

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION AND WATERFRONTS

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March 19, 2026
Start: 1:04 p.m.
Recess: 4:46 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - 8th Floor - Hearing
Room 3

B E F O R E: James F. Gennaro,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Harvey D. Epstein
Kamillah Hanks
Linda Lee
Lincoln Restler
Justin E. Sanchez

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

Lisa Garcia
NYC DEP

Nerissa Moray
NYC DEP

Beth DeFalco
NYC DEP

Angela DeLillo
NYC DEP

Anastasios Georgelis
NYC DEP

Paul Rush
NYC DEP

Albert Kramer
NYC DEP

Angela Licata
NYC DEP

Audie Soucy
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

Mackenzie Sheuermann
Riverkeeper

Brendan Cheney
NY Housing Conference

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

Sierra Scott
National Clean Water Collective

Christopher Houser
Field Form

Richard Leigh
Food and Water Watch

Jakob Franco
NRDC's Environmental Law Clinic

Cecilia Ellis
NYPIRG

Tyler Taba
Waterfront Alliance

Alicia Grillon
Self

David Abreu
Save the Sound

Alia Soomro
New York League of Conservation

Eric Goldstein
Natural Resources Defense Council

Chauncey Young
Bronx Council for Environmental Quality

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

Eric Eisenberg

Self

Michelle Luebke

Stormwater Infrastructure Matters, SWMM Coalition

Michael Streeter

New York Clean Air Collective

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2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Soundcheck for the Committee
3 on Environmental Protection. Today's date is March
4 19th, 2026, being recorded by Danny Huang in the
5 Council in HR3.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon and welcome to
7 today's New York City Council hearing for the
8 Committee on Environmental Protection, Resiliency,
9 and Waterfronts. At this time, we please ask that
10 you silence all electronic devices. If you would
11 like to fill out a testimony slip, then please see
12 the Sergeant-at-Arms in the back, and at no point in
13 time is anyone to approach the dais.

14 Chair, you may begin.

15 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Thank you very much,
16 Sergeant. Mhm. Once again, on the record now, uh,
17 oh, I gotta do this. [GAVEL] Uh, to our guests from
18 the Administration, to those who come to testify and
19 listen, to my colleagues and the staff, once again, I
20 apologize for being tardy, and I'll commence with my
21 riveting opening statement.

22 Good morning and welcome to the Fiscal 2027
23 Preliminary Budget for the Committee on Environmental
24 Protection, Resiliency, and Waterfronts. Um,
25 Somebody snuck in the word resiliency, which is no

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1
2 longer part of the title of this Committee, but I do
3 miss it. And so, uh, we're still— we still do that,
4 but it's just not in our title anymore. So I
5 probably just announced that for the last time, like,
6 the name of the Committee.

7 Uh, the Committee on Environmental Protection,
8 Resiliency, and Waterfronts. My name is Jim Gennaro,
9 and I'm, and I'm Chair of the Committee. Today we'll
10 review the Department of, uh, mhm, DEP's Fiscal 2027
11 budget to understand how it addresses the
12 environmental and infrastructure needs of all New
13 Yorkers.

14 I would like to begin by thanking the men and
15 women of DEP for their work safeguarding the city's
16 water supply, managing wastewater, and advancing the
17 city's environmental goals. DEP's work is— Stuck on
18 the next page. DEP's work is foundational to public
19 health and quality of life across all 5 boroughs, and
20 we are grateful for the dedication of its worst
21 workforce.

22 I've been doing oversight hearings for— for DEP
23 since I became a staff member here in 1990 and worked
24 for this Committee. So 1990, it's almost a long time
25 ago and so, um, yeah, the, uh, the DEP's Fiscal 2027

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1 Preliminary Budget totals approximately \$2.1 billion.
2 The Committee looks forward to discussing how these
3 resources are being deployed to address the city's
4 most pressing environmental, um, infrastructure
5 challenges. Can people hear me in the back? Is that
6 working out? Okay.

7 Uh, during our hearing today, the Committee would
8 like to focus on several key areas, including okay,
9 pay attention. Here we go. Uh, ooh, first one, the
10 water rental payment, boo, and its impact on DEP's
11 budget and ratepayers. I know you hate the rental
12 payment too, Madam Commissioner, so I'm not gonna
13 make you say it. I just, I know you hate it. Uh,
14 the, uh, 2, the upkeep and long-term funding of the
15 filtration avoidance determination. We got our work
16 cut out for us there and so I look forward to
17 engaging with you on that upkeep and funding of the-
18 of the FAD, which is critical to maintaining the
19 city's unfiltered water supply.

20 Next, the J-51 tax credit expansion and its
21 implications for DEP's revenues and building-level
energy- building-level energy and water efficiency.
Over the past year, this Committee has conducted
active oversight on environmental matters, including

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2 a hearing on greenhouse gas reduction, through
3 renewable diesel. We look forward to continuing that
4 work through the budget process. We're big on that.

5 Uh, I would like to thank our Committee Staff for
6 their hard work. Financial Analyst Tanveer Singh to
7 my left. He's our, he's our financial star. Uh,
8 Policy Analyst Ricky Chawla and, uh, Committee
9 Counsels, um, Sierra Townsend over there and, uh,
10 Natasha Bynum to my right.

11 Uh, I'd like to welcome and thank Commissioner
12 Lisa Garcia and the dedicated staff of the
13 environment- er, ah, er, of DEP, uh, for the
14 important work they do every day. I see my buddy
15 Paul Rush in the first row there. I don't see very
16 well anymore, but I can see him. Um, I'm looking
17 forward to today's discussion, and the Committee
18 Counsel will now do what she does to swear in the
19 panel, right? Is that- oh, I have to recognize- yes,
20 yes, yes. Um, oh, did you have the- oh no, hang on,
21 I have to recognize my colleague. Okay. Yes, uh,
I'd like to, uh, recognize, uh, the Finance Chair.
Finance Chair, everybody be on their best behavior.
The Finance Chair is here, Linda Lee and, uh, Council
Member Hanks, a great member of this Committee.

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2 And so, uh, now what? You gonna do your thing?
3 What? Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, yes. All right, so this
4 is why I need help. Okay. We have, uh, Lisa Garcia,
5 the Commissioner. Uh, uh, Nerissa Morey, right?
6 The, uh, uh, uh, CFO. Um, uh, Beth DeFalco, of
7 course. Uh, uh, Tasos, right? Okay, long last name.
8 Okay, we'll go by Tasos okay.

9 Um, Paul Rush, who I mentioned already. Uh,
10 Albert, you're killing me. Albert Kramer. Okay, very
11 good, yeah. If the Chair is over 65 years old, it's
12 just big letters, big letters. That's what we're
13 looking for, yeah. Uh, Angela DeLillo. Angela,
14 pleasure. Nerissa Morey. Nerissa Morey. Oh yeah,
15 again. Okay, again. I'm like, I, I, I remember that
16 name, you know. Uh, Anastasios. Oh, again? Oh,
17 okay, yeah, duplicate yeah.

18 Um, so now you have to do your thing, okay.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please raise your right hand.

20 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: I love my staff. They had-
21 they, they take care of the old man.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm to tell the
23 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
24 before this Committee, and to respond honestly to
25 Council Member questions? Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay, and with that said,
3 I, I have your, uh, testimony in sort of semi-large
4 font. Yeah, until I get- yeah, until I get all my
5 eye stuff taken care of, you know, as big a font as
6 you can get away with would be- would be appreciated.
7 But this I can get by with and so, um, thank you very
8 much, uh, you know, Madam Commissioner, please
9 commence with your good testimony.

10 LISA GARCIA: Great, thank you so much. Uh, good
11 afternoon, Chair Gennaro. Nice to meet you and to
12 the Members of the Committee and Chair Lee, thank you
13 so much for having us. Uh, as mentioned, I'm Lisa
14 Garcia, Commissioner of the New York City Department
15 of Environmental Protection. Uh, I'm joined by
16 Nerissa Moray. I guess we don't have to go through-

17 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, yeah.

18 LISA GARCIA: Okay, great. So I'm actually gonna
19 kick us off with a little bit of some personal
20 reflections before we get to the testimony that's in
21 -in front of you, uh, because perhaps by next year
I'll be like a true grown bureaucrat and we'll forget
this.

So I'm gonna start out with my personal
reflections, um, because I really am a fan of the

1
2 department and I appreciate, Chair, how you kicked it
3 off by thanking everyone.

4 Like so many New Yorkers, I have spent my entire
5 life drinking New York City water and of course
6 flushing my toilet also, not giving a second thought
7 to it. Um, even as someone who spent a career as an
8 environmental lawyer, I hadn't fully appreciated the
9 remarkable fact that most of our system is
10 unfiltered. And so you mentioned the FAD and that
11 you were part of it. Thank you so much.

12 Um, and it's protected by upstate— in our upstate
13 watersheds and reliably delivers some of the best
14 drinking water on the planet. I was one of those,
15 uh, snobby people traveling around the world talking
16 about New York City's drinking water. Um, but now
17 one month into my new role, I have a much deeper
18 appreciation of the engineering marvel that operates
19 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Um, so that all of
20 us can turn on that tap and drink this wonderful
21 water and of course, flush your toilet without worry.

18 Our mostly unfiltered water supply travels
19 through an extraordinary system that is truly an
20 engineering marvel. Snowmelt fills our reservoirs,
21 especially for those who are new, all the way

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1
2 upstate. Water travels through tunnels and
3 aqueducts, even under the Hudson River, um, mainly
4 through gravity, through additional reservoirs before
5 it enters Tunnel 1, 2, and 3, um, and hits your tap
6 in the city.

7 Behind all of that is the 6,000- about 6,000 DEP
8 employees making it work. Engineers and scientists
9 who ensure the system flows precisely as it should,
10 who test our waters thousands of times along its
11 journey. More than 200 DEP police- thank you- more
12 than 200 DEP, um, officers patrol and protect our
13 watershed lands to keep the supply pristine.
14 Construction teams and project managers are
15 constantly upgrading and improving our
16 infrastructure. Inspectors and attorneys ensuring
17 compliance with state and federal regulations.
18 Wastewater teams operating treatment plants and
19 anaerobic digesters, and we can take a trip out there
20 if you're interested to Newtown Creek, um, to visit.
21 But these, um, these systems even nurturing little
bugs that break down our waste and make sure that
what is returned to our waterways is clean.

While we slept through the nights, walking,
waking up to beautiful snowy days just last month,

1
2 DEP crews were out there in the freezing cold
3 repairing water main breaks and supporting the
4 system's storm response by even helping to shovel the
5 snow.

6 Meanwhile, our Administrative staff, HR, and
7 public affairs teams keep the wheels running and make
8 sure that all of us are aware of everything that's
9 going on. Basically, the DEP, every single day,
10 thousands of dedical- dedicated professionals working
11 behind the scenes, um, so that again, New Yorkers
12 never have to think about it. Um, of course we face
13 real challenges. Flushable wipes that aren't truly
14 flushable are mucking up the system, idling trucks
15 and noise nuisance in our neighborhoods, more than 10
16 storms, um, that create stormwater flowing into our
17 pipes and overwhelm the system. Um, sea level rise
18 and storm surges are flooding our coastal
19 neighborhoods more frequently.

20 Yet with every challenge, I've already seen how
21 DEP teams rise to the occasion, innovating, adapting,
and designing solutions to protect our drinking water
and improve our quality of life. From expanding
green infrastructure to advancing stormwater

1
2 reduction initiatives, to establishing the Bureau of
3 Coastal Resiliency.

4 So we took it now. So we have, we have
5 resiliency. Okay, don't worry about it. DEP is
6 proactively preparing the city for the future. For
7 all of that, I also want to thank DEP and everyone on
8 my team, um, for supporting that mission and waking
9 up every day to deliver. And because it is a budget
10 hearing, I want to highlight the important fact that
11 you mentioned a little bit, is that we are saving
12 billions of dollars by avoiding the need to um, build
13 a filtration plant, making New York City the only
14 major city in the United States able to claim both
15 this level of savings and this quality of water.

16 Um, one of the things I noticed is that many
17 people in DEP and even the city who understand this
18 are in awe of this New York City water system that
19 was built 100 years ago. More than that, and my goal
20 in this role is to make sure that in 100 years from
21 now, people look back at this city administration.
All of us, our great-grandchildren or
great-great-grandchildren are in awe of what we did
today to protect the system. We understand the
challenge, and DEP is ready to rise to the occasion,

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2 as you see, or continue to rise to the occasion. We
3 have a responsibility to maintain this system and
4 continuing delivering for future generations.

5 So as the new Commissioner, I'm honored to stand
6 alongside our workforce and to advocate for the
7 resources that we need to maintain and modernize this
8 system and to meet the challenges of the 21st
9 century. So with that, I will now discuss FY27, but
10 I appreciate the time to be able to say that and
11 share that.

12 As I mentioned—

13 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: How about the quiz part
14 here? You mentioned, um, more than 100 years.

15 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, it's more than 100 years.

16 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: When did the Croton
17 Reservoir come online?

18 LISA GARCIA: 18— was it '06?

19 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: No.

20 LISA GARCIA: No, 1842. Ding, ding, ding, we
21 got— thanks, Paul.

22 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: What was the last reservoir
to come online? Like, when did that open? I'm
asking the— I'm asking the Commissioner.

23 PAUL RUSH: Reservoir came online 1964.

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LISA GARCIA: 1964.

2

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: I thought it was '69, no?

3

PAUL RUSH: Um, 1964 emergency diversion. Oh. 1967
4 went into official operation per the decree amended
5 in 1954. So we then had to start making-

4

5

LISA GARCIA: Oh, so '67.

6

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: See, this is why you can
7 never let go of Paul Rush.

7

8

LISA GARCIA: Oh, I know. Paul. We need to, we
9 need that fund.

9

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah. The How to Keep Paul
10 Fund. Uh, okay. Okay, yeah, so as we're talking
11 about, right, DEP touches every New Yorker every
12 single day. We deliver the water you drink. As you
13 all know, New York City's drinking water is-

10

11

12

13

14

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Well, now we're in the
15 text, right? We're in the text.

15

16

LISA GARCIA: Yes. Now it comes from the 19
17 reservoirs.

17

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: I gotta catch up.

18

LISA GARCIA: Okay, so underneath what DEP does,
19 I'm on the second paragraph, and why it matters.

19

20

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yep, got it.

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2 LISA GARCIA: It comes from 19 reservoirs and 3
3 controlled lakes across a nearly 2,000 square mile
4 watershed in the Catskills and Hudson Valley, and as
5 far as 125 miles away from the city because of— oh,
6 and here's a picture. Do— do you guys have the
7 picture of the map?

8 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah.

9 LISA GARCIA: So you can see how far up north and
10 west the water comes from because of decades of
11 careful watershed protection, most of our water
12 remains unfiltered, the largest unfiltered system in
13 the country. That saves, as I mentioned, New
14 Yorkers, New Yorkers billions of dollars.

15 Roughly 1,000 of DEP's um, almost 6,000 employees
16 actually work north of the city around the watershed,
17 and that's where Paul hails from and his team.

18 Thousands more maintain the 7,000 miles of water
19 mains and 7,500 miles of sewers that, um, that are,
20 uh, cross— sorry, water across the 5 boroughs.

21 Every day we treat 1.3 billion gallons of water—
sorry, uh, 1.3 billion gallons of New York's
wastewater at the 14 facilities. Thanks to that
work, the waters around our cities and in our harbor
are also cleaner than they've been in 150 years.

1
2 Like many agencies, we have— we face hiring
3 challenges. At the end of January, DEP has, um, had
4 approximately 800 vacancies. Despite our hiring
5 challenges, DEP continues to serve New Yorkers, and
6 we rely on overtime when necessary.

7 We— we are working hard to fill the vacancies,
8 um, and coming into this role, it's definitely a top
9 priority, priority for me to focus on hiring, um, to
10 improve our vacancy rates. There are many challenges
11 that contribute to the vacancy rate. In some cases,
12 there is simply competition for hiring people with
13 the skill sets that we need. I'm sure you're hearing
14 that from many other agencies.

15 In other cases, there are unique issues that
16 we're working to solve. For instance, the lack of a
17 competitive police retirement plan—

18 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right, which is a big issue
19 that's come up lately for our DEP police. I mean,
20 basically, I think that's an equity issue, um, that
21 we just want to make sure that the— our, um, officers
retire with a similar police pension as all the other
federal, um, enforcement agencies and teams in the
state.

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2 So that would mean that they would be able to
3 retire after 25 years of service, like other police
4 officers. As a result of this kind of inequity, the
5 recruits we train quickly leave to go to other police
6 departments. The state legislature passed a bill
7 last year to address this disparity, but
8 unfortunately it was part of a package of bills that
9 were vetoed by the governor. And we're hoping, uh,
10 with all of your support, um, that this year we'll
11 get the bill passed.

12 Um, a little bit of our budget. DEP is funded
13 almost entirely by our water and sewer ratepayers.
14 That means we cannot get additional funding from
15 other sources- sources. Usually those funds can only
16 be used for work related to the water and sewer
17 systems and when our costs rise, our ratepayers feel
18 it.

19 Much of our spending is driven by mandates- legal
20 mandates, I would say- federal, state, and regulatory
21 requirements we must comply with to protect public
health, which is an important piece of our work.
These requirements must be balanced with our other
priorities, including system expansion,

1
2 modernization, and maintaining a state of good
3 repair.

4 Our nearly \$34 billion 10-year capital plan is
5 backed almost entirely by New York City ratepayer
6 money. Over the next 10 years, DEP will invest \$2.4
7 billion to keep our drinking water safe, reliable,
8 and delicious. We'll spend almost \$7 billion to
9 upgrade the water mains that bring, uh, it to your
10 tap and curbside fire hydrants.

11 We'll invest almost \$9 billion in sewer upgrades
12 and expansions, and we'll spend almost \$14 billion in
13 water pollution control projects that keep New York
14 City waters clean and beaches swimmable. As of the
15 FY27 Preliminary Budget, DEP's expense budget for
16 FY27 totals \$1.7 billion. DEP's expense budget is
17 predominantly funded, funded by ratepayers. 92% is
18 funded by water and sewer bills. This expense budget
19 pays for operating costs related to the water and
20 sewer system. Though we are mainly a utility, we are
21 actually a hybrid agency due to our environmental
compliance enforcement of the air and noise codes for
the city and oversight of hazardous material
abatement.

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2 This enforcement work is funded by city tax levy.
3 Um, as part of the FY27 November plan, DEP received
4 an additional 30 positions starting in FY26 to help
5 support asbestos and idling enforcement, uh, which
6 was great that we have the new- the additional, um,
7 positions, and we're working hard to fill those new
8 positions.

9 A top priority for DEP right now is maintaining,
10 as you mentioned, Chair Gennaro, our filtration
11 avoidance determination, known as the FAD, for the
12 Catskill-Delaware water supply system. Most ci- most
13 cities must filter surface drinking water. We don't
14 have to because of this filtration avoidance
15 determination. It's a waiver granted, uh, based on
16 our decades of investment. I was gonna say by the
17 EPA, but that's, um, sorry, that's my old federal
18 hat. Okay. It was- it's a waiver granted based on
19 our decades of investment and our- in our watershed
20 protection.

21 Maintaining the FAD saves billions of dollars in
filtration plant construction and hundreds of
millions in annual operating costs. Avoiding that
cost helps New York City rates lower, um, continues
to help it be lower than the national average for

1
2 other large cities. The FAD is up for renewal in
3 2027, and we will begin negotiations with the State
4 Department of Health this year to get to that point
5 of renewal at the end of 2027.

6 This renewal will not simply be a continuation of
7 what we've been doing for the last - Sorry, this
8 renewal will not simply be a continuation of what
9 we've been doing for the last decades. It will make
10 sure that we get to the next FAD.

11 The climate has changed, as I mentioned before.
12 Risks have changed. We are reassessing what's needed
13 to protect the system going forward. We have
14 convened a national scientific advisory panel to
15 evaluate emerging risks, and we're drafting a public
16 white paper outlining those risks and proposed
17 program updates before the negotiations of the FAD
18 begin. But there is no question that maintaining the
19 FAD is essential to affordability.

20 Speaking of affordability, our water remains one
21 of the best bargains in New York City. It costs less
22 than 2 cents per gallon, and we're committed to
23 keeping it that way because when people are able to
24 pay their bills, we're able to continue investing in
25 the system.

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2 In FY25, we brought in \$4.75 billion, exceeding
3 our expected revenue by more than \$400 million. This
4 was one of the main drivers that allowed us to keep
5 the water rate increase low for FY26, and we're on
6 pace to exceed our expected revenue again in FY26.
7 We know we're living in an incredibly expensive
8 economy. DEP takes extensive measures to improve
9 affordability for our ratepayers and help people pay
10 their bills, even as more money is needed to maintain
11 and upgrade our infrastructure. That's why we've
12 continued expanding customer assistance programs.
13 They include our Home Water Assistance Program, which
14 allows low-income households to save up to \$159
15 annually, approximately 13% on the average annual
16 residential bill. The multifamily water assistance
17 program provides a \$250 per apartment bill credit for
18 eligible affordable rentals each year.

19 Our leak forgiveness program provides generous
20 forgiveness when customers experience a leak, so long
21 as they fix the leak. And other— sorry and we offer
discounted rates for eligible multifamily properties,
um, that prepay their annual bills and maintain water
efficiency measures. But when people don't pay their
bills, that cost is borne by all of those who do.

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2 We strive to make it easy as possible— as easy as
3 possible for all, all New Yorkers to pay their water
4 bills. But we also understand that sometimes people
5 go through a difficult time and may fall behind. To
6 support these individuals, we have a number of relief
7 programs in place. One is our water debt assistance
8 program, which allows qualified customers to defer
9 their debt and avoid enforcement action. We've
10 created more flexible terms for the leak forgiveness
11 and meter bill cap programs to allow more
12 applications, and we continue to explore ways to
13 improve these programs. We offer credits for
14 customers with medical exemptions from service
15 terminations, to help them keep their certifications
16 and avoid service termination. We recently increased
17 reimbursements for customers who install their own
18 meters.

15 We also offer extremely flexible payment
16 agreements that allow customers to pay off their
17 debts over as long as 10 years. These agreements are
18 personalized to meet each customer's needs. Anyone,
19 regardless of financial status, is eligible and as I
20 like to say, DEP is here to help. So to all your
21 constituents, DEP is here to help.

1
2 Um, we really want to make sure that people
3 figure out how to get into, um, financial good
4 standing with DEP and so there's all these several
5 programs. To further our efforts to keep rates as
6 low as possible for our customers. We are constant-
7 constantly looking for other ways to save money by
8 operating as efficiently and effectively as possible.
9 We're modernizing operations using drones, digital
10 asset tracking, and AI to lower long-term costs. And
11 we continue advocating for more state and federal aid
12 so New York City receives its fair share of
13 environmental funding, uh, because municipality and
14 population caps on grants and zero-interest financing
15 result in New York City getting only a small portion
16 of environmental funds available statewide.

17 Um, and we continue to work on that piece also.
18 Um, as I mentioned, as we mentioned, climate change
19 is here. The 4 most intense rainfall events in the
20 past 50 years have all occurred since 2021. This
21 fall, we saw a storm that brought 1 inch of rain in
10 minutes. That's the equivalent of 6 inches of
rain per hour and that's a lot. Our infrastructure
was simply not designed for that.

1
2 New York City's water and sewer infrastructure is
3 a century-old system— or more than a century, as we
4 established. We know it requires a renewed long-term
5 commitment to modernization, and we have a
6 responsibility to not pass a deteriorating or
7 inadequate system onto the next generation.
8 Strategic, sustained investment ensures clean,
9 reliable water and sewer services for all New Yorkers
10 and protects public health and the environment.
11 Without proactive investment, the city faces
12 expensive emergency responses, federal penalties for
13 discharges, and escalating system failures.

14 We also know that investing in our infrastructure
15 saves us money in the long run. The \$34 billion
16 Capital Plan includes major investments across all 5
17 boroughs, including \$621 million for the construction
18 of Gowanus CSO retention facility in Brooklyn.
19 That's the combined sewer overflow, CSO. Um, 5— over
20 \$500 million for wastewater treatment upgrades in the
21 South Bronx, over \$500 million for wastewater
treatment upgrades in Harlem, over \$400 million for
wastewater treatment upgrades in Port Richmond,
Staten Island, and \$2 billion out of \$2.8 billion in
total funding for the buildout of storm sewer— sewers

1
2 in Southeast Queens to address chronic
3 flooding.

4 As we seek to modernize our infrastructure, we
5 are not just tackling enormous projects with regional
6 significance. We are also focused on projects that
7 will have meaningful impacts in our communities at
8 the block level. No project is too small.

9 Since July of 2024, DEP has upgraded and
10 modernized 3,273 catch basins, These are the grates
11 located at the curb that drain rainwater or snowmelt
12 when streets, uh, from streets to the sewer, which
13 are crucial during these rain events and help drain
14 the water, especially to avoid flooding. We will
15 spend \$1.5 million a year to continue these upgrades
16 across the city. We will upgrade approximately 1,700
17 catch basins in FY26. The agency has already
18 completed 1,100 or more than 1,100 of those upgrades
19 since July.

20 The upgrades pair, hmm, improved catch basin
21 grates in the road with slotted manhole covers on the
sidewalk. It's, ah, like, you really need a picture
to understand this, but basically it improves the-
the drainage when you have those slotted, uh, manhole
covers too.

1
2 Um, if the catch basin grate becomes blocked by
3 litter or leaves, the slotted manhole covers and
4 those catch basins, um, are, are a problem if there's
5 litter on them. And so, hmm, um, this is why we're
6 working on cleaning up those catch basins so that
7 they drain to the basin below.

8 We have already installed 427 slotted manhole
9 covers citywide since 2024. Our work is— extends
10 north of the city, protecting our water supply in the
11 face of a changing climate. The 10-year capital plan
12 includes \$1.1 billion towards a tunnel to add
13 resiliency and critical redundancy for the Kentico
14 Reservoir, \$1 billion towards the upgrade of the
15 Ashokan Reservoir, \$351 million towards upgrades for
16 the Hillview Reservoir, and \$25 million towards
17 upgrades to the Golboa Dam at the Schoharie
18 Reservoir.

19 We are also taking a smarter approach to
20 stormwater planning, combining traditional sewer
21 upgrades with net— hmm, nature-based solutions like
rain gardens, blue belts, and cloudburst hubs. Um,
and we've also identified 86 citywide priority
flooding areas in the stormwater analysis so that we

1
2 can focus investments where flooding is the most
3 severe.

4 New Yorkers are demanding action on flooding, and
5 we hear them, and we are responding. Um, equity is
6 not a side initiative. Anyone who knows me knows
7 that equity and environmental justice lead, uh, are
8 central to my priorities, um, and it's central to our
9 capital planning. We have major investments in all
10 boroughs, in historically underserved communities.
11 They include: \$113 million for significant sewer and
12 stormwater upgrades as part of the Jewel Streets
13 neighborhood plan on the Brooklyn-Queens borough— I
14 mean, sorry, hmm, Brooklyn-Queens border; \$335
15 million to upsize sewer and address decades-long
16 chronic flooding around Knickerbocker Avenue in Bush-
17 in Bushwick; and we're also focusing our free
18 federally funded lead service line replacements in
19 areas with some of the lowest income New Yorkers
20 starting in the South Bronx and expanding into
21 Flushing, Queens.

18 We're directing resources towards communities
19 that have been overlooked, underserved for decades.
20 We know infrastructure is not just pipes and tunnels.
21 It's about fairness. It's about public health, as

1
2 you started, Chair Gennaro, and it's about quality of
3 life.

4 Looking ahead, we face real challenges— rising
5 costs, workforce vacancies, and extreme weather— but
6 we also have one of the greatest water systems in
7 North America, built by generations who planned
8 ahead. It's now our responsibility to do the same.

9 Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look
10 forward to working closely with all of you and the
11 Council to protect public health, strengthen
12 resilience, and ensure every New Yorker benefits from
13 our work. And with that, we are happy to answer any
14 questions. I know you brought up some, but we are—

15 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Sure.

16 LISA GARCIA: Um, thank you so much for the
17 opportunity to share that.

18 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: No, it's great to have you
19 and your, and your excellent team here. It always
20 makes us feel good when you come out in force with
21 the whole team. And, uh, uh, nothing like having the
whole brain t

LISA GARCIA: It helps, especially since I've
only been here for a month, so.

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, let me give some
2 shout outs to special people in your agency, uh, your
3 Queens Borough Commissioner, Alfonso Lopez. Um,
4 yeah, right. Yeah, he's terrific. He's- everybody-

5

LISA GARCIA: Yes, he's great. I know he's
6 leaving.

6

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Alfonso?

7

LISA GARCIA: Yeah. No, I said he's leaving, uh,
8 at the end of the week, right?

9

BETH DEFALCO: Tomorrow's his last.

10

LISA GARCIA: Yeah.

11

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: What's going on? What
happened?

12

LISA GARCIA: He did such a great job, they
13 poached him.

14

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Who's they?

15

BETH DEFALCO: I, I, I don't know if he's
15 announced where he's going. He's staying in the
16 city. I think he's gonna go work for, uh, Deputy
17 Moray.

18

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay.

19

BETH DEFALCO: So we're not really losing him.

20

LISA GARCIA: Yeah, the city isn't losing him.

21

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1
2 BETH DEFALCO: Gonna bother him in a different
department.

3 LISA GARCIA: Yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: And, uh, the fellow you
5 have working in Albany for you, uh, Shams Tarek. Is
6 he here?

7 LISA GARCIA: Shams is here.

8 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Oh, Shams is here, okay.

9 LISA GARCIA: Helped prepare us for this, yeah.

10 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, so shout out from the
Chair.

11 LISA GARCIA: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: More than deserved and, uh,
13 yeah, uh, what I was gonna do just procedurally in
14 terms of, uh, this members and staff. Hmm, there are
15 Chair questions for DEP. There are Committee
16 questions for DEP. We have no shortage of questions.
17 I think I'll just, just poke- I'll just kind of go
through your statement and ask a couple of questions
that just seem to pop out.

18 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, sure. Let's go.

19 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Areas that I've
20 highlighted. What's that? Oh yes, and would you-

21

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1
2 Council Member Sanchez, and, uh, um, a great addition
3 to our small but impactful Committee.

4 We're only 5 members, but we make it work.

5 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Um, because of Council
7 Member Sanchez.

8 LISA GARCIA: Thank you, hello.

9 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, so I don't wanna- He
10 was at an event in Queens. He killed it. It was
11 great. Yeah, at the, uh, hmm, mhm, mhm. Yeah. So,
12 um, yeah, I, I made some notes on your statement and,
13 um, you know, I, I don't wanna, uh, you know, dwell
14 too much on, on the scourge that is the rental
15 payment. Mhm. But, um, You know, that was kind of,
16 um, this is really more for, you know, the OMB
17 Director, you know, um, who I'm sure is, is putting
18 it in the budget.

19 Um, uh, you know, Mayor de Blasio did very little
20 in terms of taking, um, the, um, the- the rental
21 payment, which legally he's allowed to he was allowed
to take. His logic, which made a lot of sense, was
that, you know, the rental payment was brought into
existence in- and I worked for OMB in 1984, '83, '84,
'85 when this, when this idea was hatched, when we

1
2 had to get, you know, DEP to like a self-funding, um,
3 way of doing business, you know, to get them out
4 because they're online with the Department of Ed and
5 everyone else for- and they were eating the city's
6 capital budget alive. People were paying frontage
7 rates for water. It was- it was a joke. And so, um,
8 it, it made sense to do what happened, get the state
9 involved, create the Water Board and the Water
10 Finance Authority, you know, give the Water Finance
11 Authority the ability to go to the financial markets
12 and borrow money.

11 Then it would be like a fee-for-service thing.
12 It all made sense. Um, but of course there was a big
13 pile of pre-1985 general obligation debt. Um, who
14 was gonna pay that? Um, the city felt like they
15 were, like, subsidizing water ratepayers for a long
16 time by accepting, you know, pennies in terms of
17 frontage charges for all this water and all this
18 buildout. Uhm, and the Water Finance Authority,
19 they're like- so the city didn't wanna pay it. You
20 know, and the- the, uh, Water Finance Authority was
21 like, don't look at us. We're brand new. We didn't
borrow this money. We're not paying it.

1
2 And so, hmm, so the rental payment was born and
3 it was equal to exactly what the- the rent of the
4 debt service on the pre-1985 existing, you know,
5 general obligation, DEP capital debt. Fine, so
6 that's what it was every year, to the penny. And
7 that money came in from the ratepayers and went to
8 pay off the debt. All good. bUm, at a certain
9 point, the, uh, but the Trojan horse was in there,
10 which is the rental payment shall be the annual debt
11 service of the pre-1985 general obligation debt or
12 15% of the Water Finance Authority debt service,
13 whichever amount is higher.

14
15 So at a certain point during the Bloomberg
16 Administration, the lines crossed, so to speak. And
17 so the debt service, let's say, was \$50 million and
18 the, uh, and 15% of the Water Finance Authority debt
19 was, let's say, \$60 million. Hmm. Bloomberg would
20 take the \$60 million, which he was entitled to, pay
21 off the \$50 million in general obligation debt
pre-1985, and put the \$10 million in the general
fund, \$10 million. Who cares? It's a rounding
error.

Now we're in- so when de Blasio was in office,
pre-1985 debt was paid off. No reason to keep taking

1
2 this money just to supplement the city's general
3 fund. And so, um, um, and, ah, the Adams
4 Administration didn't do it for the first 2 years.
5 But then in the last 2 years they— they jumped in
6 both feet one year, like two years ago, they did \$440
7 million which was the rental payment for that year
8 plus half of the rental payments from the year before
9 so \$440 million, which didn't pay for it in real
10 time, you know?

11 You know, uh, every rate point is about \$40
12 million, like, give or take and so \$440 million
13 should have meant 11 points on the rate to go up.
14 Give that to the ratepayers. But the ratepayers got—
15 in that cycle, they paid, you know, it was 3.1 rate
16 points, you know, between \$120, \$130 million to pay
17 \$440 million. Where'd that money come from? It came
18 from the reserves.

19 So it was a way to sort of cushion the blow. Um,
20 and then the Adams Administration figured, as long as
21 we're just doing this, why don't we just baseline it?
Let's just stick them, you know, I mean, no one knows
about this. Um, so it was, it was, it was baselined.
Um, and so now we're looking at, you know, rental
payments, \$300 million plus. As far as the eye can

1
2 see, \$300 million, about \$8 million on the rate
3 points. At, you know, at a certain point, at a
4 certain point, we're gonna have to pay for that in-
5 with like real money from like the real ratepayers
6 and not depend upon just the, uh, on-on just the, you
7 know, reserves, you know, because at a certain point,
8 you know, the people who like holding the bonds, you
9 know, they don't get too happy. If you just keep
10 taking money out of the system, um, and, you know,
11 taking down your reserves. They like big cushy
12 reserves. That's what leads to, you know, um, you
13 know, bonds that are rated the way we're fortunate
14 enough to have them rated.

15 That's not gonna last forever and so just letting
16 Council Member Lee know that I'm going to be having a
17 serious discussion with the OMB Director, um, about
18 the, you know, non-sustainability of the rate
19 payment, uh, of the- of the rental payment. And I
20 said, I know everybody here in this room hates it. I
21 know you hate it. Mhm. Because look at everything
that we have to do.

You know, I mean, as I go through your, uh,
statement, we have, you know, we have a big
initiative to, you know, we've got a 1.75, you know,

1 inches per hour kind of standard in a lot of the
2 city, which I think we wanna, you know, bump that up
3 to 2.1 or whatever it's gonna be. Um, hmm, but that
4 is gonna take, you know, generations to do. That's
5 gonna take a lot of money. We got areas of the city
6 that are 1.5 inches per hour, other areas that are 1
7 inch per hour, and in Southeast Queens we have zero,
8 nothing. Uh, and so I was glad to see in your
9 statement that, you know, we're really dedicating a
10 lot, um, you know, to, to giving, you know, Southeast
11 Queens, or at least parts of it, something in the way
12 of stormwater relief.

13 So, um, so you should take that back to OMB and
14 say, Gennaro's really pissed, you know, about what
15 you're— because it's just, this is, you know, this is
16 the ultimate kicking the can down the road. And so
17 \$400 million and you're charging the ratepayers,
18 charge them or whatever. If, if, if this
19 Administration is like, you know, wants to reach into
20 the piggy bank, then he should make the case to the
21 ratepayers that 9 points of the rate is coming off
because I wanna take water and sewer money and send—
you think when you write out your check, my
constituents, that you're paying for water and sewer.

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1
2 Guess what? You know, that's not the case. A lot of
3 it, hundreds of millions of dollars, are going to
4 fund other operations of the city. Mhm. And it's
5 like the most regressive tax I can think of. You're
6 charging people based on how much water they use.

7 Now, I go to parts of Manhattan, I look around,
8 everyone's going to— going on vacation for 2 months
9 out of the year, they're eating out every night. But
10 my constituents on Jamaica Avenue with those 4 or 5
11 kids, they're getting, you know, they use more water
12 per capita you know, the less income you have.

13 They're not going out to eat at night, they're not
14 going on vacation. You know, um, and so it's, it's,
15 it's a very, very, you know, regressive tax. I don't
16 know who the budget director is, but I— before the
17 hearing on the 25th, Linda, I will — I will endeavor
18 to find out like who it is. Um, and I will be, you
19 know.

20 Uh, okay, let me just poke through your statement
21 and then I'll open it up to the Chair and other
members here, and then I'll come back to my
questions. Uh, because I'm, I'm, I'm gonna be here
for the, you know, duration anyway. Let's see the
first mark I made on my page here.

1
2 Um, about the police retirement thing, um, you
3 know, I've, I've always had, you know, an affinity
4 for that, um, for that, uh, uh, you know, police
5 force. And, um, you know, what, uh, um, what steps
6 are we taking to make sure— so it was passed by both
7 houses.

8 LISA GARCIA: Yes. But, you know, the governor
9 vetoed it. Right and so, you know, if you need the
10 Council as a body, you know, to do a Resolution to,
11 to, to, to do that, because right now they're not
12 even, you know, you know, they can't retire in 20 or
13 25 years. They're not even— they're, they're like,
14 what's their status as employees? Are they— I mean,
15 certainly they're considered peace officers, but
16 they're not in like a— but, but, but they're not
17 represented by like a police officer union, right?
18 Aren't— or like, like, yeah, how do they do
19 collective bargaining? Like, like, who represents
20 them?

21 BETH DEFALCO: Yeah, they do have a union, but
they are civil service. I mean, they have a— their
pension is the same as ours.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right, so they don't get
3 any special consideration for their, for their, for
4 their, um, you know, for their police duties.

5 LISA GARCIA: And I like to - like DEC, the
6 conservation cops.

7 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right? Has to be Deputy
8 Commissioner.

9 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, yeah, that's why I said, um,
10 but why not have that parity, right? Like, they're
11 this, um, right, like with all the other law
12 enforcement.

13 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Correct? Correct and so,
14 you know, the government- that will be- no, to staff,
15 like, that'll be part of our Resolution if the
16 governor vetoes this thing even though we have the
17 DEC cops, um, that are, you know, get treated like
18 cops um, and the city cops don't get to be treated
19 like cops. And how does that help -

20 LISA GARCIA: And they are protecting our most-
21 natural resource?

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Like, like, how does that
help us.

LISA GARCIA: Yeah.

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1
2 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: You can't, what does she
3 care? That's a rhetorical question but know what I
4 mean. All right, so, um, uh, so we look forward to
5 working with you on that. Need a little help from
6 us? We're happy to do that.

7 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, we appreciate that and so
8 Shams is helping to work, as you mentioned. Yeah, so
9 we'll make sure that— yeah, thank you so much.

10 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: It can be formal when it,
11 uh, comes to stuff like that. Mhm. Now, we're
12 talking about the FAD, it's up for renewal in 2027.
13 I remember having, uh, I mean, we're way past the
14 midcourse review and all that. We're just, like, on
15 the doorstep of the renewal. And, um, um, I'm never—
16 I liked it better in the old days when EPA retained
17 primacy. Mhm. Um, which was for the— the first
18 2-year FADs. First, first 2 5-year FADs. 2 5-year,
19 yeah. Right. And so then, and then—

20 LISA GARCIA: Department of Health.

21 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: And then they felt
comfortable enough to hand it over to, to, um, to
the, uh, State Health Department. Um, now, you know,
like, the state has its own concerns. I know that
they wanna, you know, live up to the FAD and keep it

1
2 going to the extent that they care, 'cause it's only
3 gonna come out of the city's pocket anyway. And the
4 state's never been real concerned about what we pay
5 out of our pocket. Mhm. But I'm, I'm wondering if
6 you think, I don't wanna put you on the spot here,
7 uh, you know, in your dealings with the state in this
8 upcoming renewal of the FAD, I can only imagine that
9 the state has, you know, we have our view of the
10 reservoirs and what they're for. But you, you know,
11 if you're from New York State, they might wanna try
12 to use 'em for flood control and duh, duh, duh, and
13 things that they were not really meant for. Are you
14 running into anything like that in your conversations
15 with the, with the, um, with the state?

13 LISA GARCIA: Uh, no, I mean, I think right now
14 we're, we're in line in talking to them about what is
15 gonna be needed, what they wanna see. Um, I know
16 that there's been a lot of investments in some of the
17 upstate projects. Um-

17 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

18 LISA GARCIA: And uh, hold on a second. I do
19 have some notes on that, but, um, but I would say
20 right now we're, we're happily beginning that
21

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1
2 negotiation, and through the year you'll see more of
3 that happen.

4 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay because I'm sure that-

5 LISA GARCIA: You know, there's been investments,
6 yes, of the trying to preserve the land and land
7 acquisitions, major sewer and wastewater treatment
8 upgrades. So they do, you know, push a little bit on
9 that. And also the agriculture-

10 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: They're pushing for the
11 Land Act. You say that there's, that they're still
12 pushing for Land Act, right?

13 LISA GARCIA: Uh, no, no, no, on, um, on the
14 upgrades to, to the system.

15 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah.

16 LISA GARCIA: I think we came to an agreement on
17 the land acquisition piece that we would slowly start
18 reducing land acquisition and slowly purchase high
19 value.

20 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right, like around Kensico
21 and stuff like that, you know.

LISA GARCIA: Um, and so, like I said, we're,
we're beginning, you know, we're talking to the state
and the Department of Health, and that'll be an
ongoing- um, process.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay, now, um, make sure
3 you, when you have these discussions, that you
4 mention Paul Rush's connection to West Point and him
5 having all the cadets at his disposal.

6 LISA GARCIA: Do you want to add anything? Paul,
7 do you want to add anything?

8 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: I'm just saying, if they
9 want to get rough, you know, they want to get rough,
10 we can play rough.

11 LISA GARCIA: I think we're trying to -right
12 now, since it's the beginning, we're in good
13 standing.

14 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, I, I, you know,
15 because the- it's like the state has their own view.

16 LISA GARCIA: Yeah.

17 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Of what they-

18 LISA GARCIA: Well, yeah, they're the regulatory
19 agency. Um, yeah, good.

20 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: No, you'd have to come and
21 be in a microphone and say hi. Why don't you just do
that?

LISA GARCIA: Yeah.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay, this is Paul Rush,
3 gonna be speaking. Yeah, so you don't have to state
4 your name, I just stated it.

5 PAUL RUSH: Uh, press the button?

6 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yep. Yeah, I'm just
7 wondering about the state, and because they have
8 their own, you know, legitimate concerns about
9 flooding and stuff like that, and no, we have all
10 these reservoirs up there, like, wouldn't it be nice
11 to kind of, you know, make some kind of arrangement
12 where in certain situations, you know, we won't- you
13 know, we, we've got a lot of issues with keeping the
14 FAD. Um, and, uh, uh, you know, we had a very good
15 run. Um, but with, um, ah, and in, in, in keeping
16 the land, you know, pure and pristine and buying it
17 and having more, um, uh, uh, you know, fauna up there
18 that are doing what fauna do in the woods, you know,
19 and - and this is, this is having an impact. And so-

20 LISA GARCIA: Well, wait, before Paul starts, we
21 have every intention to 100% continue with the FAD
into the long future that it takes.

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right, just as long as, so,
I mean, hmm, if it's going okay and you tell me it's
going okay, then I'll just believe you and not worry.

1
2 Yep. So, as you correctly stated, things are— we've
3 had the FAD for more than 30 years. Things have
4 changed over the course of 30 years, but we're 100%
5 committed to preserving that as long, as long as we
possibly can.

6 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

7 PAUL RUSH: In terms of the discussion, the
8 outlook of the state, State Health Department
9 believes that as well and, um, in terms of operating
10 the reservoirs differently, you know, we had those
11 big storms in the early 2000s, 2009. We did a lot to
12 change our operations to the reservoirs to release
more cold water when it's helpful for the
environment.

13 Also improve the flood attenuation capacity of
14 our reservoirs in ways that, uh, did not affect our
15 safe yield or delivery of water to New York City.
16 And that was thanks to investments we've made in
17 modeling to better unders— understand the system so
we could be a good neighbor upstream and downstream.

18 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

19 PAUL RUSH: We will continue to do that. We're
20 making investments now to better understand climate
21 change's impacts on the system long-term. You know,

1
2 we have an historic record, historical record goes
3 back more than 100 years in terms of our operations,
4 but we're- we'll be completing in the next few years,
5 uh, changing that data to take into account climate
6 change so we can better understand risks and ways we
7 can operate with the- with the focus being on
8 delivering water to our customers, but doing it in
9 ways that is helpful also for stakeholders upstream
10 and downstream.

11 And the tremendous reduction in our demand in
12 city over the course of years has really made this
13 possible. So I think we're in a really good position
14 as we go into, um, preparing for the FAD and the
15 discussions we'll lead up to the FAD in 2027.

16 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right, I, I, I think also
17 just as a, you know, to put a big scary number out
18 there, I don't know if it- I remember back in the
19 day, um, you know, in the mid-'90s, you know, the
20 cost of the like, one of the reasons why we went all
21 out as we did- first of all, it's better policy to
have a, you know, have a, a, uh, to have a, uh, to
have a water supply that's not filtered. It's better
policy, um, rather than making it into a toilet and

1
2 you're dependent upon some gadget at the end of the
3 line to get all the problems out.

4 I mean, you know, it just— you know, we all know
5 what happened in Milwaukee, wherever it was, with the
6 Cryptosporidium and just you know, sometimes filters,
7 you know, aren't all they're— aren't all that— all
8 they're cracked up to be. Um, always better to be
9 starting out with the most pristine as you possibly
10 can. Most pristine being unfiltered, great.

11 Um, but one thing that put the fear of God in us
12 30 years ago was the roving price tag of somewhere
13 between \$6 to \$8 to \$10 billion. That number kind of
14 fluctuated. That was most— it was \$6 to \$8 that was
15 thrown around back then and even back then, everyone
16 knows that 6 billion or 8 billion means 2 or 3 times
17 that.

18 And so, I mean, everyone's really afraid of that
19 number. Um, so I think there should be a new number
20 of— I mean, back when this first started, we were on
21 the FAD track, but we were also on the filtration
track in case we had to, like, in case FAD didn't
work out and we had to jump over and just keep it.
So we were planning to filter back then.

1
2 Like, I don't think we're doing that now, but,
3 um, oh, we're, we're still doing that. Well, in the
4 2017 FAD, we were required to update our design for a
5 filtration plan on our Cattail system.

6 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: All right.

7 PAUL RUSH: So we've been doing that work. We're
8 currently in pilot testing from different treatment
9 technologies up in, uh, Gardner, Town of Ulster,
10 where there's a facility running right now.

11 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

12 PAUL RUSH: That work is scheduled to be
13 completed in 2029 and is part of that, as part of
14 that contract.

15 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah.

16 PAUL RUSH: There is a component to update the
17 cost estimate for a filtration plant with a lot of
18 asterisks after it because this is going to be a
19 conceptual design.

20 So in conceptual design, you know, that's not
21 building it all the way out but as part of that work,
that is included.

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: No, because I, I think we
have to, you know, um, figure out what the sword of
Damocles really is here. Right? Like, how much, how

1
2 much is it gonna cost? And that matters and so, um,
3 you know, we'll be looking forward to that number as
4 an incentive to make sure that we stay on the, on
5 the, on the FAD track.

6 And, you know, coming from you, everything you
7 say, I, I trust you.

8 LISA GARCIA: Um, we do have— yeah, I, um, I just
9 have a note here. The system-wide filtration plant,
10 we will— we are on this track to figure out exactly,
11 but it could cost, as you mentioned, tens of billions
12 of dollars to build. It costs hundreds of millions
13 annually to operate.

14 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right?

15 LISA GARCIA: And take up to 20 years or more to
16 construct. So it's true that it would just be— I
17 mean, we can't even probably fathom—

18 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

19 LISA GARCIA: The type of—

20 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: And plus now I don't care
21 because I'll be dead, so okay.

LISA GARCIA: Well, we're hoping you're here for
many, many more years.

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, I'm, I'm hoping that
too, you know, but it's just, yeah. 20 years, I'll

1
2 do 20 years. I'll do 20 years, yeah, I'll give you
3 20, yeah, I can do it. If Eric gives me 20, I'll,
4 I'll give- I'll give everybody 20, okay, All right.

5 LISA GARCIA: Um, I was an intern in the law
6 department when- in 1998, by the way, while everyone
7 was working on the first b-out. What was the first?

8 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, yeah, it was-

9 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, yeah, it was- we all have
10 history here and why it's so important.

11 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: No, it was- and it was, it
12 was, it was, it was you know, federal government took
13 a real- because you, when you talk about this, this
14 scientific advisory panel, it reminds me of the Blue
15 Ribbon Panel headed by Daniel Oaken from, um, North
16 Carolina, wherever it was, uh, what do they call that
17 big, uh, Chapel Hill, whatever. What's that? Yeah,
18 UNC and he was the Chair of the 10-person Blue Ribbon
19 Panel. And the Blue Ribbon Panel came back with a
20 unanimous recommendation that New York City- the feds
21 did this. The federal government said, okay,
hotshots in New York City, we're gonna do a Blue
Ribbon Panel. We're gonna see whether you have a
shot at getting this done. And so we're gonna put
together a Blue Ribbon Panel of watershed experts

1
2 from around the, from around the country. And they
3 came back with the unanimous recommendation that New
4 York City should not be given the opportunity to
5 pursue a FAD.

6 And so the federal government waved that in our
7 face and said, we got 10x- we got 10 of the best
8 experts. Says we're out of our mind giving you even
9 an opportunity, you know, to do it. So you got this
10 other scientific advice.

11 So like, what are they doing? I mean, you said
12 it in your testimony, but like, like, what are they
13 doing?

14 PAUL RUSH: So we assembled a scientific advisory
15 panel assembled from mainly university professors and
16 scientists around the country with different areas of
17 expertise to take a look at our analysis of risks to
18 our program going forward, what our biggest risks
19 are, and to verify whether we're concerned about the
20 same things. It makes sense what we're concerned
21 about.

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

PAUL RUSH: In conjunction with the issuance of
our, our 5-year FAD assessment, which is gonna, it's
gonna be issued at the end of this month, shortly

1
2 after that, we're gonna release a white paper that
3 indicates areas where we believe, DEP believes, where
4 we need to make adjustments or we should look at
5 making adjustments in those programs.

6 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: And, and that's going to
7 be, and all that work is gonna go into the 2027
8 determination by the-

9 PAUL RUSH: It's gonna inform, it's gonna inform
10 our position and our discussions and it's part of us
11 coming up with ideas of where we think we should be
12 going. This scientific advisory panel has prepared a
13 separate paper where they're looking at the risks
14 independently from us with information that's
15 publicly available and that what we have shared.
16 They're writing up their opinions, what they believe
17 the issue is. That will inform our positioning on
18 this and will also include as part of that a complete
19 panel report.

20 So you can see everything that each individual
21 panel member's opinion on all this. So that's in
there as well. That white paper will help guide us
in terms of our discussion because we have other- the
risks are changed. Our assessment of what the
biggest risks are to, um, us preserving the th-that

1
2 have changed since the 1990s. No longer turbidity on
3 the Catskill system. That's not the highest, the
4 highest risk. There are other things out there and
5 that's, that's the purpose of this, to help us
6 prepare for going to the negotiations and discussions
7 with DOH in, um, where the FAD goes.

8 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay. Just a note to
9 staff, I think we should have, you know, work with
10 DEP and whatever's comfortable with them. But, um,
11 because like this thing's coming out next month, but
12 then you got to do your own brainwaves or whatever.
13 I mean, I wanna- and, and when is the- yeah, so with
14 2020, that's next.

15 Okay, so, you know, we should have a FAD hearing,
16 you know, like at some point just to kind of, you
17 know, really like air this out, you know. And then
18 there's going to be a lot of numbers up there and
19 then we'll use that as our segue to like yell and
20 scream at the OMB Director and the State. The state,
21 you know, hmm, uh, because the state- the only people
who could take the rental payment away from the Mayor
is the state, the State Corporations Committee that
created, you know, the Water Board and the Water
Finance Authority.

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2 We also have a Resolution from last year or the
3 year before from the Water Board indicating that
4 they, they don't, you know, that, that they're, uh,
5 you know, inalterably and unanimously opposed to the
6 rental payment.

7 So, but again, you know what, so, hmm, I, I, ah,
8 yeah, I mean, we're gonna wanna have a hearing on
9 the, on, on the fact that, you know, to hear about
10 the good work that you know, you guys are doing and
11 how we can be of help and, and all that. Let me keep
12 going.

13 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, I think the public hearings,
14 you know, there's the public comment period, so next-

15 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, I know there's- so
16 we'll make sure to- yeah, to come back. Yeah, but I-

17 LISA GARCIA: Where we are, and then- yeah.

18 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Well, I mean, when does the
19 public comment start? When the public-

20 LISA GARCIA: Next spring, probably.

21 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, we're gonna want to
do something. Yeah, we're gonna wanna do something
before that.

LISA GARCIA: Yeah, yeah, we're not gonna
embarrass anybody. I'm nice.

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2 LISA GARCIA: No, no, no, we appreciate it, we
3 appreciate it.

4 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, because we want to
5 bring some daylight. You know how many people, you
6 know- yeah, I mean, I was on the street this morning,
7 no one talked to me about the FAD, Nobody, nobody.
8 And so nothing, you know, nothing.

9 LISA GARCIA: We'll make sure if we run into each
10 other.

11 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yes, yes and just, um, now
12 he's talking about people who don't pay their bills.
13 And so, you know, one way- thank you, Paul- one way
14 that we, you know, kind of get people to do that is
15 through the lien sale and the Mayor put the kibosh on
16 lien sales. And so what is the expected, um,
17 drop-off, uh, because I imagine that lien sales are a
18 pretty good way to get people to come to the table
19 and work out a plan to pay their bills, even if they
20 can't pay it all at once.

21 LISA GARCIA: Um, yeah, so we, you know, the
notice just came out, and so we'll-

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: But you can't do lien sales
now, right?

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2 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, well, it's paused for this
3 year, but the idea is that they're working with the
4 Administration, will be able to do this comprehensive
5 study. Um, and so we're looking forward to—

6 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, the study is to get
7 people to pay their bills so that, you know, 15% of
8 the people, like, don't pay their bills, so the other
9 85% have to make up for them. It's kind of, um, it's
10 anti-affordability.

11 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, well, we have other
12 mechanisms to make sure that we work with people to
13 pay their bills, as I mentioned.

14 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay, I just want to put
15 out there that the lack of your ability to do a lien
16 sale—

17 LISA GARCIA: But we understand, yeah, that,
18 that, that changes—

19 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Because we got money going
20 out the door with the rental payment, we got the lien
21 sale so nobody has to pay the bill anymore. At a
certain point, like, hey, what are we doing? You
know what I mean? Like, we have to, we have to bring
in money.

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2 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, we'll definitely have to have
3 all those conversations.

4 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yes, we do. We got a lot
5 of-

6 LISA GARCIA: Do you wanna add anything, Nerissa?

7 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: This is the beginning of a
8 beautiful friendship.

9 LISA GARCIA: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: That's from a movie, black
11 and white movie.

12 NERISSA MORAY: I mean, I guess, uh, what I would
13 say is that um, we're encouraged at the, um, to work
14 with, uh, the Administration along with the City
15 Council to, to make sure that the lien sale stays
16 equitable and fair. So we participated, you know, a
17 lot in the first round pre-fiscal '25 lien sale to
18 make- to improve the process at that- that point. So
19 we're excited to, you know, work further with the,
20 the City Council, uh, and the Administration to- to
21 look at other ways to make it more equitable and
fair. And, you know, uh, it's not- although it's
postponed for this year, it obviously hasn't been
canceled necessarily for the years after that, so-

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2 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay, okay I just, I just
3 want to get some— we got a lot of money going out.
4 Um, and you know what? I'll— yeah, I'm just— we have
5 people. Yeah, yeah, yeah, all right, Oh 7 Yeah okay.
6 You know, we— we don't have a lot of members here,
7 and sometimes most, like, they set question and
8 answer at like 5 minutes. Remember, we got the
9 Finance Chair, for crying out loud. And so we're
10 gonna go 7 minutes. We're gonna go 7 minutes and so
11 I'm gonna, um, for, for each, each, each member for
12 questions, and I'm going to— I mean, I have I'm not
13 quite done with the statement yet, but I, I've been
14 yapping long enough.

15 And so, um, uh, it is my— oh, who's, who's first?
16 Okay, okay. Uh, it's my privilege to recognize
17 Finance Chair Lee for questions. Chair Lee.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Thank you. Um, I have to
19 say, it's been very educational sitting here, Chair,
20 uh, Gennaro, listening to the history of how
21 everything came to be. So I appreciate that.

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Because of me. Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah um, thank you. Um,
we're gonna go crazy with 7 minutes, so, um, thank
you. I actually— so before I get into the more

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2 financial questions, um, I do have parts of Southeast
3 Queens, and I did have, um, unfortunately the family
4 who was the mom and son who was in the basement
5 during Hurricane Ida that passed away, that's in my
6 district.

7 So Um, one of the things that I just, just to
8 clarify in terms of the- I'm glad to see you guys are
9 putting more investments into the catch basins. Um,
10 because I gotta say, like, sometimes my staff and I
11 go and just clean them ourselves because, because
12 they're just not getting, um, clean regularly. I
13 know it's due to a lot of things, lack of resources
14 as well. Um, so it's great that you guys are looking
15 into new types of catch basins which will actually
16 help with that issue. Um, so super excited to hear
17 about that. Um, and just wanted to ask about- let me
18 just go really quickly. Um, let me just go ahead
19 with this part.

20 Oh, oh, in terms of the lien sale, actually,
21 let's start with that first since that was the most
22 recent thing that was brought up. I noticed that in
23 the Prelim Budget for '27, um, the Administration did
24 not include the lien sale in the Prelim Budget. Um,

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2 we were assuming that it would get put back in, but
3 if you guys could clarify that, that would be great.

4 LISA GARCIA: Um, sure, there were— there was an
5 announcement made that they were gonna pause for this
6 year, but also—

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: For '26, yes, but then we
8 noticed it was also not in FY27. So you mean for the
9 current fiscal year or FY27?

10 BETH DEFALCO: For the city's main budget or for
11 the—

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah, the city prelim
13 budget. Yeah, for just in general. So I wanted to
14 know if that is impacting you guys.

15 NERISSA MORAY: No, because most of our income
16 comes from the water and sewer bills, so we do our
17 own modeling of our revenue.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, so that's totally
19 separate and apart from the overall city's?

20 NERISSA MORAY: Correct.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, I just wanted to make
sure because when I heard that I was like, oh wait,
that wasn't in the budget. Um, okay, perfect. So,
um, going into the AMRs, the estimated billing and
automated meter reading, um, PMMR shows a significant

1
2 increase in estimated billing. Um, estimated bill
3 rate jumped from 10.1% to 22.2% in the first 4 months
4 of FY26 due to battery life issues affecting meter
5 transmission units. Um, and DEP launched a citywide
6 AMR replacement initiative in December 2024,
7 replacing 130,000+ devices at 5,000 devices per week,
8 which is a lot.

9 Um, the estimated billing increased from, you
10 know, as I mentioned, the 10.1 to 22.2, meaning over
11 1 in 5 bills are now estimated rather than based on
12 actual meter readings. And so what is the target
13 estimated bill rate? What percentage of MTUs are
14 affected by battery life issues? And when is the AMR
15 replacement program projected to return the estimated
16 rate to acceptable levels? Sorry, I know that was a
17 lot.

18 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, so DEP, um, has ramped up our
19 AMR replacement initiative in order to bring our
20 estimated bill rate down, um, to our target of 4%.
21 And as you mentioned, we're replacing approximately
5,000 devices per week and expect to ramp up
production as the weather improves.

Um, we projects— we project substantial
completion of the project by the end of, um, fiscal

1
2 year '27 or calendar year '27, sorry, as we work to
3 upgrade approximately 78% of our system. Um, one
4 thing I just wanted to mention is just as I'm coming
5 to, to understand this also is that it's the
6 estimated bill based on usage.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Mhm, mmm.

8 LISA GARCIA: And so it's not some estimated bill
9 that, you know, DEP charges. And so, um-

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yep. So, you know, so you
11 can go to my DEP account and see what the usage was
12 in the past and then see the estimated bill. Um, and
13 so we are prioritizing customers with long-term
14 estimated bills for replacement, both proactively and
15 upon request, or allowing customers to report their
16 own meter reading also. And we're working with
17 customers to temporarily remove those with long-term
18 estimated bills um, from enforcement action. Um, and
19 of course we also made changes to our leak
20 forgiveness program to allow more customers to be
21 eligible for leaks.

In other words, if after those estimated bills go
out, then you get your actual and there's an
increase, it could be from a leak or, um, actually

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2 have that happen to me. Maybe someone else moved it.
3 What?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: I actually had that happen
5 to me.

6 LISA GARCIA: Oh, okay.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: With the toilet leakage.
8 And I was like, damn.

9 LISA GARCIA: Yeah and so we want, so we wanna
10 make sure that we work with the- the consumer to, um,
11 to address those issues. But, um, but we've heard
12 actually from people on staff also who finally got
13 that actual number, and the estimated bill was, uh,
14 was in range of what they had been paying before, so.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay and do you- talking
16 about the estimated bill, um, do you know what the
17 average estimated billing error is, either
18 overbilling or underbilling? And what is the total
19 annual revenue impact of estimated billing
20 inaccuracies and what DEP's process for billing
21 adjustment is?

LISA GARCIA: Yeah, we have that, that, those
numbers.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

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2 NERISSA MORAY: Um, so our more modern estimated
3 billing system can calculate the estimated average
4 daily flow based on the last 12 months of
5 consumption. So we're always doing that, um, back
6 look, as the Commissioner said, to the actual water
7 that was billed over the last 12 months.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Mhm. Um, so that really
9 results in a very representative, um, estimate, uh,
10 for, for these estimated bills. Um, once we receive
11 an actual reading upon replacement of the AMR device,
12 the difference between the estimated and the actual
13 consumption is reflected then on the customer's next
14 bill, and it results in a credit in the, uh, if in
15 the customer's favor, uh, or unfortunately, you know,
16 an extra-

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah.

18 NERISSA MORAY: If, if they've actually used,
19 because we do have to bill for what they actually use
20 during the period.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

NERISSA MORAY: Based on our analysis, customers
that see a material increase due to a lower than
actual estimated read experience some sort of change

1
2 in use of the property. That could be a leak or some
3 other usage.

4 Um, customers can dispute their bill and they
5 have an opportunity to apply for the leak forgiveness
6 program that the- the Commissioner mentioned. Um,
7 we've made the rules of our, of that program more
8 flexible to assist these customers, and we're also in
9 the process of launching a new initiative to
10 proactively flag the availability of the program to
11 customers who might be eligible because of a
12 potential leak during the period of, of these
13 estimated bills.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, perfect. And how has
15 the transition to AMRs impacted the city's revenues
16 and are there any trade-offs as part of the process?

17 NERISSA MORAY: Um, yeah, sure. So, um, we, uh,
18 substantially completed our original installation of
19 the AMR devices for customers in 2012 and that
20 provided us a lot of benefits. So for example, we,
21 um, helped us improve our revenue collections
compared to, say, a decade before. It- it improves
our customer experience via proactive leak
notifications where we're actually sending out
notifications to customers if we're seeing what looks

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2 like a leak on the— at their property and much lower
3 estimated bill rates.

4 Um, and also it gives us a much more granular
5 water consumption data that helps to boost our
6 conservation efforts around the city. Um, I'm happy
7 to say that at this time we have not seen a material
8 impact to revenue due to the increase in estimated
9 bills but obviously this project is for us a real
10 priority as we focus on getting those AMR devices
11 replaced, providing excellent customer service, and
12 the long-term health of our revenue and operations.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, perfect. Thank you.
14 Um, and just really quickly, can I just ask one more
15 question on the Chief Savings Officer?

16 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Sure, sure. You're the,
17 you're the Finance Chair. I'm gonna cut you a little
18 slack.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: I gotta follow the rules.

20 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Um, no, so I, in terms of
efficiencies, I know that every agency has been asked
to do 1.5% in FY26 and 2.5 in FY27 and in the out
years. And just wanted to know, I know the reports
are technically due tomorrow, um, but just wanted to

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2 know how much of, um, the— well, I actually, yeah, so
3 have you identified who the Chief Savings Officer is
4 gonna be and how much time of theirs is dedicated
5 towards this portion of their role?

6 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, so we identified, um, DEP,
7 uh, the Chief Savings Officer is Anna Ponte, who, you
8 know, I mean, um, she's the agency's chief of staff
9 and approximately 25% of her time rallying all the
10 troops and getting the, um, getting the information.
11 Um, so she's been dedicating, like I said, uh, 25% of
12 her time to this savings initiative.

13 Um, with significant support from, um, our deputy
14 commissioner of budget. Um, and then to your point,
15 DEP has also been asked to participate in the savings
16 exercise like every other agency, and the target
17 redu— uh, reductions are the same as city agencies:
18 1.5% in FY26 and then 2.5% in FY27.

19 So we're going through, you know, finalizing
20 that, and we'll be submitting it tomorrow— tomorrow.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

LISA GARCIA: She's still smiling, so that's
good.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah, that's good. Hmm and
just wondering, um, what types of percentage

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2 reductions, which areas, and then also what are you
3 all using within the department as metrics? Because
4 I know obviously for each program it's going to be
and look differently.

5 So just wondering, um, how some of the thought
6 process has been around finding those savings and
7 what metrics are being used to determine that.

8 LISA GARCIA: This is more, um-

9 BETH DEFALCO: Um, so we're um, we're going to be
10 submitting it tomorrow, but we were looking at some
11 of our, um, O&M operations. So for example, arterial
12 or highway cleaning, um, operations. So we'd be
13 looking at the amount of cleaning we can do, the sort
of the volume of service, the service, uh, that we
can provide in that area.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Oh, and just to clarify, I
15 wanna make sure that we note that, you know, this is
16 all under the assumption that we're, we're not gonna
17 you know, decrease or diminish any city services,
18 because obviously what you all are doing is super
19 important. So just wanted to make that point very
20 clear. So yeah.
21

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2 LISA GARCIA: Oh yeah, we agree. It's not, uh,
3 ensuring that none of it interferes with our
4 day-to-day operations.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Exactly.

6 LISA GARCIA: But where we can find savings,
7 yeah.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, perfect. So we'll
9 look forward to that report, and I will leave the
10 last question actually to, um, give to the Chair but
11 yes, thank you so much. Thanks, Chair.

12 LISA GARCIA: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Thank you, Madam Chair.
14 And now it's my pleasure to, uh, recognize Council
15 Member Hanks for questions. Council Member Hanks.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you, Chair. So
17 you'd think I'd be ready with all of, uh, the
18 conversations back and forth.

19 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Take your time, it's very
20 low-key.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Okay, so-

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: We, we're having fun.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Can you hear me? So my
questions, uh, and welcome, thank you so much for
coming to testify. And, uh, capital investment and

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2 borough prioritization is kind of where I am. As you
3 said, you know, um, while we appreciate the- the
4 100-year goal, uh, we're having 100-year storms every
5 other year, every 5 years. So I think that, that,
6 you know, we really need to be looking at um, you
7 know, water resistance programs, you know, coastal
8 flooding, and a lot of that being from, uh, Staten
9 Island with Hurricane Sandy. We bear the brunt of
10 that, so much of my questioning is kind of in, in, in
11 that vein.

12 So DEP's, um, \$20.2 billion, billion-dollar
13 5-year capital plan is heavily driven by federally
14 funded mandated, uh, upgrades including wastewater
15 treatment and combined sewer overflow mitigation, but
16 lacks transparency on borough-level allocations. And
17 it definitely raises, um, equity concerns for places
18 like Far Rockaway and Staten Island where persistent
19 drainage issues, limited sewer capacity, and
20 heightened vulnerability to storm surge and coastal
21 flooding remain, um, ongoing challenges.

18 So without clear data on how funds are
19 distributed, is it- it's really kind of difficult to
20 determine, um, whether the capital plan adequately
21 addresses the borough-specific infrastructure needs.

1
2 So my question is, uh, do— does DEP have a percentage
3 of a dollar amount in the capital plan specifically
4 allocated to different boroughs, particularly ones in
5 Staten Island? And which capital projects currently
6 in design or construction directly address, uh,
7 Staten Island sewer capacity flooding issues?

8 So, um, in the last fiscal, I, um, allocated \$1.5
9 million to the dredging of Allison Pond Park and we
10 got a little pushback on the actual ownership. Is it
11 Parks? Is it DEP? And so, I'll leave that so we can
12 ask the first question, and then I'll go on with the
13 Chair's, uh, permission to ask another question.

14 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Sure.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you.

16 NERISSA MORAY: Um, we do look at our capital
17 budget in terms of a borough investment, so we do
18 have a breakdown per borough, and I do have a sewer
19 um, including blue belts. So, so our infrastructure
20 that's dealing with sewers, stormwaters, and more of
21 a, a sort of, uh, the blue belt approach, which is,
uh, an engineering solution, but also it's a
nature-based also engineering solution, uh, number
for Staten Island.

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2 So we have, uh, over \$865 million in the Capital
3 Budget, um, for the Borough of Staten Island in terms
4 of sewers, including blue belts.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: I have to say, this is my,
6 like, 8th, uh, Preliminary Budget hearing, and thank
7 you for actually having that number available. That-
8 this is, like, unbelievable. I was shocked, you
9 know, so thank you very much.

10 So, um, so water assistance programs, uh, the
11 PMMR shows DEP's water assistance programs include
12 home water Assistance Program, HWAP, providing \$9
13 million to 6- 62,000 customers, and multifamily water
14 assistance programs providing \$12 million to 48
15 units. Um, what is the annual budget for the water
16 assistance programs in FY27, and is this sufficient
17 to meet the demand given rising water rates? And has
18 the budget grown since last fiscal year?

19 NERISSA MORAY: Hmm, um, yes, thank you for the
20 question. Um, in, uh, Fiscal '26, the budget
21 included, uh, sorry, in fiscal '25, so last year, to
your question about the increase, um, our budget
included \$30.6 million for assistance programs and
then in Fiscal '26, that's been, um, increased to \$32
million, uh, for the assistance programs. Um, one of

1
2 the things that we're particularly, um, excited about
3 or proud about this year is that we've increased the
4 bill, the credits on the bills. So for the, um,
5 home, uh, homeowner water assistance program, we've
6 increased, uh, that up to, uh, \$159 per year, which
7 is almost 13% of a customer's bill compared to last
8 year.

9 And then for the, uh, uh, multifamily water
10 assistance program, um, we had been, uh, reaching
11 48,000 units. That's a \$250 credit per unit last
12 year, and we're increasing that this year to 65,000
13 units. Um, so, uh, each, uh, the sort of average
14 bill credit for that program is approximately \$10,500
15 per building.

16 So we're really, um, happy to be able to increase
17 those programs this year.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you so much. Um,
19 how many households spend more than 6% of income on
20 water sewer bills qualifying them as cost-burdened.
21 And do you have a sense of how many of these
22 cost-burdened households currently receive
23 assistance?

24 NERISSA MORAY: The, uh, typical water and sewer
25 bill for a single-family property in New York City is

1
2 \$1,224 in Fiscal Year '26. A property owner and
3 their household would need to earn less than \$21,000
4 per year for the cost of water and sewer charges to
5 exceed that 6% threshold. Sure, \$21,000 per year.

6 LISA GARCIA: We can always— we can also send
7 this to you later.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: That's great, thank you.

9 NERISSA MORAY: Um, and, um, that being said, we
10 know that many homeowners do struggle, which is
11 exactly why we offer those, um, HWP, uh, the HWP
12 credit to assist the lower-income customers who
13 qualify for the, for the programs.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you so much, and
15 thank you, Chair, for your indulgence.

16 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: You bet. Um, yeah, thank
17 you for your good questions. Appreciate it very
18 much. Uh, now it's my pleasure to recognize Council
19 Member Sanchez for questions. Council Member
20 Sanchez.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you so much, Mr.
Chair, and, uh, thank you to all of you for being
here. Uh, we look forward to a great working
relationship, uh, as you really hit the ground
running. Uh, just a few things. Uh, I represent

1
2 Hunts Point. So you're going to be hearing a lot
3 from me, uh, get ready. Um, uh, and very excited,
4 uh, to have another Bronxite, even though, uh, you
5 have been misguided into Brooklyn temporarily, but we
6 will call you back.

7 Um, so the Capital Plan includes \$289 million for
8 the Hunts Point Wastewater Treatment Plant. Um, can
9 you, uh, talk about beyond the treatment plant, what
10 are uh, other site-specific capital projects in the
11 pipeline, uh, that are funded in this plan to address
12 flooding and waterfront resiliency in Hunts Point?
13 Also, I know my questions are very specific, so, uh,
14 please, uh, know that this is not like a grilling
15 exercise. If you need to come back with information.

16 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, I appreciate that. As I come
17 up to speed, like you said.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Yes, I understand.

19 LISA GARCIA: Um, so there are the \$921 million
20 investments to modernize the infrastructure, also to
21 improve local air quality, um, and, um, produce
biosolids that can beneficially— be beneficially
reused and improve odor control. Um, DEP recently
completed \$53 million in resiliency upgrades to
fortify against severe storms, and that included the

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2 floodproofing and elevating equipment, installing
3 flood barriers and stair access, sealing buildings
4 and control rooms, and installing new sump pumps.

5 Um, and as you mentioned, the projects will
6 continue with the new digesters and the sludge
7 facility, which is in design and \$500 million of
8 investments. Um, I think— I don't know, um, I don't
9 know specifically in the Hunts Point area, but
10 obviously we continue to work on um, uh, you know, on
11 stormwater protection or reducing stormwater. We're
12 looking into more ways, um, to kind of activate our
13 work, um, around clean energy. Idling is a big
14 project, which I know from my work in Hunts Point is
15 a big piece. Um, and so it's like the suite of
16 projects that we're looking at.

17 Um, but I— let me ask my team if anyone has
18 something specific for Hunts Point. If not, we'll
19 make sure to get back to you.

20 No, I think we have it by the Bronx, but yeah,
21 um, so we'll make sure to continue to work with you
22 as we, uh, look at those projects.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Absolutely. Um, so I
24 mean, there's also, uh, looking at the Bureau of, uh,
25 Waterfront Resiliency, uh, and we know how, uh,

1
2 underfunded that, uh, bureau is at the moment. Um,
3 how does DEP plan to, uh, mitigate flood concerns in
4 environmentally vulnerable areas like Hunts Point?

5 LISA GARCIA: Um, yeah, the whole- I mean, the
6 Bureau of Coastal Resiliency is new, and, um, they're
7 gonna be looking, um, at all of the, um, all of the
8 areas in the city. I think we mentioned that there's
9 86 vulnerable areas that I actually asked for, um, to
10 begin to look at that more vulnerable areas for the
11 flooding. And, um-

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Yeah, I mean, on that
13 point, you could also expand, um, just in general
14 understanding that there are so many areas, uh,
15 especially in communities like mine, especially in
16 underserved and underfunded communities. How, um, is
17 this new Administration planning to look to, uh,
18 target them specifically, uh, to make up for
19 environmental racism and injustices that, uh,
20 unfortunately these communities have had to bear the
21 brunt uh, for generations.

22 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, so I think that's part of it
23 that, you know, as we think about flood mitigation
24 planning, um, is looking at these more vulnerable
25 areas and, um, and using the EJ maps and the, um,

1
2 disadvantaged community maps to figure out where we
3 can invest more money. Um, as I come up to speed,
4 obviously I will continue to work with this lens of
5 equity and environmental justice. Um, so I must say
6 that coming to DEP with this EJ lens, um, I don't
7 know if I should say this, but unfortunately, water
8 main breaks happen in every single community. So we
9 need to make sure that we address the issues that
10 happen as they come up. But also, like you
11 mentioned, as the Administration starts to, to build
12 up working with MOCEJ and others to really figure out
13 how we begin to - I mean, how we continue, I should
14 say, to invest in disadvantaged communities like the
15 South Bronx and Hunts Point and other areas.

16 So I'll look forward to doing that work. Um,
17 like I said, I don't have an actual page on the South
18 Bronx, but we will make sure to get some of that work
19 to you.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Uh, absolutely and I
21 look forward to working with all of you, uh, very
closely, um, to, uh, see some really great work. Um,
and a lot of, uh, pilot programs, environmental
resiliency programs, like, uh, please see us as a
partner in really trying to see what can work and how

1
2 we can make our communities more climate resilient
3 together.

4 LISA GARCIA: I appreciate that and of course,
5 you know, I mean, just hearkening back on the- my
6 history, right? Working in these communities. One
7 of the things that I know we're planning to do is to
8 continue to work with Louise Young at the, um, EJ and
9 Climate Office, but also um, with the Parks
10 Department.

11 So Tricia and I already have a plan because it is
12 really about looking at it holistically. It's not
13 just the DEP piece, so that's one thing I am
14 definitely looking forward to. Um, so thank you for
15 that.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank you,
17 Mr. Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Thank you, Council Member
19 Sanchez. It's great having you on the Committee.
20 Mhm. Okay, I'll go back to finish my, uh, statement.
21 I mean, to your statement, my comments on it, and-
oh, there's something you mentioned where there's
actually a formal question in here, so I don't have
to do that one.

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2 Um, um, now, uh, and again, this is just
3 something like out of my own head, um, I, I, I saw
4 someplace recently, not from the stuff that the, uh,
5 staff prepared, uh, well, maybe it is, but, um, when
6 it comes to estimated bills, there's still a lot of
7 people getting, uh, estimated bills. Um, and one of
8 the, um, you know, there's one phenomenon that we've
9 seen with estimated bills um, something happens in
10 the water meter, who knows. Um, and then you have an
11 individual living in a domicile, apartment, house,
12 whatever, um, starts getting estimated bills and- and
13 so this goes on for years. And then by the time the
14 meter's back online, maybe when the estimated bills
15 started kicking in, it was like a 1-person household.
16 And maybe in the interim, there's been a marriage,
17 there's been 2 kids, mhm and now there's like 4
18 people living there and, you know, kids go through
19 water, you know? And so, um, it's been this
20 phenomenon where they say, oh, okay, you know, the
21 estimated bills are wrong because your usage is
really for this, you know, for this, this, this
family that uses a lot of water and we're gonna back
you up all the way - we're gonna figure that you were
using this much water all along when, you know, it

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2 wasn't, it was just a single person and um, and so,
3 and, and we've had, you know, th-this is the kind of
4 constituent work that we do. It's just like, I, I,
5 I, I wasn't using this water all th- so th-that
6 they're backbilling me based on my new usage, but the
7 new usage is like, you know, after there was a
8 marriage and like a second kid came along. And so,
9 so they have to- so they're backbilled all the way.
10 So, how does- how does DEP resolve situations like
11 that? Or, or, or, or, or what's the standard
12 mechanism? 'Cause the standard mechanism right now
13 is, you know, you get an estimated bill, um, and they
14 were on your own estimated bills for years, and then
15 they, you, you know, your meter works again and they
16 say, okay, you know, this is your usage and we're
17 taking it right back to when you started on the
18 estimated bills that you were, using water like it
19 was going out of style?

20 So, like, what's the protocol- you know, like,
21 what would you normally do in that case, which may or
22 may not be accurate? And then if there's a wild
23 inaccuracy because of the person's life circumstances
24 have changed, like how does that get reconciled?

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2 BETH DEFALCO: Um, Chairman, I thought I'd, ah, I
3 personally understand this because I, I had to have
4 both my, uh, meter replaced and my AMU replaced last
5 year and ahead of this hearing I went to go look at,
6 at the charges to see what they looked like and see
7 what the difference was between this year and last
8 year and what the estimated billing is. And I gotta
9 give credit especially to Albert Kramer's Bureau
10 because they're very good at the estimated billing.
11 So if you think of your meter like a- like an
12 odometer in your car that's constantly running, even
13 if the automatic meter transmission device that
14 transmits that-

15 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

16 BETH DEFALCO: Goes, they were- they're able to
17 true it up and to figure out exactly still how much
18 water was used in the end. Um, it's-

19 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: But - but if the meter was
20 off and there was a life circumstance change and more
21 people entered the household, I mean, how could that
mechanism possibly account for that?

BETH DEFALCO: There's a way that they can- that
we can do estimated billing if your meter and also
your- your AMU, your transmitting devices is off.

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2 But odds are that when the meter goes, the bills
3 usually- we're able to catch it relatively quickly
4 because they see the difference, um, in spikes on the
5 end.

6 So in that case, we're trying very hard to reach
7 out to the customer to let them know that we see a
8 difference, or they- or in leak detection, like, we,
9 we see a spike in their billing change. And so we're
10 trying to reach out to them to both get the meter
11 replaced and then to update the- the AMU. So It's
12 relatively rare, though it does happen, um, that, you
13 know, people can have this kind of situation that
14 you're, that you're explaining but.

15 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah and also, something
16 else that can happen, you know, in the interim, you
17 know, forget about new people entering the household,
18 but a leak that they have no idea that that's going
19 on. But if they had their meter operating, they
20 would have a huge spike in their bill in the next,
21 the, their next bill and it would be natural to
assume that there's a leak, which they have to go
find, otherwise this thing is going to be, you know,
going on forever. Um, so thanks for bringing up the

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2 situation of a leak. So you're, you're- what's the
3 answer here?

4 BETH DEFALCO: Well, it's, it's very timely.
5 It's actually Fix a Leak Week, um, for us here at
6 DEP. So there's something that we are concentrating
7 on very heavily. Um, there's, there's-

8 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: It's Leak Week?

9 BETH DEFALCO: Fix a Leak Week.

10 LISA GARCIA: Fix.

11 BETH DEFALCO: Yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Fix a leak. What's that?

13 LISA GARCIA: We don't want Leak Week. We want
14 Fix a Leak.

15 BETH DEFALCO: Fix a Leak. Fix a Leak.

16 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Oh, Fix a Leak Week.

17 BETH DEFALCO: This is- this is that week.

18 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay. Fix a Leak Week,
19 alright.

20 BETH DEFALCO: Um, yes, so, uh, the good news is
21 that-

22 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: I'm glad it's that, you
23 know.

24 BETH DEFALCO: Um, the good news is that
25 customers, um, can sign up for automatic leak

1
2 detection, and that again, if your meter keeps
3 running, it'll show if you have got a spike. Um, it
4 shows us very quickly, usually within about 3 days
5 um, to a week, and then we will automatically notify
6 you that we see a jump in your billing, um, and that,
7 you know, please contact us, you might have a leak.
8 Especially- it's especially useful if, like, you're
9 on vacation, right? You're not there, if your
10 toilet's starting to leak.

11 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: I don't go on vacation,
12 yeah.

13 BETH DEFALCO: Ah, okay.

14 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah.

15 BETH DEFALCO: In that case, you're there when
16 your toilet starts leaking.

17 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: I'm a homebody.

18 BETH DEFALCO: Um, but we have it, we have an
19 automated leak detection.

20 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Nobody rob my house, I'm
21 there, okay.

LISA GARCIA: Also, one of the things that we
mentioned is for that instance where if all of a
sudden your AMR is fixed and you realize that there's
a difference, we made changes to the leak forgiveness

1
2 program so that you can come in and talk to DEP and
3 we'll figure out how to help you with that.

4 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

5 LISA GARCIA: I just want to mention in 2024,
6 this was mentioned a little bit before, but DEP began
7 that citywide effort to upgrade 650,000, um, AMR
8 devices and 325,000 meters to ensure that our
9 metering infrastructure provides the most up-to-date
10 information, right? That's, that- that's the goal.
11 So DEP has already invested \$27.4 million, um, to
12 support that program. Um, and as we mentioned, we're
13 replacing about 5,000, um, a week.

14 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Mhm, hmm.

15 LISA GARCIA: And so we are really trying to ramp
16 it up.

17 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay.

18 LISA GARCIA: So that we don't have too many of
19 those scenarios.

20 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Well, how many, how many
21 people are getting, like, by percentage, how many
22 people are getting estimated bills right now?

23 LISA GARCIA: By the estimated bills?

24 BETH DEFALCO: I mean, the- the PMMR number was
25 the 22% number.

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: So that's right now?

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BETH DEFALCO: That's right now, yeah.

3

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay, ouch.

4

LISA GARCIA: So we're hoping that that'll
5 continue to decline—

5

6

BETH DEFALCO: This winter is the peak of that.
So because we've really ramped up and we have, as we
7 said, 5,000 a week is— is what we're able to replace
8 at the moment. So we'll be replacing them through
9 this calendar year and next year but that's also why
10 the com— as the Commissioner mentioned, we have
11 actually proactively changed, you know, sort of, uh,
12 made changes to our policy to make the leak
13 forgiveness program more, um, more applicable. Also
14 our Meter Bill Cap program, that's also a program if
15 you have a leak that you haven't detected, um, we can
16 give some assistance there too.

10

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah.

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BETH DEFALCO: Um, we have a new key accounts
team that's working with some of the more complex
customers we have, and we're proactively, um, looking
at folks who might have a jump in their bill, um, and
reaching out to explain to them sort of why they

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1
2 might have a higher bill at the end of the
3 reconciliation period when-

4 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay, I'm gonna take this
5 opportunity -

6 LISA GARCIA: So as you talk to your
7 constituents, sorry, but, you know, like, this is the
8 information. Please call DEP. We want to work with-
9 right, folks.

10 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah.

11 LISA GARCIA: So thanks.

12 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, I'll take this
13 opportunity that we're talking about the subject.
14 You, you may not know him, uh, uh, Commissioner, but,
15 uh, Joe Singleton, who did such a great job for so
16 many years and, um, you know, left us way too soon.
17 Um, I don't know how old he was, but he wasn't old.
18 And, um, he was, he was great. He was just like
19 exactly- I mean, I don't know who succeeded him, you
20 know, but- is that you? Okay. Yeah.

21 ALBERT KRAMER: This is Albert Kramer, Deputy
Commissioner for the Bureau of Customer Services.
Joe Singleton was my first boss at DEP.

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Wow.

1
2 ALBERT KRAMER: And very much trying to honor his
3 legacy, his compassion for customers in these
4 situations. And so your point about adjustments that
5 go, that go back, usually the meter is, is working
6 and recording, but we understand that it's— there's a
7 true-up. We try to give customers a period of lower,
8 er, or no interest period to catch up. And we also
9 give customers the opportunity to dispute, let us
10 know if there were additional circumstances that
11 might have have changed, like you said, to then take
12 into consideration for the adjustment to make sure
13 that it's, it's a fair, uh, reconciliation and get
14 customers, uh, paying what they, they use going
15 forward.

13 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Oh, thank you, thank you.
14 I'm, I'm glad you were taught by the best. Yeah and
15 Joe is like a— like a saint. He was a great guy.
16 Um, hmm and I'll get to that.

16 Towards the end of your testimony, I don't know
17 if there are questions in— in the question set for
18 it. Um, um, 10-year Capital Plan, first item, \$1.1
19 billion towards a tunnel to add resiliency and
20 critical redundancy for the Kensico Reservoir. And,
21 um, you know, the Kensico has always been sort of

1
2 like the Achilles heel, you know, of stuff that comes
3 down from upstate. And, you know, once upon a time—
4 I don't know if there's been, um, uh, some kind of
5 technology or fix or, um, strategy um, uh, but, you
6 know, once upon a time, hopefully it's not the same,
7 hope it's not the same now. Once upon a time that,
8 um, not there's a lot of, not that there's a lot of
9 pollutants in, you know, New York City, you know,
10 unfiltered drinking water but, you know, to the
11 extent that there's stuff in there that would be best
12 not be in there, um, like, um, 50% of that used to
13 enter the water supply from- from that 10-square-mile
14 Kensico, you know, watershed. And, um, and so I
15 guess, like, um, I guess I'll, you know, relate this
16 to budget but, um, because this is the kind of thing
17 that could, you know, whack us in the FAD or whatever
18 if Kensico is just like, not under control.

15 And, um, and I know that, um, um, I think, um, I
16 think there's only 2% of the water in Kensico is
17 actually native water from the, from the
18 10-square-mile watershed. 98% of it is from, uh,
19 what comes out from upstate but that 2%, um, you
20 know, once upon a time was a source of 50% of
21 substances that we really didn't want in the water.

1
2 And so is anyone in position to give me a little
3 update on where that sits now? And also, and what
4 this 1.1 million could be doing to, um, I mean, is
5 the kind of thing where Kensico gets in a situation
6 where we, we, we, we, we just have to bypass it or
7 something, or are, you know, because we have to, um,
8 you know, I think people looking at the FAD, so many
9 want to go after us and Kensico once upon a time
10 would be a place where they would do it. Hard to buy
11 land around there too because it's so expensive.
12 Okay, Paul, you're on. I gave you the, you know,
13 the- the icky question, you know.

14 PAUL RUSH: Yeah, so, as you stated, our
15 unfiltered supply from the Catskills, the Catskill
16 system, Delaware system, they all come together at
17 Kensico Reservoir. Critical node for the water
18 supply.

19 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

20 PAUL RUSH: Most of the water that goes out of
21 Kensico comes from our Cat-Del system or protected
watersheds upstate. About 2% of the water comes from
the inflow in the 10-square-mile watershed.

So it's a critical spot.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, that's still the
3 case, right? There's still-

4 PAUL RUSH: Still the case.

5 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right, so you can't divert
6 that or whatever.

7 PAUL RUSH: Well, I mean, that's- you're getting
8 into operational stuff, what we can and can't do.

9 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

10 PAUL RUSH: And, um-

11 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: And how much money you're
12 willing to spend to do it, yeah.

13 PAUL RUSH: The beauty of our system is its
14 flexibility and the thought process the engineers had
15 at the time who put this together, starting with the
16 Croton system, then the- the Board of Water Supply
17 for some of the Catskill system, the Delaware system,
18 they built flexibility into the system. They also
19 built in the capability to make changes in the future
20 if something had hap- things change in the future.
21 And we've taken advantage of that flexibility many
times over the- over the course of years. I guess
the most recent big one we did was connecting the
Catskill Aqueduct with the Delaware Aqueduct in the

1 town of Gardner where those two aqueducts crossed
2 together.

3 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

4 PAUL RUSH: Which has helped us with our
5 operations tremendously to deal with the challenges
6 we have today. Then around for turbidity, what was,
7 was driving that work that was completed in 2014.
8 But at Kensico, you know, the discovery that UV light
9 was very, very effective at low doses in activating
10 the Cryptosporidium, I mean, that allowed us to
11 continue operating on filtered system and reduce risk
12 tremendously.

13 So that plant was put into service in 2012,
14 shortly before— shortly before Sandy.

15 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

16 PAUL RUSH: As part of that construction and the
17 way it was designed, we had to take out the Catskill
18 Aqueduct out of service from Kensico Reservoir to the
19 UV plant. So today we only have the Delaware
20 Aqueduct going from Kensico Reservoir down to the UV
21 plant, only one aqueduct.

22 So that puts us in a state where we want to
23 restore flexibility.

24 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

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2 PAUL RUSH: And that flexibility not only allows
3 us to do work— I mean, we're doing work right now up
4 at Kensico Reservoir. Overnight last night, the
5 city's water supply from Kensico was shut out— shut
6 off for several hours to allow us to do necessary
7 maintenance work, which we're able to plan and adjust
8 the system using its flexibility, using our modeling
9 and the skilled staff that we have.

8 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah.

9 PAUL RUSH: And the skilled staff is both the
10 white-collar staff and our blue-collar laborers who
11 worked overnight, our plumbers who worked overnight
12 last night to repair chlorine injection lines as part
13 of our maintenance procedure.

13 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah.

14 PAUL RUSH: To keep the system up and running.
15 So this project, we're putting in more than \$1
16 billion in for this Kensico-Eastville tunnel, about a
17 2-mile-long Tunnel restores that flexibility, and
18 it's essential for us to prepare for additional
19 infrastructure work—

19 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

20 PAUL RUSH: That we'll be doing down at Hillview
21 Reservoir to improve those facilities.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: And there's also a way to
bypass Kensico, just go right to Hillview, right?

3 PAUL RUSH: Well, the bypass, we can- we can
4 bypass the Delaware Aqueduct around Kensico Reservoir
5 right now, but the capacity-

6 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right, it goes right to
Hillview then, right?

7 PAUL RUSH: We can go straight to Hillview from
8 Rondout with most of the water, but demand in the
9 city require- we don't have full capacity of the
10 Delaware Aqueduct through Kensico, so it's usually a
partial bypass.

11 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

12 PAUL RUSH: This work will also restore our
13 ability to bypass the Catskill Aqueduct around,
14 around Hillview.

15 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

16 PAUL RUSH: So we don't have that flexibility
17 right now. This work allows us to restore and
18 improve our flexibility because the capacity of this
19 new tunnel will be greater than the old, old Catskill
20 Aqueduct section there. So it's really essential to
the flexibility and increases the capacity of the UV
21 plant by another 200 million gallons as well.

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay.

PAUL RUSH: It's a key project that's going forward. So it's in, in construction right now. It's on, it's on schedule. Um, this is also under the, the order that we have for Hillview from our friends at EPA and DOJ, Commissioner, the former-

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah. This has been going on- the Hillview cover has been going on since before I was born.

So it's just- it's gone on forever.

PAUL RUSH: And understanding the risk of contamination at Hillview, at Kensico, that's important as well.

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

PAUL RUSH: Thanks to the Water Board, we recently did a study there to look at risk for PFAS and contamination in that area. And what we found through that study is the- even though there are sources in the area, there's a known site related to the Westchester County Airport.

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Oh, wow.

PAUL RUSH: But this-

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Oh, right with the flame retardant on the runway.

1
2 PAUL RUSH: That's right, that's right but the
3 study revealed, you know, in a really detailed
4 scientific way, and it's available publicly, that the
5 risk is really, really low to us having that impact,
6 impact, um, consumers downstream or the
7 concentrations at the outlet of Kensico Reservoir.

8 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, so who keeps tabs on
9 the airport?

10 PAUL RUSH: What's wrong with the airport?

11 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: I mean, like, who keeps
12 tabs on the airport? Because they're, they're like
13 a, potential. I mean, with, like, flame retardant,
14 we're talking-

15 PAUL RUSH: So, I mean, they've taken, they've
16 taken steps. They- Westchester County has to reduce
17 and address- address that issue. Of course, we have
18 regulatory authority-

19 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

20 PAUL RUSH: In that area. We keep a careful eye
21 on that as well.

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right because the airport's
in the watershed.

PAUL RUSH: A small portion of it.

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Oh, okay, okay.

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PAUL RUSH: Only a small portion of it.

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: All right, Paul, I trust
you. Okay, I just wanna You know, I had to bring up
the- the Kensco thing and before I go over to the
other- so, um, all right, I, I got, I got people in
this room that want to dig my grave over the, um,
over the lead service line replacement thing.

7

You know, there was- we worked with, um, uh,
with, with, with your agency to come up with the lead
service line replacement bill, kind of- pardon the
pun- went over like a lead balloon. And so, um, how
do we do this? You thought you were going to get
easy questions, right.

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LISA GARCIA: Well, any legislation would help,
so we'll- I'll just put that out there.

13

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: I understand that, but, you
know. Yeah, it's got to be a bill but it's gotta
have something in the bill.

15

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LISA GARCIA: But um, you know sometimes it
takes- it takes some time but so, DEP has secured \$72
million from the bill that passed through the state,
uhm from the bipartisan infrastructure law, yeah.

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah and like, the total
cost is like \$2 billion or whatever it is.

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LISA GARCIA: Yeah, so the goal is to-

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: And that seems low to me.

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LISA GARCIA: Yeah. So the goal, well, one is we want to spend the federal dollars that we do get. So one is to make sure, you know, in October 2024, DEP launched a free program to replace privately owned water service- I mean, uh, lead service lines for disadvantaged communities. That was one of the, um, you know, mandates from the state. Um, and so we're hoping to continue that work.

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Obviously we could use the Council's help.

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: It's the feds that put the hammer down on the whole lead service line replacement. It was their - It was their order.

13

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LISA GARCIA: Coupled with the funding, yes. Yeah, to- to help start that program, so.

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: This comes from the- the Lead and Copper Rule or whatever the hell, right? That, that's, that's where this all comes from, right? And so it was-

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LISA GARCIA: Yeah, so the bipartisan-

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: The feds were gonna do this and it looked like it wasn't whatever, but now it's

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2 nailed down and that's a thing and we have to do this
and period.

3 LISA GARCIA: And this Administration hasn't
4 taken away the funding, so that's what I'm saying.
5 So for the city, we wanna make sure that we at least,
6 um, focus on areas where we do have the funding and
7 can replace it. One of the things is talking to
homeowners, um-

8 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

9 LISA GARCIA: To allow us to go in and to replace
10 the lines. The other is we have done this evaluation
11 or assessment that there's about 120,000, um, lead
12 service lines in the city. And to your point, it
13 would probably take- we estimate that it'll take up
to \$2 billion.

14 So we'll continue to work into the future to make
15 sure that this happens. We have, um, I think we
16 worked with all of you to make sure that we
17 understood that if we could get the legislation, we
18 could do this probably within 16 to 20 years, replace
the lead service lines that we do have. But so-

19 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: But, but, but, the bill
20 that we put out there was, you know, homeowners
21

1
2 paying for this. This is really what that, that,
3 that's what the bill was.

4 LISA GARCIA: Yeah.

5 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, there really wasn't
6 any kind, you know, this wasn't going to be like a
7 Newark situation where Santa Claus pays for it, you
8 know. This was going to be— this is not going to be
9 Newark.

10 LISA GARCIA: No, well Santa Claus didn't pay for
11 it in Newark either.

12 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: I, somebody other than the
13 homeowners paid for it.

14 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, yeah. So part of it would be
15 that, um, we would work with the homeowners, but
16 again, the other is this program where DEP would go
17 in and do it for free. So it's the both and, and we
18 want to make sure that we talk about it.

19 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: All right, this is most
20 mainly for people out there are going to want to come
21 to this table soon and like talk about this. It's
not like we're not thinking about it. And so, even
though this is not a legislative hearing, I'll just
mention that. I mean, I can talk about legislation,
I talk about whatever I want, you know, but this is,

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2 you know, this is about- this is about the budget and
3 so.

4 LISA GARCIA: It is important and one of the
5 other things about the legislation was that if
6 there's going to be a renovation or upgrade or
7 something, you know, that, that could- that would be
8 part of the cost. I mean, you know, when we talk
9 about public health, there is no safe level of lead.
10 So it is a public health issue and then the, the, the
11 concern is how do we get to this point where we
12 collectively figure out how to pay for it? So like I
13 said, the federal money is still coming in. We want
14 to work with homeowners.

15 Um, and of course, if you are eligible to come in
16 for that free program where you can. So anyway, so I
17 just want to make sure that it's understood that it
18 is a priority. We want to continue to work with you
19 and everyone.

20 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah.

21 LISA GARCIA: On how we, uh, continue to
understand the health benefit and also how we get
there.

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah so we, we, you know,
we gotta get going on that.

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2 LISA GARCIA: Yes, I appreciate it, yeah. So we
3 do wanna say thank you and we'll continue to work
4 with you on legislation.

5 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, this is— a lot of
6 people are gonna get their hair messed.

7 LISA GARCIA: And Tasos.

8 ANASTASIOS GEORGELIS: Just on the lead, one area
9 that we do need help is when we do come through to
10 replace homeowners' services for free, that they
11 allow us to do it. That's where we need the help,
12 because we're finding in the program that we've
13 undertaken the last couple years with the federal
14 money that not everybody's allowing us to change
15 their lead service lines.

16 So what we want is when we do come through and
17 offer a lead service line for free, that if they
18 refuse, that they, they have to do it themselves
19 within a certain period or help us get the message
20 out to all your constituents: we're doing this for
21 free. It's not—

22 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Oh, meaning that if, if
23 they— that, that, that if they refuse having DEP do
24 it, then they - then they must pay for it themselves
25 within X period of time.

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2 ANASTASIOS GEORGELIS: Because we're coming, you
3 know, we're the government, we're knocking on the
4 door. A lot of people are resistant to let us into
5 their basements, right? And that's where we need
6 help. We're only looking to help them. We're not
7 looking to do it.

8 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay, all right, this is -

9 LISA GARCIA: And that's what - I mean, that's
10 what really worked in Newark. I mean, even when we
11 were talking, you know, I was at EPA at the time, New
12 Jersey DEP, the state. Newark was very clear. We
13 want people from the community knocking on those
14 doors. So that's why it's so important.

15 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

16 LISA GARCIA: That we have the Council working
17 with their constituents also.

18 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, but there's a whole
19 different funding thing in Newark.

20 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, it was a whole different-
21 they got the ordinance but- but still, it was the
government knocking on the homeowner's door, and
that's where the difference was made. When you have
people from your community talking to you about,
like, Tasos is saying, there is a free program, you

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2 should take advantage, even though it is the
3 government. Trust, you can trust me, or the, you
4 know, anyway. And so, it's a community outreach
5 effort too.

6 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: It's going to take a
7 village and then some. And so, all right, let me
8 just- let me just bang through some questions and get
9 to the public. Um, a lot of these have been spoken
10 about already. Um, yeah, when it comes to, uh, this
11 under the title of Federal and State Funding Risks.
12 What federal and state grants does DEP currently- not
13 all of them, uh, receive, and what is it- what's the
14 total amount and what percentage of DEP's budget does
15 this represent? Because we always know that, you
16 know, when it comes to federal and state funding, you
17 know, DEP gets the short end of the stick. We don't
18 get any Bond Act money. Um, you know, we wanna- and
19 the state is very fond of saying you know, there's no
20 city, you know, we got a pile of money here and like,
21 you know, no city is eligible for more than like 5%
of this pot, even though like New York City is what,
45% of the state.

And so, hmm, how bad are we getting beat up by
the feds and the state when it comes to, you know,

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2 whether it's Bond Act, whether it's other special
3 things that they do that we just get left out of?

4 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, so we did, um, let me start
5 with this. Federal funding represents a very small
6 portion of DEP's funding. So it's about 1%. As we
7 mentioned before, 90% of our funding source comes
8 from the sewer and water rates or the water and sewer
9 rates.

10 Um, one of the areas that we do see the federal
11 funding continue is for the lead service lines.
12 That's why we're— take advantage of that. Um, some
13 of the other, um, work out of our Coastal Resiliency
14 Unit is— is coming from federal funding. We just
15 found out, I think it was yesterday, that even though
16 there was a loss of about \$90 million, that because
17 of, um, the AG's office suing

18 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

19 LISA GARCIA: That— that funding may have to, um,
20 come through again. And so we're hoping that that'll
21 go forward, and that was for helping to design some
22 cloudburst projects.

23 Um, and so the— so hopefully the loss of funding
24 that we were projecting may actually decrease after
25 that kind of FEMA and other funding, uh, coming

1
2 through after this litigation. And then do you want
3 to add anything? Yeah um, so we're- anyway, so, you
4 know, all of our projects hopefully will continue
5 because of that 90% not coming from the federal
6 government and only a small piece of it.

7 Um, but again, for us, the federal funding, lead
8 service lines will definitely be a priority for us.

9 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right? How about the state
10 and their proclivity to, like, leave us out of
11 everything?

12 LISA GARCIA: So in my first month, the state is
13 a good partner. Um, I did talk to the, to EFC and to
14 DEC, and so we'll continue to make sure that, um, you
15 know, that certainly with EFC, the Environmental
16 Facilities Corporation, that we continue to see money
17 flowing to New York and for projects that everyone
18 wants to to see. Um, I know there is a discussion
19 about the percentage, um, of the money flowing to New
20 York.

21 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, it's like a loan now.
It seems like a loan. It's a loan. It's not what-

LISA GARCIA: Yeah, yeah, yeah, it's financing.

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Whereas, you know, DEC
2 gives away money, they just don't- they just don't
3 give it to us.

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LISA GARCIA: Yeah, and so we will continue to
5 talk to DEC.

6

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: That's why I got the heck
7 out of that place-

8

LISA GARCIA: To give us some of that funding.
9 Um, the other thing is that with the Environmental
10 Bond Act, I did hear that get- how much is this?

11

NERISSA MORAY: 2.5%.

12

LISA GARCIA: 2.5%, um, so we did get some of it.

13

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: 2.5% of the total-

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LISA GARCIA: DEP has received 2.5% of all
15 distributed funds. Um, so we'll continue to work on

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Distributed to date.

17

LISA GARCIA: Yes.

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right, because there's
19 still plenty of money left in there. So in terms of
20 money that's been committed-

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LISA GARCIA: Yeah.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: 45%— the population— the
3 city that represents 45% of the population has gotten
4 2% of the money.

5 LISA GARCIA: Yeah.

6 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: This is your statement.

7 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, that is the facts.

8 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: What's that?

9 LISA GARCIA: Those are the facts.

10 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right, right.

11 LISA GARCIA: So like I said, we'll continue to
12 work with the state.

13 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, we should go to
14 Albany with pitchforks.

15 LISA GARCIA: Yes, yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: See how that works.

17 LISA GARCIA: I'm, I'm on that train with you.

18 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay, well, we'll do it.
19 Yeah, I used to work at 625.

20 LISA GARCIA: I used to go up there. Well, I
21 worked under Granis, so we— I don't think we—

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: I— yeah, I don't really—
you know, he was— he was right, he was in
legislation, then he did that. Yeah, but that was— I
wasn't— I was— yeah, I was Joe Martin's—

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LISA GARCIA: You were after that, yeah.

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: You know, Joe Martin's and
3 Basil.

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LISA GARCIA: Yeah, yeah.

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Um, Joe was a great guy.

6

LISA GARCIA: So was Pete Granis and Basil.

7

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: I just, you know, I know
Joe a long time. I just said he's a great guy.

8

LISA GARCIA: Yeah.

9

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: That's what I had to say
10 about it, you know. People can infer what they wish
11 about who I didn't mention. You know my Committee
Counsel is like, this guy is like-

12

LISA GARCIA: Yeah.

13

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: I get like- I get paid to
sit next to this guy. I gotta, like, work on my
career.

15

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LISA GARCIA: I went up there every Monday and
worked out of Region 2 the other days.

17

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, I worked out at
Region 2 with Steve Zon.

19

LISA GARCIA: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Steve's great.

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LISA GARCIA: He's, he's there now still, right?

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: No, no, no, he- he retired.

2

LISA GARCIA: Oh, he did retire?

3

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, retired. Yeah, we
4 still talk. But he's, he's, he's retired. Uh, his
5 wife's still working. Dawn is still working.

6

LISA GARCIA: Oh, okay yeah she's there?

7

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Um, yeah, with the
8 filtration cost avoidance. How about this? Um,
9 green infrastructure. What percentage of stormwater
10 is managed through green infrastructure versus
11 traditional gray infrastructure? I know in the
12 advent of cloudbursts and all this other stuff
13 there's, um, I mean, I have an interest in this
14 because the Council passed a-

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LISA GARCIA: Yeah.

19

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: We- you know, many years
20 ago we passed a comprehensive stormwater management
21 plan, but which gave rise to the rain gardens and all
that. Um, and then more recently we did another, um,
uh, comprehensive stormwater management plan law that
I think comports very nicely with, um, DEP's, you
know, plans to do that.

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2 And so, you know, we're looking for, um, you
3 know, green infrastructure. Do you have the
4 breakdown of, you know-

5 LISA GARCIA: Um, I don't have the percentage. I
6 have, um-

7 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Versus green.

8 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, to date, the green
9 infrastructure we've implemented reduces 839 million
10 gallons of, um, a year of combined sewer overflow.
11 So the water- we've also implemented green
12 infrastructure in some of the MS4 areas for
13 stormwater quality treatment.

14 Um, I do not have the percentage, but obviously
15 the goal is to increase the green infrastructure
16 while understanding we need the gray infrastructure.
17 That is just- yeah, so the two types of building out
18 in Gowanus. Yeah, it's essential to the work that we
19 do.

20 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right, in terms of, uh, um,
21 are we in any- are we in any trouble these days with
22 regard to CSOs and not meeting the, the, um, um,
23 requirements of consent orders, anything like that?
24 We got- we got money troubles from that? We got CSO
25 issues?

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LISA GARCIA: We are always aiming to be in compliance with all of those regulations, thank you.

2

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah and I always— yeah, I, I was aimed to open the door for my wife when we go— go someplace, but it doesn't always happen, you know. Anybody got anything on that? CSOs, are we okay? Anybody coming after us with pitchforks on CSOs?

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LISA GARCIA: No, I think we're good. I mean, obviously we're always talking to EPA and DEC, but yeah. We have dolphins in the harbor.

8

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: What's that?

11

LISA GARCIA: We have dolphins in the harbor. That has— okay, that has got to get us somewhere. Yeah, I know that the dolphin thing is good, you know, but, um, I I, does anybody know where we are with— see, because we're always— we're still under a consent order for CSL. Oh yeah, no, yeah, we're still under the consent degree.

12

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right, but are we doing okay? Oh, Angela. Angela's here to save the day.

17

18

ANASTASIOS GEORGELIS: Angela's here, but we are on track. We're working with our regulars and we're meeting targets.

19

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2 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay. What's that? You
3 don't have to swear, Angela. I know her, you know.
4 All right, she's gonna swear you. Okay, she's fine.
5 She just swear, just swear, thanks. You gotta do
6 this.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hi, thank you. Yep, please
8 raise your right hand. You did that. Do you affirm
9 to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but
10 the truth before this Committee and to respond
11 honestly to Council Member questions?

12 ANGELA LICATA: I sure do.

13 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Can you just
15 state your name and title before you begin? Thank
16 you.

17 ANGELA LICATA: Of course, Angela Licata, Deputy
18 Commissioner for Sustainability at the Department of
19 Environmental Protection.

20 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Angela, pleasure to meet
21 you. I'm- pleasure to see you again. We've known
each other forever, but, um, CSOs.

ANGELA LICATA: Yeah, so CSOs, we, as the
Commissioner was saying, we are under consent order
and we had prepared 11 long-term control plans.

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CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

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3 ANGELA LICATA: And those spun out projects that
4 we are in the midst of various stages of design and
5 construction for those. 2 of the 11 water bodies, we
6 have modifications that have been submitted.

6

7 So the status of those is that for Flushing Bay
8 CSO tunnel, we actually have increased, uh,
9 substantially the size of the tunnel so that it can,
10 uh, collect and store CSOs and also floodwaters for
11 increased resilience.

10

Um, that's the good news.

11

12 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Is it a tunnel or is this
13 like a retention tank?

12

14 ANGELA LICATA: It's actually a tunnel.

13

15 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Mhm. Okay.

14

16 ANGELA LICATA: Yeah, so it's a large tunnel.

15

17 Um, the bad side of that is that it will take us
18 longer to do. So that project's modification is
19 under review by New York State DEC now. Um, we also
20 submitted a modification for the Alley Creek CSO, um,
21 whereby we are taking on a better, bigger project.
It's more expensive, but we think it, um, essentially
follows along the nature-based solutions route, um,
rather than just additional storage.

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2 So we really like that project because it will
3 separate storm sewers, reduce flooding, enhance the
4 CSO, um, treatment and capture.

5 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay and so we're, you
6 know-

7 ANGELA LICATA: In good shape.

8 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, so we're, we're okay
9 with the, with, with, with, with, with the state.
10 Mhm. There's so many, uh, er, I don't, I don't think
11 I want to get into that. Yeah, because then it opens
12 the door. Yeah, yeah, I always like to leave my mic
13 hot so people can hear what I'm telling my Counsel,
14 which is, I guess, no longer privileged, right? Um,
15 okay so, um, yeah, we put you through the mill, you
16 know, long enough. Mhm. There are more questions.
17 Uh, you know, to- to the extent that- did you guys
18 receive the questions beforehand? You, you did,
19 right?

20 LISA GARCIA: Yes, so if you want us to-

21 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay and so, to the extent
that we want answers to things that we didn't ask,
you know, Tanveer as a Financial Policy person, uh,
Analyst will uh, you know get those to the agency.

LISA GARCIA: Okay.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Uh, little, homework
assignment, just why not.

3 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, we can definitely do that.

4 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: But, um, yeah, we, uh, you
5 know, really appreciate you bringing the whole team
6 out and giving us, um, you know, uh, er,
7 comprehensive answers and, um, we, we look forward
8 to, um, working with you as a new Commissioner and
9 the great team who we've known and worked so well
with for so long, so uhm -

10 LISA GARCIA: Well, Chair, we appreciate it.
11 Thank you so much and for your patience as I come up
12 to speed, but we definitely appreciate the
13 partnership and look forward to continuing all the
great work.

14 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, I, I, I like to be
15 appreciated, you know. I like to be appreciated. I
16 have issues from my childhood. I like to be
appreciated. So, and you appreciate the staff too.

17 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, appreciate everyone, yeah.

18 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: They're definitely worthy
19 of appreciation. Mhm. I appreciate them.

20 LISA GARCIA: Yeah.
21

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2 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: You know, I don't think
3 they appreciate me. I mean you know, who would
4 appreciate me if you worked here?

5 LISA GARCIA: Well, this was my first budget
6 hearing, so thank you very much.

7 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, I wanted to make it,
8 you know, have a nice experience, you know, get a
9 good turnout.

10 LISA GARCIA: Yeah, it was great. I have my
11 whole team here.

12 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Nice people, yep, yep, yep.
13 We got- yeah, we got- yeah, it's just- yeah, you
14 know, we aim to please. So thank you very much and,
15 um, and with that, we'll have, um, um, uh, Tanveer
16 call the first panel. I just have to- whoops, what
17 are we doing?

18 LISA GARCIA: Thank you so much.

19 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Sure, sure. Uh, I, I just
20 have to take a, um, just a, uh, just a, you know,
21 2-minute break, and then, and then I'm going to come
back and call the first panel of, uh, public
testimony. Yeah, you bet.

All right hmm, okay, now before we can call
witnesses, I have to put some, uh, comments on the

1
2 record. Um, I now open the hearing for public
3 testimony. I remind members of the public that this
4 is a formal government- formal government proceeding
5 and that decorum shall be observed at all times. As
6 such, members of the public shall remain silent at
7 all times.

8 The witness table is reserved for people who wish
9 to testify. No video recording or photography is
10 allowed from the witness table. Further, members of
11 the public may not present audio or video recordings
12 as testimony, but may submit transcripts of such
13 recordings to the Sergeant-at-Arms for inclusion in
14 the hearing record. Is that all I have to say, or is
15 that it? More? Mhm.

16 Um, if you wish to speak at today's hearing,
17 please fill out an appearance card with the
18 Sergeant-at-Arms and wait to be recognized. When
19 recognized, you will have 2 minutes to speak on
20 today's hearing topic, DEP's FY '27 Preliminary
21 Budget. I'll try to make that a soft 2 minutes
because people have been waiting a long time, and
you, you wait for 4 hours, and you, you know.

Uhm, if you have a written statement or
additional written testimony, uh, you wish to- you

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1
2 wish to submit for the record, please provide a copy
3 of that testimony to Sergeant at Arms. You may also
4 email written testimony to testimony@council-

5 C-O-U-N-C-I-L, uh, um, testimony@council.nyc.gov.

6 Oh, okay. Um, w- within 72 hours of this hearing.

7 Audio and video recordings will not be accepted.

8 Call the first panel.

9 Okay, in the first panel- take a little sip here.

10 Um, we have, uh, um, Eric Goldstein, Eric A.

11 Goldstein, uh, from the Natural Resources Defense

12 Council, mhm, Richard Leigh, it looks like,

13 L-E-I-G-H, Food and Water Watch. Alia, uh, Soomro

14 from League of Conservation Voters, who's going to

15 yell at me about the, uh, lead service line.

16 You're not? Very good. Um, Pete Malinowski or

17 something, uh, Billion Oyster Project. Pete

18 Malinowski. Okay and, um, someone representing the

19 Waterfront Alliance begins with it, uh, uh, uh,

20 Tyler- Tyler, last name beginning with a T.

21 People gotta work on their penmanship, you know.

Yeah, well, you know. That's not an order, it's just

a, you know, a recommendation, you know. Yeah, 2

minutes. But if you know what it is, I'll- when they

get done, if I want to go back and ask questions, and

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2 I'll, I'll do that. It'll be, it'd be kind of like
3 a, uh, you know, like a soft 2 minutes. And so, so
4 let's, uh, um, oh, let me see what I got here. I
5 have, uh no, now, um, Eric always works from notes.
6 You just have notes, right? Okay and so written
7 statements more.

8 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Uh, okay. So we'll go from
9 my right to my left. We'll start with, uh, Eric, a
10 veteran of this Committee for, well, 36 years that I
11 know of, and before that, because you were, you know,
12 Brooklyn Navy Yard, '84 and all that. That's, you
13 know, I remember, but I wasn't here, you know. And
14 so, um, with that send-up, you better, you know,
15 really- so, um, uh, I, I- please commence your good
16 testimony. It's a privilege to be with you again.

17 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks
18 for having us. Uh, I'm going to summarize my written
19 testimony. As you know, of course, DEP plays an
20 essential role in the daily functioning of New York
21 City, uh, although for the most part, uh, people are,
uh, not seeing their activities every day, they're,
um, 24- many of their critical facilities operate
24/7/365, uh, their operating needs are considerable
and their capital costs are enormous. And so

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2 investing in the needed programs at DEP while also
3 making sure that uh, water rates are kept in check is
4 a challenging proposition.

5 Uh, one area that should be protected from
6 ill-advised funding reductions is the city's program
7 to protect its unfiltered drinking water supply. As
8 you know, um, at a cost of less than \$3 billion over
9 the past 30 years, the city has protected this
10 downstate supply via cost-effective pollution
11 prevention to stave off the cost of building a plant
12 that would be 5 to 8 times more expensive and several
13 hundred million, uh, dollars a year in capital and
14 operating costs.

15 Uh, among the activities that have been critical
16 are funds for protecting, uh, essential watershed,
17 vulnerable watershed lands around, particularly
18 around Kensico West Branch and the terminal
19 reservoirs Ashokan and Rondout. Uh, the city, uh,
20 recently acquired a 48-acre parcel, Legions of Christ
21 just right, uh, next to the Kensico Reservoir. And,
uh, those kinds of programs need to continue. We
need to make sure funding remains there for the most
vulnerable parcels in, uh, high, uh, water quality,
uh, pro- um, vulnerable lands and that going forward,

1
2 um, that program and other critical programs
3 continue.

4 Uh, we're not only protecting the water supply,
5 but saving, uh, taxpayers, uh, billions of dollars.
6 Second area where the Council must ensure sufficient
7 funding is DEP's program to safeguard at-risk
8 neighborhoods from stormwater flooding in Southeast
9 Queens and throughout the city. I'll just say that
10 there was a 2024 study by the department on
11 stormwater needs. \$30 billion was what they
12 projected to safeguard 80 vulnerable neighborhoods.
13 But at the current rate of spending, they think it'll
14 take 30 years to get there. That's too long. We've
15 gotta make sure that funding is made available to
16 implement these critical stormwater protection
17 programs because thanks to climate change, flooding
18 is coming all the time, not just Hurricane Sandy and
19 things like that.

20 Uh, the entire city government, but especially
21 DEP, needs to be thinking 50 to 75 years down the
line when it comes to making budget decisions. And
the department, uh, for the department and the
Council to do that, it means, um, planning now for
the renewable Rikers project on that 415-acre island.

1
2 Uh, when incarceration ends there, which is going to
3 happen sooner or later, uh, that's a
4 once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build a showplace
5 of sustainability with a modern wastewater treatment
6 plant to replace, uh, the aging 4 sewage treatment
7 plants in the region.

8 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Let me come back to you
9 with questions on that Eric, okay?

10 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Okay.

11 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: And so just to stay there,
12 just sit tight.

13 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: That's fine. And finally, we
14 urge the Council, uh, in response to the Mayor's
15 Preliminary Budget- I'm sure you'll hear this from
16 others- to press for reduction in the so-called
17 rental payment, \$313 million.

18 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, and I'll come back to
19 you. I'll give you, uh, you know, because like,
20 that's how we'll do it. I mean, in this round, in
21 this round, I'll come back to you. Otherwise they're
gonna like, you know, they're gonna- yeah and so.

ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Well, I'm just saying, he's
been sitting there for 40 years doing this, so he

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1 gets a little bit of, a little bit of slack. Oh,
2 okay. Um, we're joined by Council Member Epstein.
3 Uh, very happy to, uh, have Harvey with us. And, um,
4 um, yeah, um, yeah, the fun just keeps on coming.
5 Yes, sir. Please state your name.

6 RICHARD LEIGH: Okay yes, my name is Richard
7 Leigh. I, uh, I'm a physicist and an engineer, and
8 I've been working in climate change mitigation for 20
9 or 30 years in the New York City neighborhood. And
right now I am—

10 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: And you're with Food and
11 Water Watch, right?

12 RICHARD LEIGH: I am, I am with Food and Water
13 Watch as of now. I've been connected with quite a
few other places in the past.

14 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right. Um, and I'll put a
15 short bio into my, uh, written statement so you can
see that.

16 RICHARD LEIGH: Uh, and I'm here, uh, on behalf
17 of Food and Water Watch and a variety of other, um,
18 aligned, uh, small, small, uh, groups, uh, to call
19 for the creation of a new program which will be dirt
20 cheap. Uh, it's called Heat Pumps for All, and in
21

1
2 the initial stages, which is all we're talking about,
3 it would be only be \$10 million a year. Uh, and-

4 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Heat pumps for all?

5 RICHARD LEIGH: Sorry?

6 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Did you say heat pumps for
7 all?

8 RICHARD LEIGH: That's what-

9 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Okay, I just wanted to make
10 sure I heard it right.

11 RICHARD LEIGH: Yes, it's heat pump- heat pumps
12 for all. It is talking about using- the whole city
13 must become electrified. We have to stop burning.

14 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right, I mean, it's a
15 little bit off topic for a budget hearing, but I know
16 you're trying to tie it to like a cost thing. I'll
17 give you a little latitude because you're all, you
18 know, you, you've done so much for so many. So
19 please continue.

20 RICHARD LEIGH: I, I, I agree. It's not quite,
21 ah, I mean, it involves budget because it involves
22 money, but, but we do, we do think that it applies to
23 the DEP because it implies air quality because all of
24 the boilers and, and furnaces running throughout New
25 York City now are contributing to detriments to the

1
2 air quality and converting to heat pumps will even
3 today move the pollution out of New York City and
4 some of it upstate and some of it, uh, cleared up by
5 using, by using, uh, car- carbon and, uh,
6 combustion-free systems. And as the state system
7 gets cleaner and cleaner, that'll be eliminating car-

8 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: No, just go ahead. I, I,
9 I, I, um, interrupted you, so please, please go on a
10 little longer.

11 RICHARD LEIGH: As fast as I can. The point of
12 this is to look around New York City where, uh, laws
13 like Local Law 97 and, uh, no, no new gas, uh, laws
14 are making the city much cleaner. They are not
15 addressing the needs of all of this one and two
16 family homes that fill up the outer boroughs. And
17 all of those buildings have got gas boilers and gas
18 furnaces.

19 And they are all, um, getting older and falling
20 apart. Uh, I know about falling apart when you get
21 older too. And, and, uh, what had- the worst thing
that can happen when an old boiler falls apart in
today's, uh, climate change situation is that the
owner do the cheapest thing, which is just replace it
with another boiler.

1
2 And so we are suggesting is that the city should
3 take steps that will make sure that instead of
4 replacing with an older boiler, that homeowner is in
5 a position to convert to heat pumps. And of course,
6 the problem is heat pumps cost more than a new- than
7 a replacement boiler.

8 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yes they do.

9 RICHARD LEIGH: And so our proposal is that if
10 the, uh, climate situation is sitting here saying you
11 must get a heat pump and the homeowner is saying, I
12 can't afford a heat pump, we're hoping that the city
13 can come in and say, I'll help pay for the heat pump.
14 And what we're proposing is that the city establish,
15 ah, incentives of \$10,000 for each home where the
16 boiler is falling apart. They're in some sort of
17 economic trouble and it's got to be replaced. And,
18 uh, and that, that be available for up to 1,000 homes
19 uh, in, uh, today's, um, transitory climate.

20 It conserves-

21 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: We'd be, we'd be very
grateful to have your proposal on that. Do you have,
you know, through, through written testimony?

 RICHARD LEIGH: Yes.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah and so we, we
3 appreciate that. This is, you know, hearings are for
4 good ideas, and thanks for bringing one forward.
5 Appreciate that. Alia, am I saying that right?

6 ALIA SOOMRO: Alia.

7 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Alia.

8 ALIA SOOMRO: Yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Close.

10 ALIA SOOMRO: No worries. Uh, good afternoon. My
11 name is Alia Soomro, and I'm the Deputy Director for
12 New York City Policy at the New York League of
13 Conservation Voters. Thank you, Chair, Chair Gennaro
14 and members of the Committee on Environmental
15 Protection for the opportunity to testify.

16 As our city experiences heat waves, extreme
17 rainfall, flooding, droughts, and sea level rise,
18 which disproportionately impacts vulnerable New
19 Yorkers, local environmental leadership matters more
20 than ever. With numerous fiscal challenges facing
21 the city, including climate funding cuts at the
federal level, NYLCV stresses that the city must not
lose sight of important climate deadlines and goals.
It is imperative that we pass a city budget that is

1
2 not only bold on climate, but paves the path towards
3 a just and equitable future.

4 First, NYLCV stands with you, Council Member, and
5 with advocates calling on the Mamdani Administration
6 and the City Council to reject the water rental
7 payment in this budget. The Adams Administration
8 reintroduced the full water rental payment in 2024,
9 charging the Water Board more than \$1.3 billion in
10 rent over the 4 years to lease the water system from
11 the city.

12 This means that DEP's water rent- water payment
13 revenue will be handed over to the city's general
14 fund for non-water-related purposes instead of
15 staying with DEP, where they can direct it towards
16 capital infrastructure projects. While the city has
17 done this in the past, the general obligation bonds
18 have been paid off.

19 Therefore, NYLCV and many others think this is a
20 very poor policy decision, especially given the
21 urgency of the climate crisis. Capital funding for
water infrastructure is urgently needed to address
critical stormwater flooding, uh, support coastal
resiliency, improve water quality, et cetera.

1
2 So diverting these funds are also making it hard
3 for the city to access state funding. State clean
4 water funding by sending the message that investing
5 in clean water infrastructure is not something we
6 value.

7 So we think the water rental payment is
8 undermining that, and we strongly encourage the
9 Council and the Admin to reject this, uh, water
10 rental payment.

11 Next, um, and I've submitted longer written
12 testimony, uh, just wrapping up, uh, we support
13 allocating long-term funding for the city's current
14 portfolio of climate resilience, including green
15 infrastructure, cloudburst management, blue belts.
16 Um, and we also echo the Rise to Resilience Coalition
17 calling for the city to, um, develop a 5-borough
18 adaptation plan.

19 Um, last thing, we really stress the importance
20 of providing sufficient funding for DEP and MOCEJ
21 staffing because they're the ones who have to carry
out all of these programs. Uh, so we look forward to
working with you advocates in the Admin, uh, to make
this budget equitable and, and, uh, bold on climate.

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Thank you.

1

ALIA SOOMRO: Thank you.

2

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Thank you. I'm gonna come
3 back to you as well on, on that, on that rental
4 payment thing. So I got Eric and you. Yes and
5 what's your name again? Tyler, yes, okay.

3

4

5

6

TYLER TABA: Ready?

7

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah.

8

TYLER TABA: Great, good afternoon, Chair Gennaro
9 and members of the Committee. My name is Tyler Taba,
10 and I'm the Director of Policy and Government Affairs
11 at the Waterfront Alliance. I'm here today to urge
12 the city to make dedicated and baseline investments
13 in the FY27 budget that move us past the era of
14 one-off waterfront plans and projects and toward a
15 more comprehensive and permanent framework for our
16 coastline.

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I echo a lot of what was shared here by my
15 colleagues on the panel already. I'll just state a
16 couple of our budget priorities. Longer testimony
17 has been submitted written and I think in front of
18 you.

15

16

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Um, so starting with resilience, adaptation, and
19 preparedness, we desperately need to build capacity
20

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21

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2 and stability for the agencies that are tasked with
3 our physical defense.

4 Waterfront Alliance supports a \$2 billion budget
5 for the New York City Department of Environmental
6 Protection, um, and also specifically we're calling
7 for \$15 million for the Bureau of Coastal Resilience
8 within the Department of Environmental Protection.
9 And I can get into the specifics of why that bureau
10 is so important if that's helpful.

11 Um, on the topic of DEP, we also urge the Council
12 and the city to reject the water rental payment, and
13 we know that you've been a leader on this and we
14 strongly support your leadership.

15 Instead, the city should be reallocating
16 long-term funding for DEP's current portfolio of
17 climate resilience projects like the Cloud adverse
18 management and Blue Belt programs and the green and
19 other green infrastructure programs. Staffing
20 capacity also has to be extended to New York City
21 Parks.

22 And while this is not a parks hearing, nearly 30%
23 of the total land that the Parks Department manages
24 includes waterfront parks, beaches, and boardwalks.
25 So given the Waterfront Committee, we also feel very

1
2 strongly that parks are a critical first line of
3 defense for resiliency, waterfronts, and
4 environmental protection. And this adopted, uh,
5 this, um, Preliminary Budget for parks is \$33 million
6 less than the, uh, FY26 adopted budget, and we, we
7 don't think that's acceptable.

8 To ensure that our neighbors are also ready for
9 the impacts of, um, that we can no longer avoid from
10 climate change, we're- we're requesting \$2 million
11 for NYCEMS Strengthening Communities program and \$1.2
12 million for expanding cooling center hours. And
13 Waterfront Alliance will continue to call out this
14 stark disparity in waterfront access, where more than
15 800,000 New Yorkers live within a half mile of the
16 waterfront but lack a public access point.

17 The city must fund commitments made in the
18 Comprehensive Waterfront Plan to fix those issues of
19 equity, and we specifically call for the completion
20 of the 132nd Street Pier in the South Bronx.

21 I have a couple of other things on maritime and
working waterfronts, but those are also in our
written testimony. Thank you for your time, um, and
happy to work with you on any of these issues.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, thank you, Tyler.
3 Appreciate you and the Waterfront— you— the
4 Waterfront Alliance gave me my first environmental
5 award when I had, like, a 32-inch waist and full head
6 of black hair. It was, like, 20-something years ago.
7 I got a life preserver. It said, "Hero of the
8 Harbor." And they're like, I got this life
9 preserver, you know, like you'd see on a ship. You
10 know, the white one with the, the roping around it
11 and stuff like that.

12 TYLER TABA: That's right. We're still doing the
13 Heroes of the Harbor, so we'll invite you to the, to
14 our next gala this fall.

15 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, I love to go to galas
16 where I'm not being honored. Yeah, that's like,
17 that's why I, yeah, that's, that's what I like. Yeah
18 um, but getting back to Eric, um, I'm, I'm, I'm
19 concerned about this LAND Act thing because it's hard
20 for me, you know, to get into the weeds on what a,
21 you know, realistic, um, must-do, cost-effective, um,
strategy would 'cause— you know, OMB is just gonna
poo-poo this, you know? If there's any way that NRDC
could give us, like, a template of what we should be
asking for, you know, I'll talk to the Chair of the

1
2 Finance Committee and all the money that's on the
3 table you know where if we- we- Uh, hm, mm-hm. You
4 know of course, I think DEP put a pretty good -I
5 don't wanna call it spin, but a pretty good, you
6 know, try to create an image of, um, of a Kensico
7 that was gonna serve us well in perpetuity. Mhm.
8 But, um, you know, that, that, that's, um, um, that
9 real estate's really expensive. And whatever you
10 think, you know, like, whatever NRDC thinks, because
11 you know, they're gonna say, we're gonna do Land Act,
12 whatever. And, you know, it's just, we're not, we're
13 not, we're not working it as hard as you are.

14 So we're sort of dependent upon, you know, what
15 you and your organization and like-minded
16 organizations believe would be, you know, very cost-
17 you know, ah, ah, ah, ah, a critical way to save
18 money, like over the long term.

19 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Yeah.

20 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Because if we gotta go down
21 the road of this filtration plant, There's not enough
money on the planet. Forget about, like, the lead
replacement lines. I mean, you know, building this
filtration plant or whatever and however long it's
gonna take to build it and the untold billions of

1
2 dollars is just like, we're- forget it. You know, we
3 just don't, you know, we shouldn't do that.

4 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Yeah.

5 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: So what do you think of
6 that?

7 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Well, we'll, we'll give you
8 some, some additional information on that. But the,
9 the city has overall done a good job over these past
10 30 years, and that's why they've been able to save
11 billions of dollars.

12 Again, the estimate that you heard today, at
13 least tens of billions. So \$20 billion to build a
14 new plant, operating expenses of \$300 to \$400 million
15 a year because it would consume vast amounts of
16 energy to filter a billion gallons of water a day.
17 And, uh, it would be an enormous undertaking that
18 would take at least 20 years according to the
19 Commissioner today.

20 So it's cost-effective even if ultimately 50
21 years from now the city has to filter perhaps some of
its system. The pollution prevention activities that
they do now will be money well invested and saved.
And again, the- the land acquisition program is just
one piece of dozens of programs, but it's an

1
2 important one. And the city has continued over the
3 years to refine the characteristics of which lands it
4 should acquire. So it's really down now to top
5 priority lands around Kensico, West Branch, and the
6 two terminal reservoirs right near the streams.
7 It's- it's not hundreds of millions of dollars, uh,
8 it's maybe tens of millions of dollars a year. Uh,
9 we need to make sure that that money is in the
10 budget.

11 And also, since EPA is no longer doing the job it
12 had historically done, we need to make sure it's
13 incorporated into the next filtration avoidance
14 determination.

15 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Oh, right.

16 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: And so, the council can be
17 helpful there, in, uh, down the line in months and a
18 year from now as that plan develops.

19 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Now, uh, you know, by the
20 time we have our FAD hearing, it's gonna- like, the
21 budget's gonna be adopted by then, you know, um, but
we still should have that, you know.

So first-

ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Yeah, because we're really
looking for the- for this next 10-year period.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, but I, I think we
3 need to, um, get something now so we can advocate
4 that that go in the budget. Um, and then we can, you
5 know, talk long term when we have that.

6 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Great.

7 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: You know, oversight hearing
8 and yeah, always great to see you, yeah.

9 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Thank you for all your good work
10 over the years, over the decades.

11 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, these years are
12 adding up. Yeah, these years are, uh, are, are
13 adding up. And, um, from- from this gentleman, Food
14 and Water, you gonna give me your heat pump idea?
15 You know, just submit that, you know, so we can get
16 the benefit of, of, of that. Um, you know, the heat
17 pump for the, for the, for the small, you know, for,
18 for, for, for buildings that are not under Local Law
19 97 or anything like that.

20 RICHARD LEIGH: Yeah just one- one number I
21 didn't get in. There's about almost a million of
22 these small buildings. Some of them are super-

23 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, yeah, yeah. There
24 was, uh, hmm, yeah, the, the, the, the, the most
25 common, or the most- of all the, of all the building

1
2 types in New York City, the most common building type
3 is, is the single-family home.

4 RICHARD LEIGH: Yeah.

5 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Is the most common.

6 RICHARD LEIGH: Yeah. It doesn't represent a big
7 slice of the pie chart in terms of where people live,
8 but that's, you know. So my house is in that, you
9 know, in that little— now I feel like having pie.

10 So I just did that to myself, you know. And, uh,
11 Alia- Alia. And so, um, and what's your name again?
12 Tyler. And so, you know, we wanna build a coalition
13 on this, like, rental payment thing. Mhm. Just
14 speaking in all candor, I mean, there is, um, you
15 know, there's, I don't really see the— I don't really
16 think the Mayor has a way out of not doing a rental
17 payment this year.

18 I, I just, I just don't think so. We're talking
19 about 10% property tax increase and, you know, so
20 it's just, um, you know, I, I, I think it's gonna—
21 and, and I think what's gonna do— what we need the
coalition for is not to convince the Mayor not to do
it. Mayor doesn't even— the Mayor— the Mayor has
never heard the words rental payment. He doesn't

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1
2 know what it means. His budget director, you know,
3 is not telling him.

4 So it's just like, what does he know? And so, so
5 this is all from— this is all from OMB. But - but
6 the coalition is for good guys, you know, people who,
7 who Chair the, um, the New York State Senate and
8 Assembly, uh, corporations Committees. They're both
9 from Queens. I know them both very well. And so,
10 you know, I think we, um, have to make a move on
11 them.

12 I mean, I already did talk to them and one of
13 them submitted a bill to me, but I've been involved
14 with medical stuff or whatever. It's- it's- I don't
15 think it's gonna happen, but we gotta get that to
16 happen. Only that can take that away. Um, hmm yeah
17 and then it's a question of also once we're looking
18 at it, the, um, there's taking away the budget
19 payment, t-t-t-t-t-t-t-t-t-t-taking away the rental
20 payment. There's also, um, the reality that, um, you
21 know, they- they created the regulated entity, the
water utility, which is DEP. The other regulated
entity, the Water Board, is the regulator, and the
Water Finance does what it does.

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1
2 Um, but, you know, the, you know, the Water Board
3 has no independent staff. Um, like, the, er, the,
4 you know, executive director of the Water Board is a
5 DEP Deputy Commissioner, and the only place where
6 they get information from is from DEP. So the
7 regulator and the regulated entity are one and the
8 same thing.

9 I mean, does that really work? You know, I mean,
10 it's generally not healthy if that's -, if, if that's
11 the case. And the head of the water, the head of the
12 Water Finance Authority is the Budget Director. Okay
13 and so, so the City Budget Director, you know, heads
14 the Water Finance Authority.

15 You know, authorities are supposed to be, ah, so
16 this is a long conversation as to what we can do,
17 but, but, you know, but the, you know, the rental
18 payment has really like gotta go. And so we have to
19 build a, and they're gonna wanna do it. Like, what
20 the- if I was in the state legislature, I was Chair
21 of the Corporations Committee. So, yeah, so I'm,
I'm, I'm making things right for my constituents
because their constituents live in New York City.
Both of them, they're not from, you know, Yates
County, you know, they're from- I made that up. I

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1
2 hope there is a Yates County. And there actually is.
3 We got a Wyoming County. All right, okay, you know,
4 what's that? Okay, okay, yeah and so, yeah, my
5 Counsel is telling me to shut up. And so, um, so
6 we'll, we'll, we'll do this.

7 So this is a great panel. Good ideas. Looking
8 forward to the stuff on the, on the line back.
9 Harvey, did you have something?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: Yeah, you know what? We
11 are in a bit of a fiscal problem here in the city,
12 right? So whatever you all can do to help us on the
13 state level to talk about raising our income tax in
14 New York City in the one-house budgets, both in the
15 Assembly and the Senate. Both houses are proposed
16 allowing the city to raise their income tax.

17 Um, that's what's gonna get us out of this fiscal
18 crisis. You know, we're not gonna be able to- we're
19 gonna push from one agency to the other. It's not
20 gonna resolve it. So I hope that all of you over the
21 next 2 weeks before the April 1st deadline for the
state budget will help us, like, loosen the belt a
little of Albany to get us more resources. Because
if that doesn't happen, none of this can happen.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Uh, thank you Council
3 Member, uh and former member of the state legislature
4 who knows everything about Albany, everything about
5 Albany. Um, and I was going to say something else,
6 but the Council just told me to shut up.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER EPSTEIN: No one knows everything
8 about Albany. I was— I remember Dick Godfrey's last
9 year, after 52 years, he said, I just learned
10 something about Albany. I'm like, if you learned
11 after 50 years something new about Albany, the rest
12 of us are really in trouble.

13 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Well, okay. yeah, I wanna
14 thank this panel. Next panel. You gotta— let's see
15 if you can— yeah, Mackenzie, uh, Schoomaker, uh, it's
16 almost like the former Congressman Schoomaker, um,
17 Schoomaker from Riverkeeper, uh, Audie, um, uh,
18 Soocy, New York Lawyers, David Abreu, Save the Sound,
19 Jakob Franco. Wow, that is really good handwriting.
20 New York School of Law Enforcement Environmental Law
21 Clinic. Where's Jakob? Okay.

Oh, we're waiting on Jakob. So we got— oh, how
many slips do I have? I have 5 slips and 3
witnesses. Oh, I'm sorry, um, Brendan Cheney, New
York Housing Conference. And I got— okay go. Yeah,

1
2 okay. Okay, so now we have 4 witnesses. I got
3 testimony from— for this panel we got, we got
4 Riverkeeper testimony. Anyone else have written
5 testimony?

6 Oh, Save the sound. Yep, I got it right here.
7 Okay, did Jakob ever make it? Did okay, no, I
8 commented on your handwriting was very clear, and so
9 I— I really did appreciate that. So, um, in honor of
10 Jakob, we're going to flip it around. We're going to
11 go from my left to my right. Oh, I'm sorry. Oh, oh,
12 we have, we have a fifth, uh, panelist. Oh, right,
13 okay. Let me see those slips. Oh, was the one—
14 yeah, it was the one we're doing now. I always
15 forget her. Ah, what's her name? Is she a panelist?
16 Oh, okay, yeah, all right.

17 They're just ordering this, the witness slips, so
18 I can, I can see. You hanging or you going? Okay,
19 good, good, good. Um, what's this going? It's going
20 that way, right? All right, so I'll start at the
21 bottom, right? Okay, all right. Um, oh, is— so
22 who's on the end? No, but I said we're going this
23 way. Yeah, oh, you're Jakob. No, no, you're
24 Brendan. Okay, Brendan. Yeah, okay. So Brendan,
25 we're gonna start from you. New York Housing

1
2 Conference. Thanks for being here. Thanks for your
3 patience. Appreciate it.

4 BREDAN CHENEY: All right, thank you. Good
5 afternoon. My name is Brendan Cheney. I'm the
6 Director of Policy and Operations at the New York
7 Housing Conference. We're a nonprofit affordable
8 housing advocacy organization. I've submitted my
9 written testimony, so I'm just gonna summarize it
10 here.

11 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Oh, it's good. I just
12 wanna make sure that they start the clock at a
13 certain point, please.

14 BRENDAN CHENEY: All right um, so we are
15 concerned about distressed affordable housing where
16 costs are higher than income. Uh, one of the
17 contributing factors to this is the high cost of
18 water rates.

19 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right.

20 BRENDAN CHENEY: Um, and so over the past 5 years,
21 water rates have increased by nearly 5% per year on
average, including 8.5% in 2025. Um, according to
UNHP, who's been a leading advocacy, uh, group around
water rates for the past 30 years, they estimate that
water payments will be \$2,000 per unit per year by

1
2 2030, uh, leaving affordable housing buildings over
3 their head in water costs.

4 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right?

5 BRENDAN CHENEY: Um, given the extent of this
6 stress in affordable housing, the following steps are
7 needed to help control water rates. One, um, DEP and
8 the Water Board need to maintain minimal water
9 increases. Over the coming years. Um, 2, the city
10 must stop collecting the rental payment from the
11 water board. We appreciate your advocacy on this, we
12 fully support it.

13 Um, and then 3, expand the multifamily water
14 assistance program. So increase the, um, per
15 apartment credit to \$500. It hasn't been increased
16 since the program started, and it's just at \$250 now.
17 So 10 years ago is \$250, it hasn't increased since
18 then. Increase the budget to \$100 million to serve a
19 total of 200,000 apartments.

20 Right now, the program is over-enrolled and
21 under, uh, underused. Um, and then just two small
regulatory things: revise the regulatory agreement
requirement to 3 years, and then extend the renewal
requirement from annual to multi-year, just to make
the program easier to use.

1
2 Um, thank you for your— the opportunity to
3 testify. Happy to answer questions.

4 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: No, no, thank you. Thank
5 you for that. Now, where is, uh, where's Josh from
6 my staff? Josh, you're around? Okay, um, yeah, just
7 make sure you meet with, uh, Brendan, uh, once he
8 steps off the panel, because I'd like this in
9 writing, because I'm gonna be having a face-to-face
10 meeting with the Commissioner, and I'll just, I'll
11 just bring it up, you know, because, all right, you
12 know, if we're not gonna do anything about the rental
13 payment this year, we got to do something on the
14 multi— everything you said, like, that, I, I want to
15 walk that into the Commissioner's Office. I'll claim
16 credit for it. I'm not gonna mention him, you know,
17 but, um, uh, you know, I just— that's what I'm gonna
18 do.

19 So I'm just like, sorry. Okay, great, great,
20 great, great. Yes, make sure you see Josh and, uh,
21 Jakob. Jakob with the great writing.

22 JAKOB FRANCO: Thank you, Chair Gennaro. Good
23 afternoon, my name is Jakob Franco. I am a law
24 student here at NYU as well as a member of the NRDC's
25 Environmental Law Clinic.

1
2 This year, Mayor Mamdani has recommended a \$313
3 million rental payment from the city's ratepayers
4 back to the city's general fund. As you've spoken to
5 and other members- members of this panel, I would
6 just like to reiterate a few points about how harmful
7 this rental payment is to both ratepayers as well as
8 the DEP's operations.

9 We had- we got the chance to hear from
10 Commissioner Garcia and her staff about the ongoing
11 and planned infrastructure projects across the state
12 that the DEP is implementing. All of these would be
13 better served by the hundreds of millions of dollars
14 that the city's ratepayers are paying each year to
15 the general fund. And additionally, as you noted,
16 the rental payment concept is, uh, tool that goes
17 back to the 1980s when the city was in the midst of a
18 financial crisis and established these independent
19 agencies in order to make sure that the water system
20 was self-sufficient.

21 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, I was there.

JAKOB FRANCO: As, as you mentioned. Um, and
ultimately this rental payment was a shrinking
payment that paid outstanding, uh, city general debt.
And now it has become a ballooning payment that is

1
2 continuing going forward and simply serves the city's
3 general fund, siphoning away from water resources
4 while raising rates for ratepayers. And again, as
5 you know, this is a highly regressive form of the
6 tax. The water board is required by law to implement
7 rates that are equal to all of its operational costs
8 as well as any rental payment requests.

9 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, but they're bound by
10 law, hmm, to hand over the rental payment if the
11 Mayor asks for it.

12 JAKOB FRANCO: Exactly, so as the Independent
13 Budget Office has testified to, when the, uh, Mayor
14 raised rental payments, this ultimately is passed on
15 to the consumer eventually. You've spoken to how
16 drawing down the reserves can buffer that for a bit,
17 but ultimately it will be felt by ratepayers in a
18 regressive manner. This is completely antithetical
19 to this Administration's number one priority, which
20 is increasing affordability within the city.

21 And as everyone on this panel has spoken to,
would ask that when you go to the Council, when the
Council responds to the Mayor's Preliminary Budget,
you make all efforts to reduce this payment FY27.
You spoke into the difficulties there, but going

1
2 forward for the baseline and into FY30, where we have
3 a planned \$400 million rental payment, to make all
4 efforts to reduce and eliminate it by then.

5 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, I, I, I gotta get
6 that done. I'm getting older and I gotta get that
7 done. And so we have the rudiments of a coalition
8 here that'll, you know, stand with us. But, hmm, the
9 budget director is never not gonna take a rental
10 payment. It's like we have to take the ability away
11 that they just can't do it, you know, um, and only,
12 and only the state legislature can, uh, can do that.
13 But, uh, you know, thank you, Jakob, for— and so you—
14 So you, so you prosecute cases under the supervision
15 of, of, uh, of an attorney, right?

16 JAKOB FRANCO: Uh, well, I work with, uh, Mr.
17 Goldstein. Uh, I work with Mr. Goldstein at the NRDC
18 as a member of the clinic, but this is ultimately a
19 class. I'm not an employee of NRDC. I'm a student.

20 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right but it— yeah but, but
21 you work at the Environmental Law Clinic, right?

JAKOB FRANCO: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: So, and what they do is
they— they bring people to court, right?

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1
2 JAKOB FRANCO: Um, it's a mix right now. I'm
3 participating in the clinic, testifying in front of
4 the City Council on a harmful rental payment, but
5 also working on the Kensico— what, Westchester
6 County, uh, reservoir as well.

7 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: You know, just on your
8 handwriting alone, it's like you're my— you're my
9 guy, you know. Thank you for your work with— and
10 working with Eric too. You're like, forget about it.
11 It's like, hmm, yeah.

12 David Abreu, Save the Sound.

13 DAVID ABREU: Yes, good afternoon. Um, excuse
14 me, my name is David Abreu and I'm the Clean Water
15 Advocacy Specialist at Save the Sound. Thank you,
16 Chair Gennaro, and of course the Environmental
17 Protection and Waterfront Committee for the
18 opportunity to testify today.

19 I'm testifying today in support of the Rise to
20 Resilience Coalition, the SWMM Coalition, and our
21 shared budget priorities for climate resilience and
clean water solutions that protect New York City and
Long Island Sound.

Save the Sound is a nonprofit organization
working to protect and restore the entire Long Island

1
2 Sound region, and New York City is closely tied to
3 the westernmost portion of the Long Island Sound,
4 encompassing parts of the Bronx and Queens. The
5 waterways that make up the Western Arrows face
6 significant water quality impairments that impact New
7 Yorkers' ability to safely access their local bodies
8 of water.

9 Our Long Island Sound Report Card provides
10 science and data-driven grades for water quality in
11 the open waters of the Long Island Sound, and every
12 year since 2008, the open waters of the Western
13 Narrows have received an F grade. While there have
14 been moderate improvements over time, climate change
15 threatens to halt and potentially undo decades of
16 progress. And furthermore, based on a 3-year average
17 of annual failure rates, wet weather fails in the
18 westernmost region of the Sound, combining
19 Westchester County and New York City, uh, added up to
20 14.9% in 2020 to 2022, versus 20.8% in 2020 to 2024.
21 So a significant increase.

22 Bold investment is needed to ensure that the hard
23 work done by the city to improve water quality
24 conditions is not undone. And with that, Save the
25 Sound and our coalition partners recommend the

1 following budget recommendations for Fiscal Year '27
2 to protect Long Island Sound and New York City. Many
3 of these have been expanded upon already, um, by our
4 allies today, um, and they're expanded in our written
5 testimony.

6 Uh, the first is to fully fund the Department of
7 Environmental Protection at \$2 billion to address New
8 York City's aging water infrastructure.

9 The second, and acknowledging the conversations
10 that, uh, discussions that we had today, reject the
11 New York City Water Board rental payment in the
12 Fiscal Year '27 budget and beyond.

13 Third is to allocate long-term funding for the
14 city's current portfolio of climate resilience
15 projects such as the Cloudburst Management and Blue
16 Belt Program.

17 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Um, keep going, you got my
18 attention.

19 DAVID ABREU: The fourth is to provide \$4 million
20 to provide- to fully fund and implement the Unified
21 Stormwater Rule.

The fifth is to fully fund the Mayor's Office of
Climate and Environmental Justice to complete the
planning and engagement required to fulfill Local

1
2 Laws 122 and 149 and develop the Five Borough
3 Adaptation Plan. And with that, you know, I thank
4 you for the opportunity to testify today and for your
5 leadership in ensuring that New Yorkers have access
6 to safe and swimmable waters.

7 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Thank you, David and, um,
8 uh, you, you didn't mention— I'm just curious, you,
9 you might know more than I do on this. Um, you know,
10 the city has significant nitrogen, uh, nitrogen
11 reduction efforts in any of their sewage treatment
12 plants that discharge, um, into the East River, which
13 goes into the Sound. Um, you know, how are we doing
14 on nitrogen reduction? Are we doing okay on that or?

15 DAVID ABREU: Well, again, we've had moderate
16 increases over time. There's still a long way to go
17 to really address, you know, CSOs and stormwater
18 runoff, which really drive that nitrogen pollution.
19 Um, and we're in a predicament now that you are in
20 that, uh, that point where we can take it to the next
21 level and continue to reduce nitrogen or climate
change could really be that barrier that blocks us
from moving further.

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, I remember once upon
a time, this is going back to like, I forget who he

1
2 was with, Eric probably knows him, um, Mark Tedesco
3 with the 58.5% reduction over X amount of years or
4 whatever.

5 DAVID ABREU: He's long retired, yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Did that ever happen? Did
7 we get the 58.5% reduction?

8 DAVID ABREU: I'm not quite sure right now on the
9 levels that we're at now and I could follow up, um,
10 after this panel.

11 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, so Mark's retired
12 now?

13 DAVID ABREU: Yes, recently.

14 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Oh, wow, okay. Do you know
15 him, Eric? Yeah and so, um, who did he work for?

16 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: EPA, Long Island Sound
17 Partnership, or, uh, previously an All In sound
18 study.

19 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Oh, okay. Yeah, because he
20 was like the guy. Yeah, like a long time.

21 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Yes, he was.

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Um, yeah, I, I don't
remember what I had for breakfast, but I remember
Mark Tedesco's name, you know.

ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Left a good legacy behind.

1

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, he just— he was -
2 Yeah, he was a good, good guy. Uh, no, thank you,
3 thank you very much. Look, uh, do we have written
4 testimony from you?

5

JAKOB FRANCO: Yes, I submitted.

6

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: All right, here it is, here
7 it is, here it is. Um, Audie, right? Is that right?
8 Audie?

8

AUDIE SOUCY: Yes, that's right.

9

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Is that a nickname?

10

AUDIE SOUCY: Uh, it's a chosen name.

11

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Oh, a chosen name.

12

AUDIE SOUCY: Hmm, mm.

13

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Because my mother's name
14 was Audrey.

14

AUDIE SOUCY: Oh nice.

15

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: And so some of her friends
16 would call her Aud or Audie sometimes.

16

AUDIE SOUCY: Yeah, I, uh, get questions about
17 Audie Murphy a lot. Um, the World War II fighter
18 pilot.

19

CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Audie Murphy's before my
19 time, which is like, you know, um, yeah, I just

20

20 thought maybe it was Audrey, but, um, no, it's a nice

21

1
2 happy name. So, um, yeah, so, uh, please commence
3 with your good testimony.

4 AUDIE SOUCY: Thank you. Good afternoon. Um,
5 I'm Audie Soucy. I'm a Staff Attorney with the
6 Environmental Justice Program at New York Lawyers for
7 the Public Interest.

8 Our program works on a variety of
9 community-driven initiatives, but today I'd like to
10 discuss the critical issue of sewer backups and
11 flooding.

12 Um, as I'm sure you're aware, sewer
13 infrastructure in the city is becoming increasingly
14 overwhelmed by intense rainfall because of climate
15 change. Um, as noted in the Mayor's Management
16 report, there were nearly 3,000 sewer backup
17 complaints in the first 4 months of Fiscal Year '26,
18 which is a 23% from the same period in Fiscal Year
19 '25.

20 Um, as you probably know, when sewers are full,
21 sewage can back up into a home. It comes through
22 showers, sinks, toilets, and basement drains, and
23 Communities in which the city has historically
24 invested less money and resources disproportionately

1
2 bear the burdens of this type of flooding and sewage
3 backup.

4 Um, sewer backups have become routine in some
5 neighborhoods in Queens. The DEP reported 12,548
6 sewer backup complaints between Fiscal Years '20 and
7 '24, and close of- close to 5,000 of those 12,500
8 came from Queens residents as compared to fewer than
9 400 from, from Manhattan residents. Um, some of
10 these communities, such as in South Jamaica, rely
11 upon, um, failing shared private sewer lines that
12 private developers installed decades ago.

13 Um, and these are ongoing, um, legacies of the
14 history of historic redlining. Um, one such
15 neighborhood is in Southeast Queens on 106th Road and
16 107th Avenue. Residents there desperately need the
17 city to provide what most residents in New York
18 already have, a safe functioning public sewer line.

19 In 2023, DEP assured residents that a fail- that
20 this failing shared private sewer line serving 20
21 homes would be replaced by a public line in 2 to 3
years. But we later heard through the Borough
President's Office that that would be pushed back for
years for unknown reasons.

20 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Hmm.

1
2 AUDIE SOUCY: Um, in the meantime, these
3 residents continue to suffer with regular sewer
4 backups whenever it rains. Um, so we ask that the
5 Committee ensure that DEP has the funds that it needs
6 to fund this and other critical capital projects.
7 Um, also, it- transparent communication with DEP has
8 been an ongoing issue for our clients and these
9 community members. Um, we're hopeful that with the
10 passage of Local Law 70, which requires the DEP to
11 create a dashboard communicating the status of DEP
12 projects, and Local Law 87, which creates a task
13 force to require- to report on the implementation of
14 the Southeast Queens Flooding Adaptation Plan, um,
15 that this will improve.

16 Um, and I know in the past-

17 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: That was- that was- that
18 was my law. That was my law.

19 AUDIE SOUCY: Yes, which we appreciate. Um, in
20 your office generously last fall, um, offered to
21 assist us in trying to facilitate communication with
the DEP. Um, unfortunately, probably due to the- the
transition, that was not successful. Um, but we are
hoping that with the advent of a new Administration,
things will improve so that we can-

1
2 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Right and also this
3 Commissioner is like very impressed with my detailed
4 knowledge. So it's just like, She can't hide from
5 me, you know, and she's very nice. So I've heard
6 nothing but great things about her today. And so,
7 see, Josh, my Legislative Director, if you turn right
8 around, and, um, that particular project, when I meet
9 with the Commissioner, I'll just ask her to do it.

10 And another thing we did, um, we did also the,
11 uh, you know, there was areas of the city that have,
12 uh, coastal water impacts that have always been the
13 case when it comes to flooding and, and backups and
14 all that. Um, and we just did another law recently.
15 I did, the Council did, for, um, inland flooding
16 areas from pluvial, you know, like, like, not from,
17 you know, not coastal flooding, but rain flooding.

18 AUDIE SOUCY: Right.

19 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: And so, so there's a whole
20 set of maps now where, um, you know, under this, uh,
21 city of yes and basement apartments and whatnot,
where you can't have basement apartments because, uh,
they're more prone to that.

AUDIE SOUCY: Yeah.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: And I did a law, I don't
3 know what became of it, but, um, where people can get
4 city assistance to get, um, um, what's the technology
called? Like, like, um-

5 AUDIE SOUCY: Like a backup valve?

6 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, backflow valves.
7 Yeah, backflow valves and so, yeah, that was like 2
8 years ago or something and we can give you more
information on that.

9 AUDIE SOUCY: That would be great.

10 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: You know, talk to Josh
11 about- he can get that for you. I don't know if
12 they've drafted rules for it or what. Yeah, we just
13 pass laws and we just go forward, you know, I mean,
14 we don't get a chance to look back that much but when
it comes up, then I think of it and so we can do
that.

15 So, Audie, thank you very much for your good
16 testimony and, um, I think lawyers are great. I
17 think lawyers are great, you know.

18 AUDIE SOUCY: Some more than others. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Most lawyers, you know, um,
20 yeah, I, I, I watched all of, uh, it was the two guys
21 who were lawyers. It's a Big Show. Suits, Suits.

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1
2 Yeah and so, yeah, I'm almost a lawyer myself now
3 watching that. What's that? I'm sure it isn't. I'm
4 sure it isn't and people yelling and screaming at
5 each other, I'm sure they just, like— you can't be
6 worked up your whole life, you know.

7 Um, Riverkeeper. We saved Riverkeeper, uh,
8 Mackenzie. And so Wow, we look forward to hearing
9 from you.

10 MACKENZIE SCHEUERMANN: Thank you. My name is
11 Mackenzie Scheuermann, and I'm the Legal Program
12 Intern at Riverkeeper. Thank you, Chair Gennaro, and
13 members of the Committee for your leadership and for
14 the opportunity to testify today. I would also like
15 to thank the staff of DEP for their dedication.

16 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Just speak a little louder,
17 right into the mic.

18 MACKENZIE SCHEUERMANN: Sure. Um, so New York
19 City is on the front lines of climate change while
20 the city's critical infrastructure— water
21 infrastructure systems require significant investment
to maintain current levels of service and to meet the
challenges posed by the changing climate. To provide
needed leadership and address these challenges, we

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1
2 urge the Council to support 8 critical priorities in
3 this year's budget.

4 1, fully fund DEP at \$2 billion, including \$75
5 million to restore agency staffing and fill 800
6 vacancies. 2, reject the \$313 million rental payment
7 from the NYC Water Board. 3, allocate \$10 million
8 for DEP to complete the legislatively mandated
9 comprehensive stormwater master plan. 4, fund \$4
10 million to support full implementation of the unified
11 stormwater rule. 5, fully fund the Bureau of Coastal
12 Resiliency at \$15 million for staffing, planning, and
13 operations. 6, allocate \$10 million for DCAS and DEP
14 to complete the renewable Rikers master plan. 7,
15 fully fund Ashokan Reservoir upgrades, including the
16 Ashokan Headworks Project and the supplemental EIS
17 for muddy discharges into the Lower Esopus Creek.
18 And finally, 8, fully fund MOCEJ to develop a
19 5-borough adaptation plan as required by Local Law
20 122 and 149.

21 A \$2 billion budget for DEP would fill gaps in
agency funding from federal cuts and support critical
infrastructure. The proposed increase in DEP's
budget could be funded by eliminating the planned
rental payment from the NYC Water Board.

1
2 Today, we are faced with unprecedented attacks on
3 climate mitigation and resiliency work from the
4 federal government. We need bold leadership from the
5 New York City Council and this Administration to
6 ensure that adequate funding and resources are
7 provided to critical agencies to protect our
8 communities and prepare our city for this climate
9 reality.

8 Thank you very much for your time today.

9 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Thank you very much. I've
10 always enjoyed working with Riverkeeper, and you make
11 great suggestions. I, I wasn't— I made a great
12 recommendation. I wasn't aware that, you know, our,
13 our— we - we passed the law on the Comprehensive
14 Stormwater Management plan, but according to you,
15 according to your notes and your testimony, that—
16 that's not being fully funded. We should look at
17 that. Like, that was us, you know. All right, so
18 she just made a note, so we're good and so I want to
19 thank this panel very much. You guys did a great
20 job, and so appreciate it.

19 And whoever I told you to see— Josh, you should,
20 you know, see the folks out in the hall so we don't
21 have a disruption. Calling the next panel. Um, uh,

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1
2 looks like Syrah, uh, oh, Sierra, Sierra, I'm sorry,
3 uh, National Clean Water Collective. Okay, uh,
4 Christopher House- Houserman, um, representing Field,
5 uh, Field something, Field Form. Um, Cecilia Ellis,
6 also, uh, New York lawyers in NYPIRG and Alicia
7 Grillon, I don't know, um, representing yourself and
8 so good for you.

9 And so, so now we're going to go from this way,
10 that way. So, and we'll see what um, I have- I've
11 got testimony from the, uh, housing conference and
12 from Alicia. And so, um, uh, Sierra, is that right?
13 Oh, Sierra, okay. But we're gonna- so what's your
14 name? Oh, okay, so we're going to start this way and
15 we're going to go that way.

16 CECILIA ELLIS: Okay, great. Hi, thank you, uh,
17 Committee Chair Gennaro. Um, I am Cecilia Ellis.
18 I'm Policy and Communications Manager with NYPIRG,
19 the New York Public Interest Research Group. Um, we
20 work with college students and do research and
21 advocacy. Um, the largest student-directed nonprofit
nonpartisan group in the state.

Um, I am thanking you for the opportunity to
testify about the city budget in support of a program
you heard about earlier, Heat Pumps for All, which

1
2 addresses affordability and the climate crisis. Um,
3 Local Law 97, as you know, covers large buildings,
4 and Local Law 154 covers new buildings, but there are
5 no requirements for roughly 900,000 smaller existing
6 buildings, 500,000 of which are 1 to 2 family homes.
7 We want to urge the Council to include a \$10 million
8 allocation in this year's budget for a program to pay
9 the upfront costs of upgrading such homes to clean,
10 energy efficient, heat pumps.

11 Um, it is paramount to the current moment that
12 New York City moves boldly to shore up environmental
13 protection efforts that are within our independent
14 power, such as prioritizing building decarbonization.
15 An initial allocation of \$10 million to implement a
16 program starting in 2027 would bring heat pumps to
17 1,000 homes at a \$10,000 per unit subsidy. The city
18 would then— would be creating and championing a
19 substantial affordability and union jobs program to
20 upgrade small buildings to energy efficiency.

21 We anticipate this program to be wildly popular
and envision it growing from year to year to expand
the number of homes that can benefit. The
cost-benefit savings are immediate for homeowners
still dependent on oil boilers and a good investment

1
2 in the long term for folks on the natural gas system.
3 So we urge the Council to set up a \$10 million
4 initial allocation in the upcoming city budget to
5 begin a program to upgrade 1,000 homes in 2027. We
6 also endorse the funding call for Green Healthy
7 Schools investment in \$2.2 billion for public school
8 infrastructure upgrades. And we feel it was a
9 mistake to not include \$6.2 million funding for the
10 community composting program and we heard earlier,
11 um, reference to 100-year storms and increasingly
12 devastating climate destruction.

13 Um, we feel that a,- an easy, simple solution to
14 climate resiliency, which is critical for the
15 long-term livability of New York City, is installing
16 absorbent and neighborhood cooling daylighting
17 infrastructure such as bioswales. And so, um,
18 particularly if the Climate Change Superfund Act is
19 not held up in court, New York City will be on the
20 hook for all these bills associated with climate
21 disaster. We support increasing the funding for, um,
daylighting beyond the current expected-

19 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Thank you. Really
20 appreciate your good testimony.

20 CECILIA ELLIS: Thank you.

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1
2 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: You guys going? I haven't
3 gone. Okay. See you soon. And so, uh, uh, yes,
4 sir.

5 CHRISTOPHER HOUSERMAN: Hi, my name is
6 Christopher Hauserman. I'm currently working at Field
7 Form, a landscape design, uh, resilient studio
8 specializing in distributed stormwater management and
9 drainage solutions that integrate small-scale
10 infrastructure into thoughtful- thoughtful
11 climate-responsive designs.

12 Um, we're very happy to allow you- me to testify
13 today, and I'm also testifying on behalf of the Rise
14 to Resilience Coalition and the SWMM Coalition on
15 their budget priorities for climate resilience and
16 clean water solutions for New York City.

17 We strongly urge, uh, the city budget to reflect
18 the reality of climate change, that climate change is
19 already here, and that critical investments in
20 climate and clean water infrastructure are needed to
21 ensure that New Yorkers are- are prepared. New York
City has witnessed firsthand the risks and impacts
that climate change poses on our residents,
infrastructure, and natural resources. Flooding
events are the most common climate-related hazard

1
2 across the city, where nearly 14% of New Yorkers,
3 which is about 1.3 million people, live within or
4 adjacent to the 100-year floodplain.

5 Furthermore, an estimated 75,000 homes, which are
6 worth about \$3 billion in property value, face a 20%
7 risk annually of stormwater damage. Climate risks
8 and impacts are no longer abstract or projections of
9 the future. They are tangible and measurable. A key
10 indicator is that in the last- in the last 4 years,
11 we've seen the 5 highest single-hour rain events in
12 the city.

13 While these events will get worse and they are
14 not completely avoidable, there are critical policy
15 priorities, um, that can reduce the burden and their
16 impacts on New Yorkers. In order to reduce the
17 city's vulnerability to climate change, direct and
18 bold action must be taken immediately. That starts
19 with making critical investments in the city budget
20 toward, uh, a more resilient and equitable, healthy
21 future.

22 We're calling on the City Council to focus on
23 following critical priorities for this year's budget.
24 One, to fully uh, fund the Department of
25 Environmental Protection at \$2 billion, um, to also

1
2 restore their staffing to pre-COVID levels and to
3 fill 800 vacancies currently at DEP. We also would
4 like to, uh, reject the, uh, \$313 million rental
5 payment from the New York City Water Board and also
6 provide \$10 million for DEP to complete the, er, the
7 comprehensive stormwater, uh, master plan.

8 Um, this also, uh, also \$4 million to fully
9 implement the unified stormwater rule. Um, thank
10 you.

11 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Thank you. Thank you. And
12 just give me a second for you. I have to— it's this
13 little— I don't want to interrupt you while I'm doing
14 this. It's mildly embarrassing. Something I take
15 for my stomach. It's a long story. There's these
16 little pouches, you know. When you're old, you get
17 away with stuff like this. It's like nobody cares.
18 It's just like, yeah, whatever. At least he's still
19 sitting upright, you know. God forbid he falls
20 over, you know, then we've all gotta get involved.
21 Nobody wants that.

22 Although the Sergeants would— yeah, the Sergeants
23 would take care of me. Yeah, please.

24 SIERRA SCOTT: All right, good afternoon.

25 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, you gotta—

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2 SIERRA SCOTT: Okay. All right. Good afternoon,
3 uh, Chair, um, Gennaro, Members of the Committee. My
4 name is Sierra Scott. I'm the Founder and Executive
5 Chairman of the National Clean Water Collective. I
6 do thank you, uh, for the opportunity to share my
7 testimony and testify.

8 I'm- I'm here in support of the Rise to
9 Resilience Coalition and to emphasize a critical gap
10 in our current climate and infrastructure
11 investments. Which is community-level water safety
12 at the National Clean Water Collective. We work
13 directly in communities- we started in Flint,
14 Michigan by the way, even though I live here- but we
15 work directly in communities providing water
16 education testing and sampling and implementation and
17 pipe replacements, um, water filtration systems in
18 areas where residents are already at, at risk.

19 Uh, what we are seeing is clear, um, it's aging
20 infrastructure, uh, environmental exposure, and
21 limited access to testing, um, are leaving
communities without, uh, real, um, uh, time
information about the quality of their water. Uh, in
New York City, buildings, um, constructed before
1961, um, may still have lead service lines. Or

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1
2 plumbing components with the highest risk in older
3 housing stock making community-based testing
4 education and filtration systems point of use which
5 is on the tap essential— excuse me guys, um, hm,
6 mm-hmm where am I at?

7 Essential to protecting public health, climate
8 resilience cannot stop at large-scale infrastructure;
9 it must include what is happening at the tap. Uh,
10 and we are urging that the Council, uh, to allocate
11 fund— allocate funding for community-based water
12 testing programs, uh, public education, and
13 point-of-use filtration systems in high-risk
14 neighborhoods.

15 Uh, these are cost-effective, immediate
16 interventions that protect public health while larger
17 infrastructure projects are underway. Uh, we also
18 encourage the city to partner with organizations like
19 ourselves, like myself, um, and the work that we're
20 doing, uh, sorry, just say, uh, with organizations
21 already doing the work to expand, um, reach, improve
data collection, and ensure resources are reaching
the communities that need it most.

1
2 If we are serious about resilience, uh, we must
3 ensure that every New Yorker has access to safe,
4 reliable, and trusted water.

5 Um, I thank you for your time, commitment to
6 protecting New Yorkers. Um, we look forward to
7 working in partnership to ensure that every community
8 has access to safe, reliable water.

9 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Thank you very much. It
10 was great testimony. We appreciate it. Make sure we
11 have our copy of it.

12 SIERRA SCOTT: Yes, we'll do. Thank you very
13 much.

14 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: And finally- yeah, you're
15 good.

16 ALICIA GRILLON: Hi, um, good afternoon, and
17 thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is
18 Alicia Grillon and I am an artist, professor, writer,
19 and lifelong Bronxite, daughter of immigrants from
20 the Dominican Republic, and a parent raising a family
21 in an unforgiving economy.

I'm also a community gardener deeply committed
in- to the future of New York City's green spaces. I
remember Hurricane Sandy and Hurricane Katrina, and
many of our young people do not, but those events

1
2 remind us how quickly climate disaster becomes a
3 lived reality.

4 During the pandemic, I collaborated with other
5 Black and brown women, queer gardeners, artists, and
6 organizers in Kingsbridge to transform an abandoned
7 park into a space for grieving, healing, and
8 learning. As food apartheid deepened, we partnered
9 with City Harvest and organized mutual aid,
10 distributing culturally relevant food, PPE, and
11 education while restoring land and supporting public
12 health.

13 The Parks Department eventually shut down our
14 garden, and that experience showed me how vulnerable
15 these spaces are and how essential collective
16 advocacy is. Community gardens rooted in movements
17 of the 1970s have long been acts of survival,
18 stewardship, and community governance. Today they
19 remain vital, climate infrastructure, absorbing
20 water, cooling neighborhoods, and sustaining
21 community life.

22 I'm proposing a Percent for Green policy modeled
23 after Local Law 65, Percent for Art, to allocate a
24 small percentage of publicly funded construction
25 budgets towards community gardens, bioswales, trees,

1
2 and local stewardship networks. These spaces are not
3 amenities. They are essential climate
4 infrastructure. New Yorkers in EJ communities have
5 been doing this work for decades, and we just haven't
6 funded it yet.

7
8 Environmental justice is not abstract. It is
9 about whether our buses run, our neighborhoods flood,
10 and our children can breathe clean air. Investing in
11 green space is climate protection. How much we love
12 this city will be measured by how much we protect the
13 land and the communities that sustain it. Thank you
14 very much, and I look forward to talking to you.

15
16 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, thank you and- and,
17 you know, to the extent that you have like a, an
18 outline for your proposal, we'd appreciate receiving
19 that.

20
21 ALICIA GRILLON: Sure, absolutely.

ALICIA GRILLON: That'd be great.

ALICIA GRILLON: Thank you.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: And so, uh, what's that?
24 Oh, fine, fine, fine, fine, fine. Okay. All right.
25 I, I really thank this panel and we're gonna go to,
26 uh, remote. Um, but I- I have to just step out for a
27 second but, you know, we really appreciate your good

1
2 testimony and your patience for waiting all this
3 time.

4 PANEL: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Yeah, we really appreciate
6 that. We will now turn to remote testimony. Once
7 your name is called, a member of our staff will
8 unmute you and the Sergeant-at-Arms will give you the
9 go-ahead to begin. Please wait for the Sergeant to
10 announce that you may begin before delivering your
11 testimony. And then— okay, and the first witness is,
12 uh, Chauncey Young. We look forward to your good
13 testimony. You may begin.

14 CHANCEY YOUNG: Hello. Good afternoon. Um, my
15 name is Chancey Young, and I am the Coordinator of
16 the Harlem River Coalition and a board member of the
17 Bronx Council for Environmental Quality. Thank you,
18 Chairperson Gennaro and Members of the Committee for
19 your leadership and the opportunity to testify.

20 I'm testifying today in support of the Rise to
21 Resilience Coalition and the SWIM Coalition, and for
the budget priorities for climate resilience and
clean water solutions for New York City. The Bronx
Council for Environmental Equality is the oldest
environmental organization in the borough of the

1
2 Bronx and is a founding member of the Harlem River
3 Coalition. The Harlem River Coalition represents
4 groups on both sides of the Harlem River in the Bronx
5 and Upper Manhattan and has been working to reconnect
6 community members to the Harlem River, improve water
7 quality, and advocate for greenway development and
8 on-water recreational programs.

9 The Harlem River unfortunately remains the body
10 of water in New York State with the largest number of
11 combined sewage overflows of any body of water.

12 Crucially, the Harlem River quality continues to
13 suffer due to sewage contamination during large rain
14 events, and investing in comprehensive green
15 infrastructure solutions is essential to capture
16 storm runoff, reduce CSO discharges, and ultimately
17 make the Harlem River safe for recreational and
18 ecological health.

19 The Harlem River Coalition and BCQ strongly urge
20 the city's budget to reflect the reality that climate
21 change is already here and that critical investments
in climate and green water infrastructure are needed
to ensure that New Yorkers are prepared.

The Harlem River Coalition and BCQ— I'm sorry,
that's right. Okay, um, New York City has witnessed

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1
2 firsthand the risks and impact that climate change
3 poses to our residents, infrastructure, natural
4 resources, flooding events, our most common
5 climate-related hazard throughout the city.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time expired.

7 CHANCEY YOUNG: No worries, I'll submit my
8 testimony. Sorry about that.

9 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: No, no, uh, uh, uh, no
10 problem whatsoever. We really appreciate your, uh,
11 uh, um, waiting to testify and giving us the benefit
12 of your views.

13 Next witness, um, Eric Eisenberg. Eric
14 Eisenberg.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

16 ERIC EISENBERG: Uh, thank you. Um, pulling up
17 my notes here. Um, I'm here today, um, on behalf of
18 myself, but I'm also a member of the New York Clean
19 Air Collective, um, to advocate for an additional \$1
20 to \$2 million a year, um, specifically for, um, the
21 DEP's idling unit.

Um, I was heartened to see the Commissioner today
mentioned several times the importance of, uh,
combating truck idling in our city. Uh, it's a major
source of air pollution, uh, which kills people,

1
2 which causes health events. Um, and it- and I'm also
3 heartened to see that in the Mayor's Preliminary
4 Budget, um, there's already a significant additional
5 allocation.

6 Um, and this was funded by its own revenue. So
7 this is a self-funding program and putting another \$1
8 to \$2 million in would actually be beneficial, uh,
9 for the city's coffers. Um, right now there are
10 significant delays in ticket issuance, which is
11 really unfair to the truck companies that- that get
12 these tickets. Um, they may, uh, er, if a citizen
13 submits a complaint, it may take a year for the DEP
14 to issue a ticket, and that, um, that simply needs to
15 be sped up through additional resources, additional
16 full-time equivalent positions. Um, and we need-
17 that's why I'm suggesting an additional \$1 to \$2
18 million more towards that.

19 Um, currently, due to the lack of resources, DEP
20 has been taking a number of shortcuts. Um, they've
21 been refusing to issue tickets to full-size box
trucks that, uh, happen to illegally use passenger
plates, um, just to cut down on their workload. That
should happen. We shouldn't be encouraging
loopholes. We need the funding to do things right.

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1
2 Um, another very problematic shortcut is the DEP has
3 been refusing to take complaints in foreign languages
4 like French, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Chinese. Uh,
5 everybody deserves clean air. That's in our
6 Constitution. Um, and providing the resources for
7 the DEP to review these foreign language complaints
8 from our immigrant communities—

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you, your time has
10 expired, sir.

11 ERIC EISENBERG: Is, um, is vital. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Thank you very much for
13 your good testimony. We are working on that issue.
14 I'll be working with the Commissioner on that. Thank
15 you for, um, advocating for, uh, common sense with
16 regard to idling and making our air cleaner.
17 Appreciate you being here with us.

18 ERIC EISENBERG: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: And next witness, uh,
20 Michelle— looks like Luebke. Michelle Luebke.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

MICHELLE LUEBKE: Okay, can I begin now? Sorry,
I wasn't unmuted.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

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2 MICHELLE LUEBKE: Yeah, okay, thank you. Um,
3 good afternoon, my name is Michelle Luebke and I'm
4 the Program Manager for the Stormwater Infrastructure
5 Matters, or SWMM Coalition. Thank you, Chair
6 Gennaro, and the Committee for the opportunity to
7 deliver public testimony on the SWMM Coalition's
8 recommendations— excuse me— for the Preliminary
9 Budget hearings.

10 On behalf of our more than 70 member
11 organizations, many of whom you have heard from
12 today, the SWMM Coalition has long advocated for more
13 sustainable, resilient stormwater management as
14 effects from climate change challenge and often
15 overwhelm our current sewer systems. The SWMM
16 Coalition, the Rise to Coalition and our member
17 groups strongly urge the city's budget reflect the
18 current reality of climate change, which already
19 affects millions of New York City residents today.

20 Specifically, the New York, uh, the SWIM
21 Coalition recommends the following priorities in the
Fiscal '27 budget. Uh, most importantly, we
encourage rejection of the water rental payment.
Funds paid by ratepayers should be used by DEP, not

1
2 put into the general fund. I've already talked to
3 Josh about that, so I'm on your list.

4 Next, we strongly urge the City Council to
5 allocate \$4 million for DEP staff to fully implement
6 the unified stormwater rule, which is imperative
7 given the priority of affordable residential
8 development. Affordability should not come at the
9 cost of clean water. The SWMM Coalition supports
10 investment in nature-based green infrastructure
11 solutions, including DEP's Cloudburst program and
12 Bluebelt programs that manage large amounts of
13 stormwater.

14 Additionally, we are advocating for adequate
15 funding for DEP to fully staff their Bureau for
16 Coastal Resilience, long-term funding for
17 climate-related resilience projects, and full funding
18 of the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental
19 Justice to develop a 5-borough adaptation plan, among
20 their other important roles. Thank you for this
21 opportunity to testify. Our more extensive written
comments will be submitted later.

As always, the SWMM Coalition looks forward to
partnering with the City Council to advance any and
all of these recommendations and initiatives, and I'm

1
2 happy to discuss any or all of these items in more
3 detail with you at any point.

4 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Thank you so much,
5 Michelle. I, I really appreciate you and the SWMM
6 Coalition for really giving us good, concise, um, you
7 know, ah, er, hmm, testimony that's practical and
8 implementable. And so, um, uh, we really appreciate
9 um, you know, the advocacy and the help. We could
10 use it. Have a good day. appreciate it. All right,
11 bye-bye.

12 And, uh, next we have Michael Streeter. Michael
13 Streeter.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

15 MICHAEL STREETER: Hi, my name is Michael
16 Streeter. I'm a member of the New York Clean Air
17 Collective, but I'm speaking on my, uh, my own
18 behalf. Uh, I've been dialing into these budget
19 hearings for, for a few years now and I'm, uh, always
20 asking for the same thing. I'm a, uh, participant in
21 the DEP's Citizen Air Complaint Program. Uh, uh, but
I'm also a- a champion and advocate, uh, recruiter,
cheerleader, whatever you, whatever you wanna call
it.

1
2 Um, I was very, uh, pleased to hear the
3 Commissioner's comments about bringing on new staff
4 to handle- handle the backlog of idling complaints,
5 uh, submitted by New Yorkers. But we need- we need
6 more people on board immediately. The- the program
7 is behind on over 100,000 complaints going back as
8 far as, uh, almost a year.

9 Um, it's critical that the city dig itself out of
10 this hole. Uh, I suggest bringing on more staff,
11 offering competitive salaries, and also increasing
12 the salaries of current inspectors who do an
13 outstanding job in reviewing complaints and
14 representing them at oath hearings. Um, and really
15 prioritize this because it- if a, if a company breaks
16 the law, it shouldn't take nearly a year for them to,
17 to get the summons.

18 Um, getting the summons in the mail is a feedback
19 loop. It tells violators to stop idling or, or else
20 you get more, uh, tickets and then that hopefully
21 causes them to- to stress to their staff that they
need to reduce idling. Uh, and generally that's what
happens. Um, I mean, and it works. Uh, but this
backlog really undermines the overall impact and

1
2 potential of the program when summonses aren't
3 hitting mailboxes for close to a year.

4 Uh, so the, the backlog really needs to be
5 addressed, uh, in order for the program to have as
6 much of an impact on air quality as possible while at
7 the same time being fair to respondents who should
8 not be getting their, uh, summonses, uh, nearly a
9 year after their violation.

10 Uh, so getting more staff, uh, to turn around
11 complaints faster really is critical. Uh, the
12 program raises tens of millions of dollars each year,
13 so, uh, an investment of \$1 to \$2 million, uh, it
14 essentially funds itself.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you, your time has
16 expired sir.

17 MICHAEL STREETER: Thank you everybody and
18 Committee Chair Gennaro, thank you for your
19 leadership.

20 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Uh, uh, thank you, Michael.
21 We really appreciate, uh, uh, those who are working
with us to try to figure this out. I was also
pleased to hear what the Commissioner said about uh,
the allocation of, um, increased resources to that
vital service and, uh, let's get this done. Let's

1
2 get it resolved. Let's get the idling to end. Let's
3 get it all done and we couldn't do that without you,
4 and we really appreciate you and, um, uh, you know,
5 like-minded people who wanna make a difference and,
6 um, so good for you for that. And I'm sure we'll be
7 seeing you real soon and have a good rest of your
8 day.

9 MICHAEL STREETER: Absolutely, thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON GENNARO: Thank you. Okay, finally,
11 if we inadvertently missed anyone who registered to
12 testify today and is yet to be called, please use the
13 Zoom raise hand function if you are testifying
14 remotely, and you'll be called in the order that your
15 hand has been raised.

16 If you are testifying in person, please come to
17 the dais. Seeing no one, hearing no one, I will now
18 close the hearing.

19 Uh, thank you to the members of the
20 Administration and members of the public who joined
21 us today. This hearing— well, I, you know, almost,
almost, um, yeah, I'm gonna take a little item of
personal privilege. And first of all, I wanna thank
all the staff, um, you know, particularly Tanveer,
who did such a great job in putting together all of

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
AND WATERFRONTS

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1
2 the, all of the materials, um, that, uh, almost ran
3 the ink out of my printer last night when I was
4 printing them all out, and for all the staff and, um,
5 um, and my own Legislative Director, uh, and also as,
6 uh, you know, everyone on staff here knows, uh, um,
7 yesterday was the, uh, you know, 10-year anniversary
8 of the passing of my late wife, my late sainted wife.
9 And, uh, I dedicate my efforts in today's hearing to
10 her memory. And with that, I, uh, this hearing is
11 adjourned. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date May 22, 2026