
9 in expanding this program, but also in what I feel is
10 your vision based on what you said today, in not only
11 doing the logistical things that cost us money, they
12 cost our city money to do the many logistical things
13 that come with the UN, but also the proactive ways
14 that we can benefit by the UN being here and also
15 contribute to the UN being here outside of financial
16 resources that go to supporting the UN on an array of
17 things.

18 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Yeah. So I think
19 that there is a tremendous opportunity for New York
20 City as a whole to really lead in what is called
21 subnational diplomacy, which is the idea that, you
know, so many of the problems that are sort of global
problems, climate change, displacement of people,
war, inequality, they actually land in the city. And

1 the municipal government has to advance solutions
2 that address those challenges. And I think New York
3 City has a lot to learn and also to share with the
4 world. And we would welcome the opportunity to work
5 in a very collaborative way to actually allow New
6 York to play that leadership role in promoting
7 solutions and urging action on these many
8 interlocking global crises.

9 And I think it is work that, as you said,
10 is work of the whole government, not one branch or
11 the other. There are often opportunities. Because the
12 UN is constantly hosting conversations of the world
13 in the headquarters, there are often so many requests
14 for New York City leaders to participate in those
15 conversations. And so now that we are starting this
16 moment of more engagement, my commitment to you is
17 that we will reach out to you when these requests are
18 happening, when these opportunities arise, so that
19 the City Council can represent the perspective of New
20 Yorkers in these conversations. You know, an example
21 is, next week there is a forum on migration. Leaders
from all over the world who are trying to tackle the
reality of migration and propose a vision for how to
relate to migration humanely are gathering at the UN.

1 Obviously, New York City is the immigrant city of the
2 United States, and we have 3 million people here who
3 were born outside of the US, and we have a lot to
4 share in our efforts. And so that's a perfect example
5 of how both the City and the municipal government as
6 a whole could be playing a bigger role. And we, as
7 the office that is most directly in touch with the
8 UN, have the most visibility on those conversations.
9 And we can make sure that you all are as aware and
10 able to take advantage of those opportunities to
learn and to lead.

11 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yes. And I feel
12 like that's a great way you can help us engage, but I
13 want to know how we can help you? We want to be
helpful to you as well.

14 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Yes, I appreciate
15 that.

16 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: You know, learning
17 about the Junior Ambassadors Program and, again, in
general, just learning about your office.

18 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Mm-hmm.

19 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: One, I don't think
20 many people know that your office exists.

21 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: That's true.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Nor do they know
3 the scope of work. And so, you know, even internally
4 within the Council, maybe there needs to be more of
5 an education/information sharing process about your
6 office. But you know, as Chair, I really do want to
7 be helpful and not, you know, point fingers or
8 whatever. I'm trying in my head right now, thinking
9 about who could potentially be a donor to support it.
10 So like, you know, we have initiatives. I mean, like
11 maybe there should be an initiative that, you know,
12 the Council puts together that's-- I don't know...

13 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: But, you know, it's
15 those types of things that I'm trying to think
16 through in real time... (CROSS-TALK)

17 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: I mean, I think...
18 (CROSS-TALK)

19 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: And I just want to
20 know from you how you feel the Council can be
21 supportive of the work that you're doing—and then
the work that you want to do, because the work that
you want to do right now, I don't think your office
probably has the capacity and needs to do a lot of
the things you want to do.

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COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: So, how can we be helpful?

COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: I think all the things that you listed—helping us make sure that the Council knows this office exists and the work that we currently do, the work that we aspire to do. That would be tremendously helpful on its own. Helping us think of ways to resource their work so that we can actually sort of achieve the potential of the promise and the responsibility of the office. And you know, in particular, the Junior Ambassadors Program is the way that most firmly plants the connection between New York City, New Yorkers, and the UN. So any thoughts, any ideas that you have to resource that work, or ideas that we welcome. Our commitment is shared to make this work as far-reaching and impactful as it could be.

CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay. All right. Well, I appreciate you all for coming. Thank you so much for all of your hard work with very limited resources, and for continuing to make the program happen. We really appreciate it, and we definitely want to be an accomplice in figuring out how to

1
2 expand in ways that fill in some of the gaps that
3 were noted today during the hearing. Thank you so
4 much.

5 COMMISSIONER ARCHILA: Thank you so much,
6 Deputy Speaker.

7 DIRECTOR AVEZZANO: It's wonderful to see
8 you all, thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yes, thank you.

10 I now open the hearing for public
11 testimony. I remind members of the public that this
12 is a formal government proceeding and that decorum
13 shall be observed at all times. As such, members of
14 the public shall remain silent at all times.

15 The witness table is reserved for people
16 who wish to testify. No video recording or
17 photography is allowed from the witness table.

18 Further, members of the public may not
19 present audio or video recordings as testimony, but
20 may submit transcripts of such recordings to the
21 Sergeant at Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

If you wish to speak at today's hearing
again, you can fill out the appearance card.

1
2 If you are testifying remotely, please
3 listen for your name to be called. Once your name is
4 called, a member of our staff will unmute you.

5 So I know we have some names, and so I
6 will call up Lucy Sexton first and then Jeff.

7 LUCY SEXTON: Did I unmute myself? Hi, can
8 you hear me?

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we can.

10 LUCY SEXTON: Wonderful. I'm so sorry.

11 My name is Lucy Sexton. I am here as a
12 leader of the Cultural Advocacy Coalition, New
13 Yorkers for Culture and Arts, because it's crucially
14 important that the City lift up and celebrate New
15 York's artists and cultural legends.

16 I'm also here as a lifelong New York
17 dancer and the former leader of the New York Dance
18 and Performance Awards for the best piece.

19 Carmen de Lavallade's impact is hard to
20 measure. She was a transcendent dance artist, a
21 performer and choreographer who worked in ballet, in
modern, on TV, at the Metropolitan Opera, and more.
Her career spanned more than six decades.

I want to lift up, in particular, her
role in Alvin Ailey's life and company. She

1 co-founded the company with Mr. Ailey. It was
2 originally called, as you know, the de Lavallade
3 Ailey Company and at the end of his life, when he was
4 struggling with what is widely understood to be
5 ravages of HIV, Ms. de Lavallade was there helping to
6 steady and guide him as his health declined and
7 helping to steady and guide the company, so that
8 there was no question of the Ailey Company ending
9 with Mr. Ailey's death, as it well could have.

9 Ms. de Lavallade (*LOST ZOOM AUDIO)
10 (INAUDIBLE) when my grammar school at PS3 received
11 visits, training, and inspiration from regular
12 classes by Alvin Ailey teaching artists. They can do
13 phrases from the revelations to this day. My older
14 daughter is in her 20s and is now making her career
15 as a choreographer and dance teaching artist. Like I
16 said, Carmen de Lavallade's impact is immeasurable.

15 Thank you, Chair Williams, for both of
16 your resolutions. Thanks to Council Member Salaam for
17 his resolution saluting another legendary artist.
18 Thanks to the City Council for your steadfast support
19 of culture and the arts in New York City. Thank you
20 for hearing my testimony.

20 Sorry, I'm in a cab.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: It's okay. Thank
3 you, Lucy, for always being a trusted person to come
4 and testify at our hearings. It was nice to see you
5 last week.

6 Okay, next up, Jeff.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

8 JEFF ZYSMAN: My name is Jeff. I work for
9 The Center for Family Support, CFS. I'm an
10 Ambassador for The Center for Family Support.
11 (INAUDIBLE) for people with disabilities. I do
12 advocacy work. I'm here to talk about how the
13 disability community helps out with-- helps me out.
14 I'm someone with a disability. I've been an advocate
15 in the disability community for a long time. I mean,
16 legislators like Tony Simone, Linda Rosenthal, Liz
17 Krueger, and I feel that people with disabilities
18 should have a say in, you know, getting the right
19 supports they need and the right opportunities. You
20 know, I'm someone like, I have been getting services
21 through an agency called CFS, and I felt that, you
22 know, I feel they needed more support and more
23 opportunity to do, you know, to get ourselves out
24 there. That's what I feel. Yeah, I've been...

25 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Jeff?

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JEFF ZYSMAN: Yes?

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CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Sorry, I didn't
3 mean to interrupt you. I think you might be logged
4 into the wrong hearing. There is another Disability
5 Hearing.

5

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: (INAUDIBLE)

6

CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Oh, it's been
7 deferred. Okay. So it's been deferred. Do we have a
8 rescheduled date?

8

JEFF ZYSMAN: Am I in the wrong hearing?

9

CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yes, the hearing
10 was deferred. The disability attorney-- This is the
11 Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International
12 Relations Committee.

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Can I make sure I say that?

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UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you so much. We're
14 going to jump off, and hopefully we'll get the
15 correct meeting invite.

14

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CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Yes, it's been
16 deferred, but maybe- we're looking now to see if they
17 set a new date for this hearing to happen. No...

16

17

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UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you if you can find
19 out now...

19

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2 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: No, we don't. It's
3 not. It's not on our Legistar Website or Council
4 website.

5 UNIDENTIFIED: But thank you. If you can't
6 find out now, you have his e-mail, and you can e-mail
7 Jeff so we (INAUDIBLE)

8 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I don't think we
9 have the capacity to do that. But I guess, similar to
10 how you found out about this hearing, you can look
11 online. And you know what? What we'll do is, we'll
12 have committee staff for that committee just flag it.
13 I'm sure they might reach out to people. So we'll
14 have committee staff. And you said you're from the
15 Center for Family Representation?

16 UNIDENTIFIED: The Center for Family
17 Support.

18 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Oh, Family Support,
19 okay, okay. Thank you.

20 Okay, seeing that there are no more
21 people signed up, I know that we had some amazing
22 teachers who probably had to go back and teach our
23 babies. So we look forward to them submitting
24 testimony to us. And thank you so much.

25 This hearing is [GAVEL] adjourned.

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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 no interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date June 1, 2026